

# East Asia insight

OMF INTERNATIONAL SUMMER 2006

## EVERY TRIBE AND TONGUE

by Chad Berry, staff writer

*After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb... And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."*  
Rev. 7:9-10

**L**ao, Maguindanao, Amdo Tibetan, Hani, Dai, Japanese, Hui... what do all of these unusual names have in common?

- (1) Each represents an East Asian people group with a distinct culture, language and identity.
- (2) Each is virtually untouched by the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are bound by the idols of Buddhism, Islam, animism or materialism.

In missions-speak, these are "unreached people groups" (UPGs). More than 400 such groups reside in East Asia. They are at the forefront of OMF's vision: *Through God's grace, we aim to see an indigenous, biblical church movement in each people group of East Asia, evangelizing their own people and reaching out in mission to other peoples.*

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But how can such a vision become reality?

How can the label of a group like the Khmer of Cambodia be changed from "unreached" to "Christian"? First, it will happen by God's grace and by his Spirit. He is the mover and changer of hearts.

Related to this, the process of unreached people groups coming to Christ will happen in response to continual, focused and intensive prayer. At OMF, we can recall success stories such as seen in the Lisu people of southern China in the first half of the 20th century. As missionary J.O. Fraser labored with little result, he called on prayer warriors back home to intercede for the Lisu. God moved and the rest is history. The Lisu are a "reached" people group today. "If I am sure of anything," Fraser wrote to his prayer supporters, "it is that your prayers have made a very real difference in my life and service."

Prayers need to be made for people to come to faith and prayers need to be made for God to raise up more workers for the harvest. (Luke 10:2) As Paul wrote in Romans 10, "And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (Rom. 10: 14) This entails involvement by the global Body of Christ in all areas of missions work (going, praying, giving, mobilizing, welcoming and learning). What is your role(s) in seeing more unreached people groups come to faith in Christ? ■



## A SUCCESS STORY: THE PWO KAREN

by Jim Morris

*Jim Morris and his wife Louise served among the Pwo Karen of Thailand for more than 20 years and were eyewitnesses of God's transforming work of this people group.*

### PWO KAREN OF NORTHWEST THAILAND

**Population:** 100,000

**Location:** Northwest Thailand, provinces of Mae Hong Son and Chiang Mai

**Religion:** Animism; some Buddhism

**Christians:** more than 10 percent

OMF began work among the Pwo Karen in Northwest Thailand in 1954 from a base town 60 miles south of Chiang Mai city. The Pwo Karen in the area were subsistent farmers, living among the Buddhist Thai on the plains in the Mae Ping basin and occupying a large area of

isolated jungle in the mountains west of Hod.

Spiritually, they were traditional animists, placating spirits, with a veneer of Buddhism mixed in. None were Christians. They knew that "God" had created the Karen, but God had left and they lost the Book he had given them. "Satan" had subsequently taught them how to appease the spirits that controlled nature and their daily lives.

The first Pwo Karen of the area believed in Jesus in 1960. A few more believed in 1965, but the major turning from spirits to Christ came in a breakthrough in Prosperity Fields village in the Omkoi area in 1974. By the end of that year, nearly 200 Pwo Karen believed in Jesus. Small churches were started in Pwo Karen villages. In 1976 the movement spread to an area of the Sgaw Karen people.

Since then, thousands of Pwo and Sgaw Karen in the area have turned to Christ. There are now over a hundred churches. The New Testament in the Pwo Karen language was printed in 1995. The Sgaw believers are able to use the Sgaw Karen Bible printed in Myanmar. Under local Karen leadership, the church continues to grow in numbers and spiritual depth. ■



## AN ONGOING STORY: THE KHMER

by Chad Berry

### KHMER OF CAMBODIA

**Population:** 12.5 million

**Location:** Cambodia

**Religion:** Buddhism

**Christians:** less than 2 percent

The Khmer make up more than 90 percent of the population of Cambodia. In many ways, they are a broken people. Beginning in 1975 the country was ruled by the harsh Khmer Rouge regime under Pol Pot. Millions of Khmer were murdered or died due to starvation and disease over the next three years.

Though the Khmer Rouge is no longer in power, the effects of their genocide are still felt today. Physically, undetected land mines have killed or maimed thousands. Emotionally, the Khmer have a high rate of depression and psychological wounds. Economically, the country is quite poor, with a median per capita income of \$260.

But God is at work. Though Christians are

still just a fraction of the population in this predominantly Buddhist country, the church has doubled in size in the past decade. In the wake of tragedy, thousands of Khmer have turned to the ultimate healer, Jesus Christ.

More work remains, however. The Khmer church is in need of mature, godly leadership. Also, most church growth has been concentrated in urban areas such as Phnom Penh. Outlying rural areas remain relatively untouched by the gospel. Opportunities abound for church planting, leadership training, medical work, community development and outreaches to factory girls and college students. ■



# GOD AT WORK IN EAST ASIA

## New generations of Chinese believers

Several Chinese Christians have grown in their faith and are now investing spiritually in others as a result of OMF's Chinese diaspora ministries in the United Kingdom.

Miss Y was baptized three years ago and is in the midst of a two-year Bible training program. This year, she's been leading a Chinese church's new believers class. "Now her one life is impacting many," write Paul and Naomi Pruitt.

Miss H came to Christ five years ago, was called into full-time ministry three years ago and graduated from Bible college last year. She is now a well-established cell group leader, is spearheading the visitation ministry of the church and is discipling new Chinese believers.

Praise God for this "passing on" of the faith among Chinese worldwide. ■

## Growing church in Mongolia

OMF workers in Mongolia report that a woman recently came to Christ through the witness of her grandmother, who's been a believer for a number of years. The town where they live now has three Christians. These women are part of a small, but fast-growing church in Mongolia. In 1990 there were only four known Christians in the country. Today Mongolia is home to 20,000 believers—still less than one percent of the Mongolian population, but evidence of God at work in this rugged land. ■

## Church-planting movement

In the last 18 months, using chronological Bible storytelling, more than 80 people have come to faith in Christ among two unreached East Asian people groups. Several healings and visions have confirmed to the people that Jesus is truly the Lord. There are now believers in eight villages, with one village almost entirely Christian and functioning as a church. Fourteen believers are being trained as evangelists. Praise the Lord! ■

## Manobo youth find new life in Christ

The village of Tagpopo-ot in the Philippines was the site of "spiritual birth" for some Manobo youth. At an annual Manobo youth conference held in Tagpopo-ot recently—which was completely planned and run by Manobo Christians—44 young people accepted Christ.

More than 100,000 people spread among 25 tribal groups comprise the Manobo. Most live on the island of Mindanao in the Philippines. Though they are largely an animistic people group, since 1978 OMF has planted more than 30 Manobo churches. ■

FOR MORE STORIES OF GOD AT WORK IN EAST ASIA VISIT OUR WEBSITE — [WWW.US.OMF.ORG](http://WWW.US.OMF.ORG)

## A TOUGH STORY: THE BRUNEIAN MALAY

by Chad Berry



### THE MALAY OF BRUNEI

**Population:** 230,000

**Location:** northwest coast of Borneo between the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak

**Religion:** Islam

**Christians:** only two known believers (in-country reports indicate that there are a number who have believed over the years, but the strict Islamic environment is not conducive to them being open about their faith)

Brunei is a tiny nation on the northwest coast of the island of Borneo. It is ruled by the sultan of Brunei, His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanah Bolkhah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, the 29th descendant of the world's oldest continuously reigning royal line. An absolute monarch, the sultan is chief of the government, commander and head of the armed forces and head of the Islamic faith.

As in other places in Southeast Asia, Islam

dominates the religious landscape of Brunei as it is an official Islamic state. All other religious activities are closely monitored. Among the Bruneian Malay, who comprise 66 percent of the country's population, there are only two known Christians. It is an unreached people group.

Economically, the Bruneian Malay are rich. They have one of the highest per capita incomes in Asia at \$25,160. Most of this comes from the oil and natural gas industries. In addition, the government provides free education and health care and subsidizes rice and housing for all Brunei citizens. Magnificent mosques dot the Brunei landscape. All of the country's wealth is credited to Allah.

Efforts to reach the Bruneian Malay with the gospel of Jesus Christ have been few. Conversion from Islam to other faiths in Brunei is illegal. Much prayer is needed to open the way for effective witness and an outpouring of faith among the Bruneian Malay. ■

# PRAY FOR EAST ASIA'S PEOPLE GROUPS

## USING THESE DAILY PRAYER GUIDES



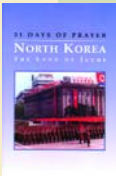
### Pray for China

Written by China expert Tony Lambert, this 30-day prayer guide will help you intercede for the 1.2 billion people who are still without Christ in this vast nation. \$3.00



### The Muslims of Thailand

A Muslim minority of 4 million is spread throughout Thailand. Less than 100 follow Christ. Please pray for them. \$3.00



### 31 Days of Prayer: North Korea, The Land of Juche

This prayer guide is a great tool to help you pray for one of the most closed countries in the world. \$3.99

Join us in praying for the unreached people groups of East Asia. Intensive, effective, focused prayer is essential for the spread of the gospel. It is the key which will unlock the door to the hearts of East Asia's peoples so that the Good News can be preached and churches can be established.

*East Asia*  
**insight**

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