


[Sign Up](#) | [Log In](#) | [Help](#)
[HOME](#)
[My Account](#)
[What's New](#)
[EXPOSURE!](#)
[Help](#)

Read the **NEWEST ARTICLES** on FaithWriters.com!

Missions

[→ TRACK THIS AUTHOR](#)

[→ SEND ARTICLE TO A FRIEND](#)
[→ LEAVE COMMENT ON ARTICLE](#)
[→ SEND A PRIVATE MESSAGE](#)
[→ HIRE THIS WRITER](#)

[→ ADD TO MY FAVORITES](#)

Church History in Asia

 by [Edmond Ng](#)

01/31/05

[For Sale](#)
Author requests article critique
[→ SEND A PRIVATE MESSAGE](#) ✉

[→ HIRE THIS WRITER](#)
[Buy This Article](#)

Many Christians know about church history in the days of the apostles, the martyrdom during the Roman Empire, the Crusades of the tenth century, the Spanish Inquisition of the fifteenth century, and the Reformation Movement in the days of Martin Luther and John Calvin. Few however know about the history of Christianity in Asia, how it began and how it has expanded to what it is today.

This article details how Christianity began in China and India.

CHINA

The earliest evidences of Christian writings in China dates back to the seventh century during the Tang era (AD 618-906). A 'Nestorian Monument' found at that time speaks of the teaching by a first century orthodox Christian from Hebrew origin in Rome with the name Nestorius. The inscription on the monument was by one Adam, a leader of the 'Luminous Religion', and the calligraphist, Lu Hsiu-yen. The 'Luminous Religion' was the first known name of Christianity when the *Church of the East* began in the Tang era. The two, Adam and Lu, were however non-orthodox Christians and later mixed the Christian writings with a little Buddhist wing.

Emperor Tai Tsung, founder of the Tang Dynasty welcomed the Nestorian Monument inscription. He directed the building of a Christian monastery in the capital during his reign. His successor, the emperor Kao Tsung, also encouraged Christianity and ordered Christian monasteries to be built in each province of his domain.

Christianity however fared badly under the reign of the infamous Empress Dowager Wu (689-99), who was an ardent Buddhist. However, several succeeding emperors were favorable and missionary forces were reinforced. About the middle of the 9th century, the ardent Taoist Emperor Wu Tsung proscribed Buddhism and all monks and nuns, including Christians, were forced to return to private lives.

In the Sung Dynasty (960-1280), Christianity was barred from entering the domain of Sung emperors.

In the thirteenth century came the conquest by the Mongolians, which established the Yuan Dynasty for a brief time. Genghis Khan (1167-1227) having conquered Central Asia among whom many were Christians enlisted them in his armies. He married one of his sons to a Christian Kerait princess, who became the mother of Kublai Khan (1216-94), the first Mongol emperor of China and founder of the Yuan Dynasty (1213-1368).

She lived and died in the faith and two of her sons (not Kublai Khan) became Christians. According to Marco Polo, the great Khan himself was sometimes minded to embrace Christianity but refrained for political reasons. Kublai Khan protected Christianity and several other religions under his reign.

With the breakup of the Mongol empire and the rise of Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Christianity diminished in the history of China, coinciding with the decline of the Church through Middle East and Central Asia by the rapid advance of Islam.

It was not until the latter part of Ching (Manchus) Dynasty that various revolutionary groups began to fight the Manchus. Dr Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) who was committed to the Christian faith was one of the leading organizers of the revolution. When the Manchus Dynasty fell on February 12, 1912, Dr Sun was appointed president of a provisional government with Yuan Shih-kai assuming presidency of the revolutionary republic. After the discovery of Yuan Shih-kai's intention to establish a new dynasty with himself as its first emperor, Dr Sun led his party in revolt but failed and had to flee the country.

Sun later sought help from the Russians and formed an alliance with the Communists which precipitated the rise of Chiang Kai-shek. At the death of Sun in 1925, the alliance was broken by Chiang who in 1934 drove out the Communist base led by Mao Tse-tung in South China. A temporary truce was however agreed between the Nationalists (Sun's party) and the Communists to form a united front against Japanese in the Second World War. When that wave ended in 1945, internal fighting resumed. The Nationalists were defeated and on October 1, 1949, Mao Tse-tung inaugurated the People's Republic of China.

Despite the seemingly unpleasant events, statistics were found in these periods that Christianity grew even more rapidly. Many turned to God in the midst of sufferings. Even before the Communist Revolution by Mao in 1949, hundreds of thousands of Chinese believers were associated with several thousand house meetings.

Between 1954 and 1958, the government appointed Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) which was formed after the Revolution, began to arrest pastors and church leaders who did not conform to TSPM for charge of being 'unpatriotic' to the government. Wong Ming Dao and Watchman Nee, two dynamic preachers, were both imprisoned at that time. By the end of 1958, only TSPM churches remained and many Christians lived in fear of being watched, questioned and imprisoned. Some even renounced their faith.

With the death of Mao Tse-tung in 1976 and the rise of Deng Xiao-ping, there was a little more religious freedom. Under Deng, Wong Ming Dao was released, and in 1979 it was declared that to worship is legal. However propaganda was forbidden. Persecution to this day has not completely ceased but through this, the Church began to grow even more rapidly.

INDIA

There is an ancient Christian community in the state of Kerala (in the south) known as the 'Church of Saint Thomas' familiarly called the Syrian Christian community in India. A long-standing tradition says that the apostle Thomas brought the gospel to this regime in AD52, founded churches in seven different places, and gained converts even from the highest Hindu caste, the Brahmins. Later, according to tradition, Thomas crossed over to the east coast of South India and converted large numbers of people to the Christian faith. Because of this, the apostle was martyred by the Hindus on a small hill eight miles from the city of Madras. This hill is to this day known as Saint Thomas Mount.

Roman Catholicism arrived in India in 1542 with Francis Xavier representing the king of Portugal with considerable power and right to correspond with the king of India. Christianity was part of the political equipment of the Portuguese government and Xavier used his powers to appeal for support of the government in his missionary work. With the help of imperfect interpreters, he worked out a rough translation of Christian literatures. Xavier in one of his letters mentioned that in just a month he baptized more than ten thousand people. With him, Roman Catholicism was rapidly spread. He was

succeeded by Robert de Nobili in his work in India after Xavier left India in 1552.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century, due to the decline of Portuguese power, the spread of Roman Catholicism began to diminish.

William Carey arrived India on November 11, 1793 and was the first to bring Protestant Christianity to India. During his lifetime, he produced more than two hundred thousand Bibles and Scripture tracts in forty different Indian languages and dialects.

Today, Christianity in India is still of the lowest recorded percentage in comparison to other religions. Besides the identified groups of people in India, there are also unidentified tribal and ethnic groups not accounted.

ASIA

The church history in Asia encompasses many more countries than what is mentioned in this article. As we begin to understand more about the Christian outreach in Asia, let us all pray for the greater widespread of Christianity in these countries and for the missionaries who are reaching out to them. Let us pray for peace to prevail in Asia and for the liberalization of governments to allow the sharing of the gospel.

SOURCE OF INFORMATION

The historical records of events in this article are based on authentic accounts and documentation from various sources obtained through collective research. The author wishes to specially thank the following parties for their contribution of crucial information: Asia Evangelistic Fellowship (Singapore), Asian Center for Missionary Education (Philippines), Chinese Church Research Center (Hong Kong), Christian Nationals Evangelism Commission (Singapore), and Overseas Missionary Fellowship (Singapore).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barker, P. William (1977), *Who's Who in Church History*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

Dowley, Tim (ed) (1997), *The Lion Handbook: The History of Christianity*. Surry Hills, NSW: Lion Publishing.

Hoke, Donald (1975), "East Asia Millions", *The Church in Asia*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

Law, Gail (1982), *Chinese Churches Handbook*. Hong Kong: Chinese Coordination Centre of World Evangelism (CCOWE).

Copyright © 2005 Edmond Ng. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

The opinions expressed by authors may not necessarily reflect the opinion of FaithWriters.com.

This article has been read **444** times < Previous | Next >

Member Comments

Member	Date
Gregory Eckrich	31 Jan 2005
<p>Thank you for this informative history--a wonderful read. Let me suggest another source of Christian history in China: "The Lamb of God hidden in the ancient Chinese characters," by Kul Shin and Larry Howee. It can be found at www.answersingenesis.org. Last point: watch verb tense, 3rd paragraph, founded. Keep writing!</p>	

[Home](#) | [My Account](#) | [What's New](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Help](#) | [Feedback](#) | [Monthly Newsletter](#)
[SITE INFO](#) | [Link To Us](#) | [Become A Member](#) | [SHARE FaithWriters!](#) | [ADVERTISING](#)

© FaithWriters.com. [All rights reserved.](#)

FaithWriters.com Free Christian Articles -Your place
for Christian articles, Christian poems, Christian stories and much more.

[Make A Website](#) [Website Builder](#) [Build Website](#) [Build A Website](#)
[Resell Ebooks](#) [Home Business](#) [Sell Ebooks](#) [Ebook Business](#)