The Mennonites in Asia
**Global Mennonite Population in Review:**


Total Mennonites, in 83 countries: 1,774,720

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>529,108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>186,339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
<td>679,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
<td>315,645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>64,575</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **North America**: (USA 391,900; Canada 137,208)
- **Latin America**: (Par. 33,251; Mex. 32,036; Bol. 24,988)
- **Africa**: (Congo 235,202; Ethiopia 224,407)
- **Asia**: (India 149,849; Indonesia 108,528)
- **Europe**: (Ger. 46,757; NL 8,030; Switz. 2,500)
The Mennonites in Asia

- Christianity was in India by 3rd c. (?), China by 7th c., but “hidden”
- By 13th c. Islam was already established in Mongolia, China
- Difficult colonial history from 16th c. (Portuguese, Spanish, British, Dutch)—RC priests followed traders from 16th c., Reformed Church with Dutch East India Company
- In 18th c. Pietism included missions (SPCK established in England, 1698)
- Conflict between RC and Protestant missions (to 1960s)
Mennonite missionaries came to Asia in this spirit in 19\textsuperscript{th} c.
- In some countries only in 20\textsuperscript{th} c.
- Asian Mennonite churches not due to mass migrations

Mennonite, Brethren in Christ, Church of the Brethren congregations resulted from missionary and service work
- Some Mennonite missionaries were Europeans (including the earliest), most were from NA

MCC programs since WW II

Taiwanese Mennonites celebrate 60\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the church (2014)

(Photo: MWC)
Mennonites in Asian countries (2012):
Total: 315,645 members in 33 conferences, 16 countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Congregations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>149,800</td>
<td>1,466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>108,500</td>
<td>346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>40,800(?)</td>
<td>462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(GAMEO: 959)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>12,700</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>Congregations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>No stats</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>No stats</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>No stats</td>
<td>No stats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Information: MWC directory https://www.mwc-cmm.org)
Indonesia

- Area: 1,904,569 km²; population: 237,424,363 (2011)
  (Canada: 9,984,670 km²; population: 36,000,000)
- Mennonite mission work began in Muria Mountains, central Java, in 1851—then expanded to other areas

(Map: Google)
Indonesia

- First Mennonite missionaries to Asia came to Indonesia
  - Pieter Jansz from Netherlands came to Java in 1851
  - Christian “colony” began in Muria Mountains (central Java)
    - Muslim and animist opposition—Christians lived together
  - Support from Dutch, German, Swiss, Russian Mennonites
  - Gradually the Javanese Mennonite Church developed
    - JMC (= Evangel. Church of Java, “GITJ” ) independent 1940 largest conference in Indonesia
    - Political difficulties: Japanese in WW II, communist in 1960s, government controls
    - Active in gospel proclamation, social services, education

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Indonesia

- Parallel to the Javanese church, the Chinese Mennonite Church was started in the Muria Mountain region in 1918
  - Impact of vision of one Chinese man, Tee Siem Tat
  - Influence of Western missionaries has been minor
- The Muria Christian Church of Indonesia (Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia, “GKMI”) was established 1927
  - Ethnically Chinese at first, later less divided
  - Work cooperatively with Javanese church (e.g., seminary)
- Third church is the Indonesian Christian Churches ("JKI")
  - Developed in 1970s in split from GKMI
- MCC involved in Indonesian social services since 1947
- Church growth has been rapid (e.g., Hadi and Djojodihardjo)
India

- India has the largest Mennonite population in Asia
  - C.J. Dyck stats: 76,670 (1990); MWC stats: 149,800 (2012)
- Main conference bodies:
  - Mennonite Brethren Church—began missionary work in 1889 (following the great famine of 1897-98)
  - North American Mennonites began famine relief in 1898-1900
  - Mennonite Church, General Conference MC, Mennonite Brethren, and 3 others in different states of India
  - All cooperate in Mennonite Christian Service (est. 1964)
  - Programs emphasize evangelization, education, and medicine; also refugee and disaster aid (Bangladesh)
India

- Mennonite Brethren in Andhra Pradesh
- Menn. Church in Madhya Pradesh and Bihar
- General Conference in Madhya Pradesh
- Brethren in Christ in Bihar and Orissa
- United Missionary Church in West Bengal
- All have spread out further
India

- MCC has been in India since 1950
  - Refugee crisis with division of India/Pakistan (late 1940s)
  - Repeated food and water crises (poultry, wells, dams)
  - Hurricanes and flooding
  - Medical support
  - Food-for-work projects
  - Education
  - Ten Thousand Villages
  - Centered in Kolkata; staff basically all local

Soma Chakraborty, with student Ratne Prasad, is a teacher at Tomorrow’s Foundation Model School in Kolkata, India. MCC helps educate children from impoverished communities and to involve parents in schooling. (Photo and text: mcc.org)
Vietnam

- Area: 332,698 km²; population: 90 million  
  (Canada: 9,984,670 km²; pop. 36 million)
- Recent history: French, Japanese occupation in WW II, long struggles for power and independence
- Vietnam War (US military) 1954-1975
- Socialist Republic of Vietnam est. 1976
  - Executions, refugees (“boat people”)
- Religion in Vietnam: Indigenous—45% (?), Buddhists—16% (?), Roman Catholics—7%, Protestants—1% (since 1911), Islam—1%?
Vietnam—many religious beliefs!

Folk religions

Roman Catholicism

Buddhism

Islam

Mennonites

[No temples]
Mennonites in Vietnam

- In Vietnam from 1954 through MCC
  - MCC works through Vietnam Christian Service (with Church World Service and Lutheran World Relief)
  - Programs: refugee resettlement, medical, food
  - Also rebuilding, peacebuilding, reconciliation
  - Popular student centre in Ho Chi Minh City (ESL classes, study room)

- Evangelical Mennonite Church of Vietnam est. 1954
  - With collapse of S. Vietnam in 1975, most Westerners left
  - MCC was one of few Western NGOs to stay after 1975

- Presently 168 Mennonite congregations, 12,700 members
  - (.014% of overall population)
Mennonites in Vietnam

- Constant conflict with government
- Vietnamese Mennonite Church has been divided since 2008
- **Registered church:** about 6,000 members, more freedoms
  [Luke Martin/MWC: 8,500]

- **Unregistered church:** continued harassment, Pastor Nguyen Hong Quang and others repeatedly jailed, meeting place in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) destroyed—about 5,000 [Luke Martin/MWC: 3,500]
- Pastor Quang and others repeatedly physically attacked, needed to be hospitalized (Can. Menn., Feb. 16/15)

Ransacked church

[Photo: morningstarnews.org]

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Taiwan

- **Katherine Wu** (Wu Fang-Fang) is a Mennonite pastor in Hualien, Taiwan
- Concerned about poor families selling their children into prostitution (60,000?)
- Started the Good Shepherd Ministry in 1986, taught vocational skills
- In 1993 she was beaten up while going to work
- Slow recovery in hospital, then back to work
- National media headlines, outpouring of support
- Government acted to end the sex trade

(Photo and story: Sheldon Sawatzky, [www.martyrstories.org](http://www.martyrstories.org))
Mennonites in Australia

- Small membership—about 320 in 5 congregations
- 2 conferences (both members of MWC):
  - Australian Conf. of Evangelical Mennonites (20 members)
  - Sinode Jemaat Kristen Indonesia (about 300 members)

- Unrelated development: the German “Temple” movement of the mid-19th c. also influenced some Mennonites in Russia
- Some moved to Palestine, were deported during and after WW II
- In 1950s there were about 1,200 in Australia
- In 2010 one centre is in Melbourne, specific statistics unknown
Issues facing Mennonites in Asia:

- Dealing with colonial past—and Christian church’s role (conflict between biblical shalom and imperialistic conquests)
- After WW II (relations between former “enemies”)
- Relationship between Christians and other religions and worldviews (e.g., Islam, Hinduism, animism)
- What is the “mission” of the Mennonite church?
- How to relate to other ethnic and social groups
- Relationship of church and state/government
- The Mennonite peace witness—teaching and living it out
References:
C.J. Dyck, *Introduction to Mennonite History*
*GAMEO*
*Churches Engage Asian Traditions: Global Mennonite History*  
Series: Asia (Good Books, 2011)

Focus of next session:  
Mennonites in Africa