

MISSIONARY ATLAS PROJECT

ASIA

North Korea

Snapshot

Name: North Korea is officially known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), which in Korean is “*Chosun Minchu-chui Inmin Konghwa-guk.*”

Population: North Korea’s population is estimated to be: 23,113,019 (July 2006 est.)

Independence: 15 August 1945 (from Japan)

Urbanization: In 1965, the population of North Koreans living in urban areas was approximately 45%.



Picture of Flag:

Location: Eastern Asia, northern half of the Korean Peninsula bordering the Korea Bay and the Sea of Japan, between China and South Korea

Religion

The vast majority is non-religious (atheists). Many follow the cultural idea of *juche* and others hold to traditional beliefs.

Government interaction with religion;

Supposed religious freedom is replaced by government persecution of Christianity and the rejection of Christian groups.

North Korea

Country Profile

Basic Facts

Name

North Korea is officially known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), which in Korean is "*Chosun Minchu-chui Inmin Konghwa-guk.*"
Conventional short form: North Korea (*Choson*)

Demographics

North Korea's population is estimated to be: 23,113,019 (July 2006 est.)

Ethnically, North Korea is very homogenous. The only substantial minority is the approximately 17,000 Mandarin Chinese. There is also a small number (5,000 to 7,000) of Halh Mongolian and Russian people with a few other individuals representing foreign businesses and governments.

The population growth rate is approximately 0.84% (2006 est.). The age breakdown is:
0-14 years: 23.8% (male 2,788,944/female 2,708,331)
15-64 years: 68% (male 7,762,442/female 7,955,522)
65 years and over: 8.2% (male 667,792/female 1,229,988) (2006 est.)

North Korea's population is estimated to be less than half of that of South Korea's, but has more than doubled in size compared to what it was at the end of the Korean War in 1953.

Life expectancy is approximately 71.37 years, and the median age is 31.74 years old.

The birth rate is 16.09 births to 1,000 people while the death rate is estimated to be 7.05 deaths to 1,000 people.

Infant mortality is 24.04 deaths to every 1,000 live births.

Overall fertility is estimated to be 2.15 children born per woman.

Blind population: 110,000

Urbanization:

In 1965, the population of North Koreans living in urban areas was approximately 45%. By the year 2000, the urban population had grown to around 63%. Also in the year 2000,

the capitol city, Pyongyang, had a population of 2,484,000 and a metropolitan population of 2,726,000.

Other large cities include Hamhung, with 670,000 inhabitants; Ch'ongjin, with 530,000; Kaesong has 310,000; and Sinuiju has 330,000.

The vast majority of North Korea's population is concentrated in the country's plains and lowlands, which are primarily located in the North and South P'yngan provinces, Pyongyang's municipal district, and in the urban area of Hamhng-Hngnam as well as the surrounding Hamgyng Province.

The mountainous Chagang and Yanggang provinces, which are adjacent to the Chinese border, are the least populated regions in North Korea.

It has been estimated that North Korea's average population density is 167 people per square kilometer and ranges from 1,178 people per square kilometer in the Pyongyang Municipality to 44 people per square kilometer in Yanggang Province. In contrast, the average overall population density of South Korea is 425 persons per square kilometer (1989).

Since the end of the Korean War, both North and South Korea have experienced significant urban migration. In 1953 estimates claimed that only 17.7 percent of the North's population lived in urban areas. In contrast, statistics gathered in 1987 revealed that this number had grown to approximately 59.6 percent. Two possible variants to this are that: (1) that North Korea considers settlements as small as 20,000 people as urban (while South Korea begins at 50,000 and up), and that communities in urban areas who engage in agriculture are listed as rural.

Between 1953 and 1960 the urban population grew between 12 and 20 percent annually, but slowed to around 3 percent between 1970 and 1987. In 1987 11.5 percent of the population lived in Pyongyang. Currently, migration to cities is monitored and controlled by the government so as to maintain a relatively balanced distribution of people within the provincial centers in relation to Pyongyang.

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Worldmark: Encyclopedia of the Nations: Asia & Oceania. Gale Group: Farmington Hills. 2001. pp. 281-292)

Religion

The majority of North Koreans consider themselves non-religious / atheist 64%
Small groups of Buddhists, Confucians, and indigenous religions *Cult of Kim II-sung / Kim Jong-il* with its concept of *Juche* serves as religion for many
Shamanism remains important to some.

Evangelical Christians, in the face of persecution, are around 2 % of the people while Roman Catholics are under 1 %.

Language

Korean is the primary language spoken in North Korea. Other minority languages include Mandarin Chinese, Halh Mongolian, and Russian among their respective minority groups.

North Korea has no indigenous minorities, and aside from regional dialects, Koreans are as linguistically homogeneous as they are racially homogeneous. While dialects certainly exist in North Korea, the Korean which is spoken throughout the peninsula is equally comprehensible. In North Korea, the phonetic alphabet (Hangul) is used exclusively for writing.

Hangul was created under the great King Sejong in 1443 and was utilized alongside Chinese characters from that point on. Originally consisting of 14 consonants and 10 vowels, it was later expanded to 19 consonants and 21 vowels. Hangul, along with Chinese characters, constituted the Korean language throughout the peninsula until it was restricted by the Japanese in 1910 that then imposed Japanese as the official language.

Following the end of World War II, and once the DPRK was established in 1949, Hangul (called *Choson Muntcha*) was re-implemented for writing. North Korean linguists have studied Hangul extensively, publishing comprehensive dictionaries in 1963 and 1969. In 1964, Kim Il-sung called for the purification of the Korean language by purging it of all borrowed words from English and Japanese, and replacing them with native Korean or familiar Chinese terms. Traditional honorifics of polite language remain very much in use, though in simplified forms, and are formally sanctioned by the government.

Official estimates claim that 91 to 99% of all North Korean adults (age 15 and over) are able to read and write in the Korean language. From ages four to fifteen, North Koreans of both genders are required to gain a technical education which is provided by the government.

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Society/Culture

Society in general --North Korea is a highly secretive state and has been described by some as a Stalinist nightmare. North Korea remains strictly quarantined from outside influences, and its despotic ruler, Kim Jong-il, oversees one of the most repressive regimes in the world and his regime is regularly accused of shocking human rights abuses. Life is hard for the 23 million North Koreans, and especially for the rural populations who are still struggling to recover from the famine of the 1990s.

North Koreans have very little contact with outsiders, even in Pyongyang which is relatively affluent and modernized. Even though small numbers of foreign tourist and businessmen frequent the capitol city, it may cause unease among North Koreans who are used to having every aspect of their daily lives scrutinized by the government. Though the North Koreans do have media outlets, including news papers, radio and television stations, all of these are controlled by the central government. In fact, the media coverage is rarely contentious and primarily serves as the government's mouthpiece.

To this end, all radios (which have not been smuggled in to the country) are pre-set to pick up only the government channels. As a result, information is highly restricted. Even travel from city to city requires necessary permits, and even if people are able to obtain proper documentation, means of transportation are very limited. There is very little in the way of domestic air services and personal automobiles. Also, there are no bus systems. Ultimately, trains constitute the main form of travel, but are barely maintained due to the constant shortage fuel.

There are substantial challenges faced by foreigners wishing to enter North Korea, and most westerners will never be granted a visa. In fact, all prospective visitors must submit their passport, resume, and a letter from their current employer well in advance of their requested visit. The best chance for gaining a visa will probably include a visit to the tourism office at the North Korean Embassy in Beijing, China, since their embassies give out fewer visas. If they are given, visas are often granted quickly.

North Korea is a mono-racial country and strongly exclusive of other races, especially of other Asians. They have a strong cultural identity as one ethnic family speaking one language (Korean).

Juche, the definitive ideology utilized in North Korea for life, government, and politics, is a significant break with its Confucian past. Developed by Kim Il-sung during the period of revolutionary struggle against Japanese imperialism, Juche emphasizes the importance of the nation developing its nation's potential by using its own reserves and resources by its own human creativity. Juche "self reliance," legitimizes cultural, political, and economic isolationism. By stressing the need to avoid becoming excessively "international" and by limiting the imitation of other countries, Juche promotes a rigid ideal of self-reliance. As early as the 1970s, Kim Jong-il declared Juche to be superior to all other systems of human thought, apparently also Marxism.

With regard to daily life, the result of *Juche* thought is the relentless emphasis on self-sacrifice and hard work. The North Korean population is told that anything can be accomplished by dedication and the proper revolutionary spirit. This is manifested in the unending "speed battles" initiated by the leadership to drastically increase all sorts of industrial productivity. Another bizarre example of this is the "drink no soup movement," which apparently was designed to limit workers' need to use the bathroom. Beyond this, *Juche* provides a "proper" standard for creating or judging art, literature, drama, and music. It also serves as the philosophical underpinning for North Korea's educational system.

Though the current government has sought to uproot Confucianism from the North Korean society, its influence has remained at least as a cultural undercurrent. Confucian character is reflected in its emphasis on devotion to family, hierarchical authority, and vertical relationships. Confucianism is based on Five Relationships that prescribe behavior between ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, old and young, and between friends (for more information of these relationships see <http://www.globaled.org/chinaproject/confucian.html>). Once a person falls into these relationships, there is incredible devotion. For things deemed worthy--family, friends, company, causes--Koreans will give their utmost.

Korean traditional music shares many similarities with Japan and China, with an emphasis on stringed instruments. The "*Chongak*" and "*minsogak*" are the two primary forms of music. The former is statelier while the latter is generally considered folk in style. Along with their various traditional styles of music, Koreans also have several folk dances. These include Drum dances, Mask dances, Monk dances, and Spirit Cleansing dances.

In addition to these, there is traditional painting and calligraphy. Traditionally, sculptures are influenced by Buddhism, and take the form of statues or pagodas. While these traditional elements linger, the North Korean regime has so imposed its socialist and *Juche* ideals upon the society the communistic view of art and life are dominant. For example, realism dominates most North Korean art, and generally seeks to propagandize its viewers with nationalism and devotion to the "Great" and "Dear" leaders.

The traditional Korean national costume is called "*hanbok*," and is sometimes worn during national holidays and festivals. These costumes are brightly colored and hide body shape.

North Koreans eat mostly rice, occasionally supplemented by fish, vegetables, or fruit. The national dish is kimchi, a highly spiced mixture of Chinese cabbage, white radishes, and various other vegetables. The Koreans have developed a variety of recipes for *kimchi* with various ingredients. The most famous *kimchi* is very spicy. Rice cakes are another important part of Korean food. They are often shared with neighbors or friends in times of happiness or sorrow. Rice cakes are a part of several Korean customs and traditions.

While socialism promises a classless society which eliminates oppression, the reality is that an incredible amount of social inequality is the norm in North Korea. All resources are officially allocated by the state, and inequalities are justified in terms of the political and economic imperatives of the state. While the average person living in North Korea has suffered famine and starvation, Kim Jong-il has lived a life of opulence and ease. Equally important, in regard to social stratification, is a small but clearly defined elite within the ruling KWP party living a privileged life as their own class in North Korea. They experience a relatively high standard of living, and have access to many consumer goods not available to the common people.

The total membership in the ruling KWP as of 1987 was estimated at over 3 million, which is almost 15 percent of the estimated population of 20.3 million at that time. A politically "clean" background is required for membership in the party, and given the KWP's status as revolutionary "vanguard," these individuals clearly constitute an elite class. Party membership is clearly the only real path to upward social mobility. Only Party members are allowed certain opportunities such as university attendance for them and their children.

Although Japan had invested in and promoted some industrialization in the northern part of its Korean colony during the Japanese occupation, most Koreans subsisted in an agrarian society before 1945. However, North Korea's industrialization following the Korean War transformed the nature of work and occupational categories. During the 1980s, the labor force was divided into four categories: "workers," employed in state-owned enterprises; "farmers," working on agricultural collectives; "officials," performing non-manual jobs including teachers, technicians, health-care workers, civil servants, and KWP cadres; and workers employed in "cooperative industrial units," made up of a small number of individuals who work in a restricted private sector ranging from collectivized farms to the black market. While farmers' markets exist in areas, the black market is not likely to grow large enough to create a sizable class of smugglers and entrepreneurs.

Food and other life necessities are strictly rationed. In fact, different occupational groups are reported to receive differing kinds and qualities of goods. As of the late 1980s, consumption of beef and pork was largely restricted to the middle and upper class. Ordinary people generally had no access to meat other than dog meat, which was not rationed. The only real exception to the meat ration is made during the New Year's holiday, Kim Il-sung's birthday, and other national holidays, where pork is rationed to all. Also, it has been reported that the regime has actively encouraged sons to enter the occupations of their fathers, promoting "job succession" as a popular virtue in North Korea.

Another area of social inequality involves housing. It is reported that North Korea has five types of standardized housing, which are allocated according to rank. Those with the highest rank - the party and state elite - live in one or two-story detached homes. An estimated sixty percent of the population, consisting of farmers and ordinary workers, live in multi-unit dwellings of no more than one or two rooms (including the kitchen).

Family background, as it regards political and ideological criteria, is extremely crucial to one's social status and standard of living. The children of revolutionaries, and those who died in the Korean War, are shown preference for educational opportunities and advancement. Illegitimate children are also favored, since they are raised their entire lives in state-run nurseries and schools and are seen as being free of the corruption of traditionally minded parents.

On the other hand, the descendants of the "exploiting class" - those people who cooperated with the Japanese during the colonial era, opposed the agricultural collectivization of the 1950s, or were associated in any way with those who have ever fled to South Korea - are discriminated against. These individuals are considered "contaminated" by the bad influences of their parents and associates. Relatives of defectors to South Korea are especially despised and are labeled as "bad elements." Despite their intellectual qualifications, these people are often denied admission to any institutions of higher education.

According to international human rights organizations at work in the country, people with physical handicaps appear to be subject to a great degree of discrimination, except for disabled veterans of the Korean War. Reports claim that no disabled people are allowed to enter or live in Pyongyang, and that any disabled people found in the city are periodically sought out and expelled by the police. This also includes dwarfs, who are forced to live in special settlements in a rural and remote area.

The legal age for men to marry is eighteen years and women can marry at seventeen. However, it is common for people to wait to marry until their late twenties and early thirties, because of work and military obligations. This trend seems to also affect the country's fertility rates. Marriages were traditionally arranged, but that has largely disappeared in favor of "love marriages." Most marriages these days seem to be between people in the same urban enterprise or rural cooperative. Nevertheless, it is still common for children to seek their parents' permission before getting married. Polygamy (the traditional practice of taking a second wife) is prohibited by law. Marital bonds have been so strong in the past that divorce was infrequent - even unthinkable. Today, however, the divorce rate among the educated urban Korean is steadily increasing and divorce is no longer seen as a disgrace.

In households where both parents work, and no grandparents live nearby, infants over three months are usually placed in state-run nurseries where they remain until they are four years old. Although these nurseries are not part of the compulsory education system, many families utilize them. These nurseries function in two main ways that serve the North Korean regime: they enlarge the work force, as more women are "freed" to return to work, and it also provides that state with the earliest stages of ideological indoctrination. In these "nurseries," the foundations of a thorough ideological and political education are laid. One South Korean source reported that when meals are served to these infants, they are expected to give thanks to the ever present portrait of "Father Kim Il-sung" for his gracious provision for them. These children are taught from the earliest age, that Kim Il-sung is their father, and that the government is their mother.

Education for the Korean is free and mandatory for the first 11 years (this includes a year of preschool), and during their summer vacations, students must work for the state.

While his motives can be debated, Kim Il-sung has vigorously promoted traditional Korean art and culture. Promoting his agenda involved convincing the North Koreans that they were ethnically superior to all other cultures, that North Korea was the greatest country in the world, and that Kim Il-sung was by far the greatest man to have ever lived. Thus, North Korea actually has a wealth of traditional Korean culture to experience, including pottery, paintings, sculptures, architecture, and music.

The use of art and literature in North Korea is primarily didactic. Cultural expression in North Korea serves only as an instrument for inculcating the Juche ideology, along with the need to continue the great revolutionary struggle and labor for the reunification of the Korean Peninsula under the authority of Pyongyang. Most contemporary cultural expression is hardly subtle, as "foreign imperialists," especially the Japanese and Americans, are portrayed as heartless monsters, and revolutionary heroes are depicted as saintly figures acting from the purest of motives. The three most consistent themes in North Korean art and literature are martyrdom during the revolutionary struggle, the happiness of the current society, and the genius and benevolence of the "Great" and "Dear" leaders – the two Kims.

Kim Il-sung portrayed himself as a writer of "classical masterpieces" during the struggle against Japanese imperialism, and created several novels "under his direction." Several titles include *The Sea of Blood*, *The Flower Girl*, *The Song of Korea*, and *The Fate of a Self-Defense Corps Man*. These works are considered "prototypes and models" for Juche art and literature. During the last years of his life, Kim lived in semiretirement while writing his memoirs - "a heroic epic dedicated to the freedom and happiness of the people."

The state and the Korean Workers' Party (KWP) control all production of art and literature, and there remains no evidence of any underground cultural or literary movements similar to those that existed in the former Soviet Union or currently in China.

The general population of North Korea has little to no exposure to foreign cultural influences, apart from various song-and-dance group performances and other entertainers brought in periodically and for certain audiences. These performances, however, are propaganda displays meant to show that all the peoples and countries of the world, like the North Korean citizens themselves, love and revere the "great leader." Under his father's rule, Kim Jong-il had administrative responsibility for the country's cultural policy, and was credited by the North Korean media as having brought to the country a cultural renaissance unmatched in other countries of the world.

North Korean ethnographers have devoted a great deal of energy to restoring and reintroducing traditional cultural forms that have the appropriate "proletarian" or "folk" spirit, which also promotes and develops a collective consciousness. This is represented in lively, optimistic choreographic and musical expression. Choral singing and group

folk dances are traditionally practiced throughout Korea and are promoted in North Korean schools by the government. Pyongyang, among several other large cities, offers the broadest of a very narrow selection of cultural expression.

Motion pictures also play a central role in the “social education” of the masses and are used to promote the government’s agenda.

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<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php>

Religious holidays ~

North Korea does not celebrate Christmas or the Lunar New Year. Along with these, North Korea does not share many of South Korea’s major holidays either. Typical of other Communist countries, there are no official religious holidays.

Holidays North Korea celebrates include:

New Year’s Day	January 1
Kim Jong-il’s Birthday	February 16
International Women’s Day	March 8
Kim II-sung’s Birthday	April 15
May Day	May 1
Liberation Day	August 15
National Foundation Day	September 9
Founding of the Korean Workers’ Party	October 10
Anniversary of the Constitution	December 27

As a major part of certain holidays (especially May Day and Liberation Day), North Korea generally orchestrates enormous parades and mass gymnastic extravaganzas. North Korea marked its 49th anniversary with a new dynastic calendar based on the year Kim II-sung was born. This is the era of Juche and is now the official calendar/year marker for the state, which counts from the year 1912AD.

http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/north_east_asia/north_korea/facts.htm

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<http://www.persecution.com/members/countryMap/dspDetails.cfm?CountryID=34>

Major similarities to western culture

Though life in several major cities, like Pyongyang, is viewed by some as relatively technological and modern, very few similarities actually exist between North Korean and Western cultures. North Korea's major cities have been likened to other large, East Asian cities, but even here the similarities are few.

Current events that are pertinent to missions work

North Koreans have suffered harsh treatment at the hands of their government. The average North Korean experiences horrific living conditions - prices are high and many people are starving. An estimated 2 to 3 million people have died during the past 10 years due to famine and food shortages, and it is reported that 15% of all children under the age of 5 years old are malnourished.

In 2005, it was reported that there are between 100,000 and 250,000 internally displaced people within North Korea, due primarily to the ongoing famine and to government repression. In the last three years, over 100,000 North Koreans have fled to China and there are about 200,000 ethnic Korean Christians who live in the Chinese provinces bordering North Korea. Many Christians attempt to shelter the escapees, sharing the gospel with them in hideouts and safe-houses. Any Chinese citizens caught harboring Korean refugees can be severely punished, and the refugees are generally forcibly repatriated by the Chinese government. Refugees who remain in China are at great risk of abuse, since the local population can threaten to turn them in at any time. As a result, an estimated 70-90% of all North Korean women in China are victimized by trafficking and forced into sexual slavery. (Read more here: [The Invisible Exodus](http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/northkorea) which is about North Koreans in the People's Republic of China, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/northkorea>).

The North Koreans returned to their country face cruel torture, imprisonment and even execution. In fact, there are currently tens of thousands of Christians who are currently serving endless sentences in North Korean gulags where fifteen years is considered a life sentence and the average life expectancy in prison is estimated at three years. Often, believers are publicly executed and suffer regular and intense torture. Kim Jong-il believes that Christians destroy socialist societies and, accordingly, he harshly opposes them. In fact, the two Kim's are responsible for the imprisonment or murder of all known Christian leaders in North Korea's history. Despite these dangers, converted North Korean escapees often return to their home country as missionaries, and at an extreme risk to their own lives.

The following is an excerpt of the regime's propaganda as seen in the pages of an official North Korean dictionary:

“Church – An organization that spread poisonous anti-government ideas to take the people's rights away, disguised as a religious activity. Bible – A book written of the false Christian religion to deceive. Heaven – A false world created to trick or lie that a person will live better after death. Jesus – An idol of this faith who is proposed to be the son of God. God – Falsified One who said that He created nature, society and destiny. Cross – A wooden symbol that resembles the grace and love that the uncouth believers of Jesus use.”

Since the famine in the mid-1990's, reports have slowly leaked out of the country about people surviving by eating grass and tree bark, and in some extreme situations, by cannibalism as human flesh has even been sold in open markets. All cats, dogs, and even many rats were reportedly eaten during the height of the famine, in a desperate attempt to survive. These events have led North Korea's isolationist government to begrudgingly open its borders to humanitarian aid from foreign countries. While the situation remains volatile, a number of Christian organizations have been able to work even within the country. In order to get the Bible into the country, several organizations float "scripture balloons" across the border by night, and Voice of the Martyrs claims to have launched hundreds of thousands of these balloons over the last twenty years. They also train Korean pastors and evangelists who return to their home country, smuggle Bibles, help families of martyrs, and produce gospel radio broadcasts and smuggle in radios set to these channels.

Often described as its own enormous prison, North Korea is actually home to a great many gulags and prison camps. Criminal punishment is not limited to the "offender" alone, since up to three generations of their family can be imprisoned as well. North Koreans can be imprisoned for any state-defined crime, including, but not limited to, being a Christian, making negative comments about the regime, failing to keep a picture of the two Kims in their home (or of not keeping the picture clean enough), leaving the country without government permission, and more. What is worse than the looming and arbitrary threat of arrest, are the egregious and severe violations of human rights that are commonplace within the North Korean penal system. These human rights abuses include: a systematic use of torture, the use of public and private executions, using prisoners (humans) for chemical and biological weapons testing and research, arbitrary and brutal imprisonment, a complete lack of due process of law, extreme nutritional deprivation and starvation, the use of a caste system (which operates in the society as well), extreme nationalism and racism, and regular forced abortions.

It is estimated that over 200,000 prisoners are currently being held in just five of the 12 prison camps within the country, and the number of additional prisoners, imprisoned in the other known and unknown prisons, is not known. Some of these prisons are even believed to be built completely underground. These political prisoners are terrorized by the constant threat of execution, and all of the known prisons have facilities capable of killing every prisoner rapidly – in case the country was invaded and needed to close their prison.

The North Korean State Security Agency maintains at least 12 political prisons and an estimated 30 re-education and forced labor camps. Some of these camps are similar in size to the population of many United States counties, and at least two of them are actually larger in area than the District of Columbia. In the last thirty years, an estimated 500,000 people have perished in the huge network of North Korean jails, prison camps, and underground secret construction projects. Prisoners are forced to endure extremely hard labor, but are only given below subsistence levels of food and nourishment. A great many prisoners are literally worked to death, as they succumb to starvation and disease

due to malnourishment. For survival, many prisoners must catch and eat anything they can find, such as snakes, frogs, rats, worms, grass, and even certain types of clay.

Read more about life inside North Korea from the perspective of an American defector at:
http://www.feer.com/articles/2004/0409_09/free/exclusive1.html and
<http://www.time.com/time/asia/magazine/article/0,13673,501041213-880313,00.html>

Current International disputes:

China seeks to stem illegal migration of tens of thousands of North Koreans escaping famine, economic privation, and political oppression. North Korea and China dispute the sovereignty of certain islands in Yalu and Tumen Rivers and a section of boundary around Paektu-san (mountain) is indefinite. The Military Demarcation Line within the 4-km wide Demilitarized Zone has separated North Korea from South Korea since 1953. There are periodic maritime disputes with South Korea over the Northern Limit Line. North Korea supports South Korea in rejecting Japan's claim to Liancourt Rocks (Tok-do/Take-shima).”

North Korean “Caste System”

The whole population of North Korea is broken down into a veritable caste system, depending on “social origin,” and is divided into 51 groups that form three strata: the “main,” the “wavering” or “uncertain”, and the “hostile.”

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Government

Government Type: Communist state - authoritarian socialist one-man dictatorship.

Head of State: Eternal President Kim II-sung

Head of Government: Chairman of the National Defense Commission (highest post held by a living person) Kim Jong-il”

Capital: Pyongyang

Independence: August 15, 1945 (from Japan)

Constitution: Adopted 1948. It was completely revised on December 27, 1972, again in April of 1992, and most recently in September 1998.

The North Korean Constitution officially gives political power to the people, but in reality, all political power really belongs to the Communist Party. While the constitution guarantees such rights as freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of religion, the truth is that North Koreans actually have very little freedom in these areas, among others.

Legal system: Based on the German civil law system and greatly influenced by Japanese and Communist legal theory, there exists no judicial review of legislative acts. In fact, the North Korean Penal Code is notorious for being one of the most draconian legal and penal systems in the world. Gulags, officially called “re-education centers,” house hundreds of thousands of political prisoners as well as other convicts. The Communist Party exercises complete control over all aspects of the criminal justice system and the judiciary. Judges are generally instructed by the whims of the government to impose certain types of punishment in each case. Defense attorneys, though sometimes provided, do not serve as representatives for the accused. Rather, they are representatives of the court. Defense attorneys are expected to assist the accused to confess their crimes.

Executive branch: *Chief of state:* Kim Jong-il (since July 1994)

Legislative branch: The Unicameral Supreme People's Assembly has 687 seats and the members are to be selected in popular elections for five-year terms. The last elections were held on August 3, 2003 and will be held again in August 2008. The ruling party approves a select list of candidates who are voted on, and always elected without opposition.

Judicial branch: Judges for the Central Court are elected, or appointed, by the Supreme People's Assembly.

Political parties and leaders: The major party is the Korean Workers' Party (KWP), lead by Kim Jong-il, and while there actually are several minority parties, they are all controlled by the KWP.

Diplomatic representation in the US: There is no diplomatic representation in the United States, other than the North Korean Permanent Mission to the United Nations that is in New York.

Diplomatic representation from the US: None. However, the Swedish Embassy in Pyongyang represents the United States as consular protecting power.

Politics and governmental structure in North Korea revolves around one man – Kim Jong-il. Accordingly, all political management is highly personalized and is based on loyalty to Kim II-sung and the Korean Workers' Party. The primary unique features of North Korean politics include the cult of personality devoted to the two Kim's, nepotism

within the Kim family, and a strong influence of former military leaders and anti-Japanese partisan veterans. Little else is known about the actual in working of the reclusive and isolated regime, and in fact, most of what is known has come from information provided by defectors over the years.

Illicit drugs and counterfeiting: Over the last thirty years, a growing number of North Korean citizens have been apprehended abroad for trafficking narcotics illegally. In fact, many of these individuals have been official diplomatic employees of the government. Recently, two delegates were arrested in Turkey during December of 2004. In recent years, police investigations in Japan and Taiwan have linked North Korea to large shipments of methamphetamines and heroin. In April of 2003, a North Korean merchant ship attempted to deliver 150 kg of heroin to Australia.

Along with these arrests, \$50 million worth of U.S. currency has been confiscated overseas and this also largely from North Korean diplomats. Unfortunately, these offenders are generally protected by diplomatic immunity. The North Korean government is believed to have the most complex and sophisticated counterfeiting system for counterfeiting U.S. currency in the world. Most observers believe that Kim Jong-il uses this money and the money he makes from these illicit transactions to fill a personal slush fund that enables him to buy and maintain loyalty and power within the KWP and North Korean military hierarchy. In fact, the U.S.'s ability to track and freeze a great deal of these illegal assets has seemingly been tied to the North's more recent shows of hostility.

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<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/kn.html>

http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/north_east_asia/north_korea/

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php>

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Economy

Overview

North Korea has one of the most centrally planned and isolated socialist economies in the world. Due to desperate economic conditions, the country is in a veritable free fall economically, suffering recent growth rates between -5% and 1%. Following years of underinvestment and a shortage of spare parts, the industrial facilities are almost beyond repair since large-scale military spending consumes most of the available resources needed for investment and civilian consumption. This intense focus on militarization, attempts to develop nuclear weapons and technology, and the ending of aid from the former USSR and China have also contributed to North Korea's economic woes and fosters a growing black market economy. As a result, industrial and power outputs are in a continual state of decline and the nation is now in its 11th year of food shortages despite an increased harvest in 2005. While massive flooding in the mid-1990's initially brought

on famine and starvation, the problem truly has to do more with on-going and systemic government distribution policies, a lack of arable land, collective farming, and a continual fuel shortage.

Massive international food aid has allowed North Korea to escape mass starvation, but the population continues to suffer due to prolonged malnutrition and extremely poor living conditions. All agricultural land is collectivized, and state-owned industry produces most of the manufactured goods. In 2004, the regime formally allowed private "farmers markets" to begin selling a wider variety of goods, and also permitted some private farming experimentally, in hopes that it might boost the overall agricultural output. But in October 2005, Kim Jong-il reversed some of these policies, forbidding private sales of grains, and reinstated a centralized food rationing and distribution system. Despite this, the government may be gradually moving toward the 'family farm' concept employed by China which began to move away from agricultural collectivization as early as the early 1980s. Only time will tell how significantly these changes will be, and whether the regime will continue this policy.

As of December 2005, the regime reaffirmed its intention to eliminate all international humanitarian assistance operations in the country (stating rather that it would only accept developmental assistance). This, of course, would greatly restrict the activities of international and non-governmental aid organizations currently working in North Korea. The Communist government's overriding obsession for firm political control will continue to inhibit the loosening of economic regulations and stifle growth and development.

GDP (purchasing power parity): \$40 billion *Note:* since North Korea does not publish any reliable income data; this figure has been calculated based on various economic estimates (2005 est.); *real growth rate* between -5% and 1% (2005 est.); *per capita* income \$1,700 (2005 est.)

Industries: Military products, machine building, chemicals, electric power and chemicals Mining (coal, iron ore, graphite, magnesite, zinc, copper, lead and precious metals) and metallurgy, textiles and food processing, tourism

Exports: \$1.275 billion f.o.b. (2004 est.); *commodities* include minerals, metallurgical products, manufactures (including armaments), textiles and fishery products; *partners* include China 45.6%, South Korea 20.2%, Japan 12.9% (2004).

Imports:
\$2.819 billion (2004 est.); *commodities* include petroleum, grain, coking coal, textiles, machinery and equipment; *partners* include China 32.9%, Thailand 10.7%, Japan 4.8% (2004).

Humanitarian Needs

Over 3 million people died of starvation between 1994 and 2000 while the government stockpiled food rations for the military, refusing assistance on any but the strictest of terms. Floods brought on by deforestation continue to devastate what crops are left and reports of cannibalism and a nightmarish existence have gradually leaked out of the country. While some Christian organizations and individuals have been able to offer aid, they are never able to openly share the gospel.

<http://www.strategicnetwork.org/index.php?loc=kb&view=v&id=14613&fct=PRK&>

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“The alternative scenario for those escaping is that they are protected by missionaries. These individuals face a much better future. They are sheltered away from capture and are provided with food and clothes. Their lives are not easy as they still cannot live normally or provide for themselves, but they can live free from the violence and abuse they could otherwise expect to experience.

“North Koreans consider China a free and prosperous country. In their first encounter with the outside world many realize that the forced indoctrination and worship of North Korean leaders is false. While in the care of the missionaries they are taught about God for the first time in their lives and have their first opportunity to open their hearts to the gospel. <http://www.strategicnetwork.org/index.php?loc=kb&view=v&id=14613&fct=PRK&>

Other links:

<http://www.soonoklee.org/freenk.cgi>

<http://www.chosunjournal.com/>

<http://www.crossingbordersnk.org/>

<http://www.hrnk.org/hiddengulag/toc.html> (prison camps)

<http://reference.allrefer.com/country-guide-study/north-korea/north-korea62.html>

Literacy

Official estimates claim that 91% to 99% of all North Korean adults (age 15 and over) are able to read and write in the Korean language. From ages four to fifteen, North Koreans of both genders are required to gain a technical education which is provided by the government. Education beyond this level requires official Party approval.

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/kn.html>

http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=Korea%2C+North

Land/Geography

Set between the Yellow Sea and the Sea of Japan, North Korea is located in East Asia as the northern half of the Korean Peninsula. North Korea shares its northern border with China, and its far northeastern border with Russia. North Korea is bordered in the south by South Korea at the 38th parallel. This is the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and is extremely fortified. North Korea's geographic coordinates are: 40 00 N, 127 00 E and it has a total area of 1,297,482 sq miles (1,296,083 sq miles of land and 1,399 sq miles of water). In contrast, North Korea is slightly smaller than the state of Mississippi and barely larger than South Korea.

North Korea is extremely mountainous and has a complex system of ranges generally running in a northeastern to southwestern direction. As a result, North Korea is approximately 80% uninhabitable (compared with 70% in South Korea). Nangnim-sanmaek, in the north central region, is the most prominent mountain range, and at 9,003 feet, Mount Paektu is the highest peak on the peninsula and is a part of the Chinese border. The soils in the mountainous regions are relatively infertile, generally lacking the basic organic materials needed for cultivation. Nearly all of the major rivers rise in the mountains and flow west to the Yellow Sea. Only about one-fifth of its total area is made up of lowlands and these are largely confined to the country's western coast and the several broad river valleys of the west. Fertile soils are found in these river valleys. The longest river, the Yalu, forms part of the border with China. Other streams include the Taedong, Ch'öng-ch'ön, and Chaeryöng rivers. Of the major rivers only the Tumen flows to the eastern coast to empty into the Sea of Japan (also known as the East Sea).

North Korea has a continental climate with four seasons. Average temperatures for Pyongyang are:

Spring (March to May) 59°F

Summer (June to August) 84°F with high humidity. July and August are the rainy seasons.

Autumn (September to November) 55°F

Winter (December to February) 10°F. The temperature usually does not get below -22°F, but it is windy in the winter.

Annual precipitation in most parts of the country is about 40 inches and is concentrated in the summer months.

The weather is similar to South Korea's, only colder and drier in winter. Most of the rain falls from July to September, but autumn is drier with crisp, bright days and cool nights. The winters are long and very frigid -making travel questionable at best. Summers are generally hot and humid with lots of rain.

www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/kn.html

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761555092/Korea_North.html

http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/north_east_asia/north_korea/environment.htm

http://w3.whosea.org/general/info_dprk.htm#Weather <http://reference.allrefer.com/country-guide-study/north-korea/north-korea30.html> <http://reference.allrefer.com/country-guide-study/north-korea/north-korea31.html>

History

Early History

Koreans of both North and South Korea share distinctive Mongolian features and are believed to be the descendants of a single racial group though documented history begins in the 12th century and legends go back even further. Throughout most of their history the people of the Korean peninsula have been fighting off invaders or paying tributes for protection. Korea has been invaded at least 900 times in the 2,000 years of recorded history. There is a story of invasion and influence by the larger powers and nations that surround them. There is the story of a people who have incredible pride for sustaining themselves and their culture through time and affliction.

Koreans are descendants of the *Tungusic* tribal people. Korean folklore dates their birth around 2333 BC by the god-king *Tangun*, the offspring of a bear-woman and the son of the king of the heavens (for the full story see <http://www.clickasia.co.kr/about/m1.htm>).

Documented history begins in the 12th century BC when a Chinese scholar, *Ki-Tze*, founded a colony in *Pyongyang*. By AD 313 there were three kingdoms existent on the peninsula: the *Koguryo* kingdom in the north near the *Yalu River*, the *Paekche* kingdom in the southwest, and the *Silla* kingdom in the southeast. Each of these kingdoms was advanced for their time and had compiled a written history during the 4th-6th centuries. Also, Buddhism came to the Korean peninsula at this time.

Kingdom Rule of Korea

In AD 668 the kingdom of *Silla* conquered *Koguryo* and *Paekche*, unifying the peninsula. This resulting kingdom is referred to as the unified *Silla Kingdom* and lasted from 668 to 935 AD. During this time, Buddhism became dominant and the arts flourished, resulting in palaces, pagodas, and pleasure gardens. Also, Confucianism was introduced from China at this time.

In 935, *Wang Kon* overthrew *Silla* and established the *Koryo Dynasty*. *Koryo* is an abbreviated form of *Koguryo* and is the source for the current name, "Korea". *Koryo* rule lasted from 935 to 1392. During this time literature was cultivated. Buddhism remained the state religion, but Confucianism controlled the pattern of government. 30 years of sporadic war began in 1231, when the Mongols invaded from China. Finally, *Koryo* kings accepted Mongol rule resulting in a period of *Koryo* and Mongol rule. The Mongols used Koreans to attack Japan.

While the *Ming dynasty* was overtaking the Mongols in China, there was a revolt and disorder in Korea. This resulted in new leadership for Korea. *General Yi Song-gye*

assumed the throne, adopting the name *Choson* for Korea. He moved the capital from *Kaesong* (the capital since 918) to *Seoul*. The *Yi dynasty* lasted from 1392 - 1910. During this time Korea was actually independent, but acknowledged China as their big brother within the “tribute” system. Also, Confucianism was established as the state religion at this time. During the mid-15th century, the Korean phonetic alphabet, *Hangul*, and printing with moveable type were developed.

But by 1500, factionalism divided the kingdom and the rulers were not prepared to defend their kingdom from their neighbors. Japan, under *Hideyoshi Toyotomi*, invaded Korea in 1592 and 1597. Then Korea was invaded by the *Manchus* in 1636 and became a vassal state and was under the control of the *Manchu dynasty* in China. There was a short-lived intellectual and cultural revival led by two kings, *Yongjo* and *Chongjo*, in the 18th century.

The following decade was the bitterest of the *Yi dynasty*. Frustrated from the continual attacks and attempting to save the floundering dynasty, *Yi Ha-leng* began domestic reforms and adopted an isolationist policy. Only China was able to influence them. This behavior gave them the nickname “the hermit kingdom”. They remained isolated from all contact other than China until 1876, when Japan forced the *Kanghwa treaty* with them. Then, in 1880, there were trade agreements with the United States and countries in Europe. Japanese control tightened in the early 1900’s, as their troops moved through the peninsula to attack Manchuria in the Russo-Japanese War. The troops were never withdrawn and Japan declared a virtual protectorate over Korea in 1905 and formally annexed them in 1910.

Japanese Rule

Japanese rule lasted from 1910-1945 and was harsh and exploitative. There was strict rule from Tokyo and an effort to abolish the Korean language and culture. There were sporadic attempts to overthrow the Japanese but they were unsuccessful. To read more about the rise of Korean Nationalism and Communism visit: <http://www.country-studies.com/north-korea/korean-nationalism-and-communism.html>

When Japan surrendered to the Allied forces in 1945, Korea was liberated from Japanese rule but did not receive her independence. The United States drafted the terms of surrender, which required the Japanese forces north of the 38th parallel to surrender to the Soviets and those south of that line to surrender to the Americans. It was at that time that Korea was divided into two zones. The division of Korea was originally intended to be only an interim step in facilitating the Japanese surrender, but with the advent of the Cold War, two separate nations were ultimately formed. Given the rising Cold War hostilities, a unified Korea was out of the question.

Relations between the US and Soviets quickly worsened. Soon trade between these two zones ceased, resulting in economic hardship. And finally in 1948, two separate regimes were formally established. The *Democratic Peoples Republic* was formed to the north of the 38th parallel. Under Joseph Stalin’s direction, the country was communist and had

Kim Il-sung as their first leader. South of the 38th parallel was The *Republic of Korea* with *Syngman Rhee* as their first leader, with the support of the United States.

Recent History

By mid-1949 Soviet and American troops left the area with two rival leaders and governments eager to reunify the peninsula under their own rule. In June 1950 North Korea launched a surprise attack against South Korea and the Korean War began. The South Korean army had retreated almost to the tip of the peninsula when the US came to help. At the request of the UN Security Council, the US led an international effort beginning with a surprise attack at *Inchon* and quickly pushed their way back up and beyond the 38th parallel. As troops neared the *Yalu River*, the Chinese forces joined in the war and forced the US to retreat. The battle lines drew up along the 38th parallel. Negotiations began in the spring of 1951, but there were still hostilities until 1953. An armistice agreement was signed by North Korea, China and the United Nations in 1953. South Korea did not sign the armistice. Nevertheless, the war came to an end by with this agreement. The armistice agreement also established the current border between North and South Korea, as well as a demilitarized zone (DMZ) along that border.

Though sometimes referred to as the “Forgotten War,” falling between the global conflagration of WWII and the morally conflicted and Vietnam War, the Korean War was very brutal. By the time the war ended, over two million people had died and the North had been virtually flattened after almost continual bombing by the US Air Force. The overall bombing inflicted upon North Korea was far heavier than either Japan or Germany had endured during the Second World War.

After failing in the Korean War (1950-53) to conquer the US-backed republic in the southern portion by force, North Korea, under its founder President Kim Il-sung adopted a policy of ostensible diplomatic and economic "self-reliance" as a check against excessive Soviet or Communist Chinese influence. It molded political, economic, and military policies around the core ideological objective of eventual unification of Korea under Pyongyang's control. However, Kim Il-sung shoved the North down a Soviet-style path which included Soviet-style purges, Soviet-style gulags and even a Soviet-style cult of personality. Thanks to the new *Juche* (self-reliance) ideology that Kim created and implemented, the North Korean economy initially developed more rapidly than did the South's economy. North Korea progressed socially as well as industrially, and North Koreans were offered some of their first clinics, schools, food reserves, labor rights and recreation facilities they had ever known. Life in North Korea improved greatly, for those who were not class enemies.

In 1980, Kim Il-sung designated his eldest son, the current ruler Kim Jong-il, to be his successor. Kim Jong-il assumed an increasing managerial and political role until his father's death in 1994, and he then assumed full power without opposition. After decades of economic mismanagement and resource misallocation, the North has relied heavily on international aid to feed its population since the mid 1990's. This was done while continuing to expend vast resources to maintain an army of more than 1 million. North

Korea's development of long-range missiles and research into nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, along with their massive conventional armed forces are of major concern to the international community. Beyond this, the North Korean government is believed to have been involved in past acts of terrorist violence. Though the North Korean regime has not been directly responsible for acts of terrorism since it bombed a South Korean Airliner in 1987, there is growing concern about its possible sale of chemical, radiological, biological or even nuclear weapons to transnational terrorist organizations in the future.

North Korea's nuclear buildup continued unabated which led to their inclusion in George W. Bush's infamous "axis of evil" speech in 2002. Attempts to deter this trend were made by cutting off its oil supply. However, this seemed only to make the regime angrier and the people hungrier. The economy was barely maintained, and was ultimately kept alive by the export of arms and heroin on the black market. In December 2002, North Korea revealed that it was pursuing a nuclear weapons program in violation of a 1994 agreement with the United States, and expelled monitors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In January 2003 North Korea withdrew from the international Non-Proliferation Treaty. During 2003 Pyongyang announced it had reprocessed spent nuclear fuel rods (in order to extract weapons-grade plutonium) so as to develop a "nuclear deterrent." Since that time, North Korea has sporadically participated in six-party talks with the China, Japan, Russia, South Korea, and the United States to resolve the stalemate over its nuclear programs.

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<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0859140.htm>http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destination/north_east_asia/south_korea/history.html

http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/north_east_asia/north_korea/history.htm

http://www.worldover.com/history/south_korea_history.html<http://www.countrywatch.com/fox/country.asp?vCOUNTRY=91><http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php>

You can read the fascinating and certainly slanted biographies of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il at <http://www.korea-dpr.com/pmenu.htm>. But be warned, Kim Il-sung's autobiography is a lengthy 2,161 pages long!

Christian History

The history of Christianity in Korea began differently in that Koreans actually initiated the first contact with Christian missionaries. Around 1770, a Korean envoy to China brought back Matteo Ricci's *Tianzhu* (the True Doctrine of the Lord of Heaven). The *Shilhak* scholars studied this literature in an attempt to understand Western civilization. In 1783 the *Shilhak* scholars asked *Yi Sang-hun*, the son of an ambassador to China, to visit the Catholic missionaries in China and learn all he could of this western religion. *Yi Sang-hun* returned in 1784 with books and articles on Christian doctrine. The *Shilhak* began to discuss these new ideas with friends and neighbors. As a result of their study, they abandoned all pagan rites, preached Catholicism openly, instructed with the

Catechisms, and baptized believers. Thus, the *Shilhak* scholars laid the foundation for the Catholic Church in Korea.

Although some sought out Christianity, it was not accepted by all. The Koreans practiced *chesa*, a ritual of ancestor worship. But, the Catholics considered ancestor worship an act of idolatry and thus prohibited by God. This caused many Koreans to not only avoid Catholicism, but to also begin to persecute it. In spite of the government persecution that followed, the Catholic Church in Korea grew from 4,000 members in 1795 to 10,000 members by 1801.

Catholicism in the first part of the 19th century experienced a series of persecutions with occasional breaks in between because of Kings who were tolerant to various degrees. *King Chongjo* had been tolerant of Christianity, but when he died in 1800, *King Sunjo* came to power. At this time he was only a child and his mother ruled as the Queen Regent. She issued an edict ordering adherents of “the evil learning” to be treated as being guilty of high treason. The result was the *Shinyu persecution* of 1801 with at least 300 Catholic martyrs and more than 1,000 arrests. The result was that the church was forced underground.

The *Ulhae persecution* of 1815 targeted Catholic refugees who had fled from the *Shinyu* persecution. These refugees lived in the mountains, and their success at a time of general famine and poverty aroused jealousy which provided a sufficient motive for attacking them. Hundreds of Catholics were massacred during this time.

Following this persecution, the *Chonghae persecution* of 1827 broke out. This, much like the Ulhae persecution, was mainly confined to one area. In spite of the persecution, the church continued to flourish and even sent three young men to Macao to study theology. Two of these men, *Kim Tae-gon* and *Choe Yang-op* became the first native priests in Korea.

The persecution continued in *Kilhae* in 1839, when expansion of Catholicism was restrained because of concern and suspicion about foreigners. Over 200 Catholic Christians died during this time.

The last and most severe persecution against the Catholics is known as the *Great Persecution* and lasted from 1866-1871. During this period of time there were numerous confrontations between Korea and the Western powers and Christianity was soon identified with the Western imperial interests. Missionaries were not spared, as they were perceived to be government agents of Western foreign powers. The persecution of 1866 alone resulted in over 8,000 martyrs - almost half of the known Catholic population at that time.

Protestantism began to arrive in Korea was just following this period of persecution. The first foreign protestant to reach Korea arrived in 1883. This man was *Nagasaka*, a Japanese Christian from the National Bible Society of Scotland in Tokyo. He distributed Bibles in Chinese and Japanese, with portions of the Gospel in Korean.

Shortly after his arrival, American missionaries made their arrival. Dr. Horace Allen, appointed by the Presbyterian Church, arrived in 1884. In the same year, the Methodists sent Dr. and Mrs. W.B. Scranton, his mother Mrs. Mary Scranton, and the Rev. and Mrs. Henry Appenzellar.

Shortly after Dr. Horace Allan arrived, the Korean leader, *Prince Min*, was near death from injuries he had sustained during the *Kapshin Chongbyon* (a Coup d'état in 1884). Dr Allan cared for him for three months and ultimately saved his life. This gave the court great confidence in Western medicine and established a sense of trust toward the Americans.

The next decade saw a great increase in Protestant missionaries on the Korean peninsula, but the new sense of openness changed abruptly in 1888. The Catholic Church decided to build a Cathedral on a site close to both the royal palaces and the shrine built in dedication to the royal ancestors - *Chongmyo*. Clearly opposed to this option, the King requested that they build the cathedral elsewhere. The Catholics refused and moved ahead with plans to build in that location. This of course led to a decree in May of 1888 that completely prohibited the propagation of Catholicism.

Although this decree was directed against the Catholic Church, it impacted the Protestant community as well. Because of the fear and hostility towards the foreigners and their teaching, direct evangelization was made almost impossible. In order to maintain a witness in Korea, medical and educational work became the missionary focus in order to lead to their evangelism. In addition to their medical and educational work, the protestant missionaries adopted what became known as the *Nevius method*. This method, named after Dr John L. Nevius, emphasized self-support, self-propagation, self-government, and independence of the church. This stressed the need for the local people to carry on the evangelical work and placed the Protestants in stark contrast to the Catholics, who relied on leadership in Rome. Evangelical work based on the Nevius-principles led to several sweeping church growth movements.

The beginning of the twentieth century was a time of increasing Japanese dominance. Missionary work in education and medicine continued and the Protestants saw a period of impressive growth. By 1910, missionaries had founded 800 schools accommodating around 41,000 students. These numbers equaled twice that of the Korean government schools at the time.

The Great Revival of 1907 and the Million Movement of 1909-1921 had a profound impact on the propagation of Christianity and inadvertently offered an outlet for the expression of Korean nationalism. These revival movements set the tone for later evangelical movements. A video documentary of this revival can be viewed at the following: http://english.sarang.org/again_1907.asp.

Japan occupied Korea from 1910-1945, and controlling Korea was a key to their plan to conquer all of China. Thus began the Japanese oppression of Korea. They tried to

annihilate Korean culture and replace it with Japanese culture. Likewise, their policy towards Christianity was one of oppression and great hostility.

In 1911, 124 Koreans were arrested because they were suspected of involvement in an independence movement. The majority of these individuals were acquitted, but since 98 of the 124 were Christians, Christianity began to become associated with Korean nationalism. This idea was reinforced in 1919, when nearly half of those who signed the Declaration of Independence were Christians, who at that time comprised only about 1.3 % of the Korean population. As a leading organization of the demonstration and push for independence, churches were burned down, hundreds of Christians died in demonstrations, and thousands more were imprisoned and tortured. The brutal suppression of this demonstration and the prominence of Christians among those persecuted produced another strong link between Christianity and Korean nationalism.

The Japanese practiced Shintoism which involved the worship of their emperor as divine. Japan tried to impose this religion on all the people under its rule, and especially on the Korean peninsula. They installed Shinto shrines in every town and required that schools participate in Shinto shrine ceremonies. At first, missionaries refused to allow teachers and students at Christian schools to participate in the Shinto shrine ceremonies. However, a few prominent protestant missionaries were kicked out, and the ensuing result was that the Methodists, followed by the Presbyterians, complied with the government order so they could remain in operation. The participation in Shinto Shrine ceremonies by the two largest protestant groups in Korea squelched any resistance against the Shinto Shrine worship.

In addition to forcing all people to worship at Shinto shrines, the Japanese tried to undermine the strength of Christianity by restructuring the church, removing foreign missionaries, and considering foreign missionaries spies of their respective governments. By 1940, almost ninety percent of all foreign missionaries had left or been forced out of Korea. The few missionaries that remained were harassed mercilessly, and following the onset of World War II, were imprisoned after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 8, 1941. They were later released as exchange civilians in April, 1942.

The surrender of Japan split Korea into two opposing sides which ultimately led to the three year long Korean War. Hundreds of thousands fled the communists in the North, and this involved a large percentage of Christians. The persecutions faced by the Christians in the North were by far worse than those of the Catholics in the nineteenth century. The communists in the north saw Christians as anti-communist and American sympathizers. As a result, tens of thousands of Christians were imprisoned and systematically slaughtered. Churches were burned and all known Christian leaders were hunted down, tortured, and executed.

After the early Korean revivals, a great deal of the expansion of Christianity in Korea was in the North. In fact, Pyongyang was known as the "Jerusalem of the East" due to the great many Christians who lived there. But in a sad turn of events, the communist regime brutally purged its society of Christian influence and has portrayed it as an evil and

vicious religion ever since. In order to keep up appearances of religious tolerance though, there are three propaganda “show” churches for view in Pyongyang. North Korea’s true view of Christianity is to be seen in the mass slaughter of Christians early on, and in its estimated 100,000 Christians are currently interned in gulags and labor camps across the country.

As was true for the Cultural Revolution in China, the government completely shut out the outside world and the rest of the world. One had only to wait and wonder about whether the church would survive. In fact, for many years there was little known about Christianity in the North, but especially following the droughts, floods, and ensuing famine in the mid to late 1990’s, as refugees and defectors began a steady exodus from the country, new details have surfaced about the church and its survival. While the repression of Christianity was incredible, the remaining church went underground and managed to survive. Details are often still hard to come by, but one thing that is sure that the underground church has survived and is (at least recently) growing a great deal. Some sources have reported the existence of more than 10,000 Christians in an estimated 500 house churches that are scattered widely throughout North Korea. An increase in the number of believers even in the capitol city has also been reported.

Any actions or statements seen to indicate a lack of total support for the regime are harshly suppressed. Freedom of association, movement, thought, and assembly are strictly controlled or repressed. This certainly involves the freedom of religion. Therefore, believing in or practicing Christianity is viewed as an extremely serious offense. The “Great Leader,” Kim II-sung, has been exalted and is revered as a god to be followed with complete obedience. As a result, faith in any other or greater power is treated as treachery. The Bible has been officially banned in North Korea. Believers are not free to fellowship or worship together. Surveillance and informing is so widespread that meeting together would be fraught with danger. Even parents often do not allow their children to know of their faith, as teachers ask the children questions to make them unwittingly inform on their parents.

Most North Koreans have never heard the gospel, met a Christian or seen a church or Bible. North Koreans are brought up to believe that Christians are deranged and often only know them by the term “crazy people.”

Even internment in prison is not the harshest punishment. Christians are also executed for their faith. Eyewitnesses have seen Christians dragged out, unable to stand due to torture, denounced for their faith and shot dead. They are typically tied to a pole - although it is even reported that victims are attached to crucifixes - and then shot through the head, heart and stomach by three marksmen. Execution has been commonly referred to as the punishment for those North Koreans who return from China having had contact with Christians or with South Koreans.

<http://reference.allrefer.com/country-guide-study/north-korea/north-korea49.html>

<http://www.kimsoft.com/1997/xhist.htm> , http://hcs.harvard.edu/~yisei/backissues/spring_99/religion1.html
http://www.worldevangelical.org/persec_korea_5sep01.html
Operation World, 21st ed. 2001, pp. 385-386
<http://www.strategicnetwork.org/index.php?loc=kb&view=v&id=4671&fwo=north%20korea&>
<http://www.strategicnetwork.org/index.php?loc=kb&view=v&id=14613&fct=PRK&>

Christians occupy a unique position in these political prisoner camps. They alone are not sentenced to a specific number of years. Instead, they are imprisoned as long as they keep their faith. If they renounce their faith and embrace the Juche belief system, acknowledging Kim II-sung and Kim Jong-il as the supreme power, they may walk free. In addition, prison guards are promoted if they succeed in "rehabilitating" a Christian prisoner. This gives them a particular incentive to target Christians for beatings, torture, harsh labor, rape, and other unspeakable treatment. One former prisoner had seen a guard pour molten iron over living Christians in a sadistic effort to force the other Christians to renounce their faith.

Christians in political prisoner camps are also subject to a decree that their faces must permanently face the ground, so their heads are continually held at a ninety degree angle to the rest of their body. The rationale behind this is that because they believe in a God in Heaven they must not look up. As they work, sleep, and eat, they must always look down. A former prisoner reports that after years of keeping this position many of the Christians' necks were permanently deformed. Even in death, their necks were broken by the guards and they were buried face down to prevent them from "seeing Heaven."

The children of Christians are also imprisoned indefinitely. Many spend their entire lives - however long they last - behind the walls of a concentration camp. Their crime is that someone in their family has been found to be a Christian. Christians in the political prison camps are literally worked to death. According to reports from former prisoners, Christians are singled out for the worst and most dangerous jobs. Men are sent to work in the iron foundries and other factories where the mortality rate is high because of the dangerous conditions and exposure to extreme temperatures. Women are subjected to intense labor, such as making shoes with hammers and needles, for sixteen to twenty hours daily, seven days a week or they are given responsibility for the toilets and the cesspools where they are often overcome by the toxic fumes. Inevitably, of all the prisoners in these camps, Christians have the shortest life expectancy.

It is remarkable that these Christians manage to maintain their faith in such dire conditions. A former prisoner who was not a Christian at the time of her imprisonment recounted:

They had such a warm love that the rest of the people did not know. I have seen and felt that even in such a difficult situation they were able to express love for others. They sometimes even took responsibility for others' wrongdoing; they took the blame to protect others! Truthfully, taking the blame for someone else is almost unheard of in such a prison camp because the penalties are so severe.

Because of that, if a person did something wrong they would try to hide it and blame it on someone else. I have seen many times that rather than blame someone else, the Christians would take the blame for someone else! I realized that they are living in a different world, experiencing a different level of love. One of the reasons I have survived up to this moment is because of them. I reflect back and keep it as a guide, remembering them as they gave up their lives for the Kingdom of God with the type of love that all Christians should have. It would be easy to be discouraged about the future of Christianity in North Korea. It is important to realize, however, that the persecution of Christians has been ongoing in its intensity for five decades and Christianity has not been eradicated! A former prisoner stated that when she was first imprisoned in the late 1980s there were about forty older Christians. When she was released in 1992, all of the original forty had died but there were now 250 Christians ranging in age from teenagers to people in their 60s. This increase in numbers shows that Christianity is spreading among North Koreans of all ages - contrary to the aims of Kim II-sung and Kim Jong-il!" <http://www.strategicnetwork.org/index.php?loc=kb&view=v&id=7436&fct=PRK&>

Religions

Non-Christian

Non-Religious

The majority of North Koreans consider themselves as non-religious/atheist. 64%

Buddhism

Korea's traditional religions are Buddhism and Shamanism. Around 5% of the people follow some form of Buddhism or Shamanism

Confucianism

Confucianism is a moral and religious system from China started by *Kongfuzi*. This Chinese sage, more commonly known as Confucius, created sayings known as the Analects and other ancient commentaries that taught how to treat other people.

Confucianism had a revival under the Tang Dynasty of China (618-907). The Song Dynasty (960-1279) developed a modified version of Confucianism, based on beliefs of Zen Buddhism during the Ming Dynasty. Under the *Pinyin* system (1368-1644) meditation became a part of Confucianism. With the overthrow of the monarchy in 1911-12, Confucianism declined. In 1910 Japan formally annexed Korea. While under Japanese colonial rule until 1945, all of Korea's religions were suppressed.

<http://www.media.granite.k12.ut.us/Curriculum/korea/confucian.htm>

Confucianism: <http://www.globaled.org/chinaproject/confucian/reading1.html>

Confucian and Neo-Confucian Values: <http://reference.allrefer.com/country-guide-study/north-korea/north-korea38.html>

CONFUCIAN QUOTES ON THE FIVE PRINCIPAL RELATIONSHIPS:

<http://www.globaled.org/chinaproject/confucian/quotes1.html>

A mixture of Confucian thought, Buddhism, and shamanism (belief in an unseen world of gods, demons, and ancestral spirits) were previously dominant among the Korean, but have been officially repressed since 1945.

Shamanism

Shamanism is a belief in an unseen world of gods, demons, and ancestral spirits. Female shamans (*mudang*) hold *kut*, or services, in order to gain good fortune for clients, cure illnesses by exorcising evil spirits, or propitiate local or village gods. Such services are also held to guide the spirit of a deceased person to heaven. Often a woman will become a shaman very reluctantly--after experiencing a severe physical or mental illness that indicates "possession" by a spirit. Such possession allegedly can be cured only through performance of a *kut*.

Many scholars regard Korean shamanism as less a religion than a "medicine" in which the spirits are manipulated in order to achieve human ends. There is no notion of salvation or moral and spiritual perfection, at least for the ordinary believers in spirits.

<http://mtpcwww.army.mil/ports/837th/837th%20HomePages/country/religion.htm>

“Koreans have traditionally used special drawings called *pujok* as talismans in and around their houses to bring them luck and ward off evil. These talismans are usually printed in red, a color believed to have special beneficial properties and often seen in shamanistic rituals.”

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php>

Cult of Kim II-sung / Kim Jong-il

“Kim II-sung, North Korea’s dead but current head of state and ‘Eternal President’, and his son Kim Jong-il, the ‘Dear Leader’ are the subject of worship and veneration unique to political leaders in the world today. Citizens are taught that all good things come from the leaders, who deserve unending loyalty and devotion. Due to the isolation, North Koreans genuinely believe this and worship them, bowing before the enormous statue of Kim II-sung and memorizing his speeches and texts. North Korean must have pictures of the two leaders in their homes and failure to keep them clean is viewed as a political crime. State propaganda accords the ‘Great Leader’ supernatural powers and control over nature. <http://www.strategicnetwork.org/index.php?loc=kb&view=v&id=14613&fct=PRK&>

The former North Korean ruler, Kim Il-sung, was held in high regard and worshipped by the Korean. He was presented as omniscient and omnipresent. The new regime under Kim Il Jong is as oppressive as the former. However, it is not yet known whether the people have to worship the new ruler. <http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php>

Juche thought is not, at least in principle, necessarily xenophobic. Pyongyang has devoted considerable resources to organizing *Juche* study societies around the world and bringing foreign visitors to North Korea for national celebrations--for example, 4,000 persons were invited to attend Kim Il-sung's eightieth birthday celebrations.

The government opposes "flunkeyism." Kim Jong-il, depicted as an avid student of Korean history in his youth, was said to have made the revolutionary proposal that Kim Yushin, the great general of the Silla Dynasty (668-935), was a "flunkeyist" rather than a national hero because he enlisted the aid of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) of China in order to defeat Silla's rivals, Kogury and Paekche, and unify the country. *Chuch'e's* opposition to flunkeyism, moreover, is probably also a reaction to the experience of Japanese colonialism.

Chondogyo (or "Religion of the Heavenly Way)

a syncretic religion - 14% adherents; This indigenous monotheistic religion was founded in the nineteenth century as a counter to Western influence and Christianity. Its Christian-influenced dogma stresses the equality and unity of man with the universe. It was formerly called the Tonghak (Eastern Learning) Movement.

http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/korea_north/kp_glos.html#Ch

Indigenous Religious Groups

Choe Che-U (1824-1864) formulated the ideology of *Tonghak* (Eastern Learning) in the 1860s to help ease the lot of the farmers suffering from abject poverty and unrest, as well as to restore political and social stability. His ideas rapidly gained acceptance among the peasantry. *Choe* set his *Tonghak* themes to music so that illiterate farmers could understand and accept them more readily.

In 1905, Korean nationalists founded *Chundo-gyo* based on the themes of *Tong-hak*. The nationalists wanted to stem, by peaceful means, the tide of pro-Japanese sentiments sweeping across Korea.

<http://www.kimsoft.com/KOREA/chundo.htm>

Catholics/Orthodox Churches – 0.2%, approximately 55,000 followers.

Protestant/Evangelicals/Pentecostals

Evangelical Christians make up around 2% of the population

Independent/ secret believers –
Protestant – est. 10,000
Independent – est. 432,413
Marginal – est. 2,800

Annual church growth rate: est. 3.6%.
Evangelical and neo-Charismatic groups make up an estimated 2.1% of the
population

World Christian Encyclopedia, vol. 1, p. 558 *World Christian Trends, AD 30-AD 2200*, p. 415

People Groups

Ethnic Groups: racially homogeneous; there is a small Chinese community and a few ethnic Japanese.

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/kn.html>

7582

British (ROP: 102927)

7583

Chosun (ROP: 105225)

Other people name(s): **North Korean**

7584

Han Chinese (ROP: 103686)

7585

Khalka Mongol (ROP: 104885)

7587

Russian (ROP: 108452)

<http://www.peoplegroups.org/MapSearch.aspx?country=Korea>

Blind: 48,000

Deaf: 1,434,800

Lepers: 40,000

World Christian Encyclopedia 2nd ed vol. 1, p. 558

French – 481 population, expats in business

Han Chinese – from communist china – military advisors, 76% non-religious and 15% atheist
Khalka Mongol – from Mongolia: 60% non-religious, 36% atheist, and 4% Buddhist.
Russian – From USSR, military advisors: 48% non-religious, %15 atheist
Other minor people groups – other Asians, Europeans: 70% non-religious, Buddhists 15%, Muslim 5%
[pp. 168-169 in World Christian Encyclopedia 2nd ed]

Koreans are racially and linguistically homogeneous. Although there are no indigenous minorities in North Korea, there is a small Chinese community (about 50,000) and some 1,800 Japanese wives who accompanied the roughly 93,000 Koreans returning to the North from Japan during 1959-62.

<http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Demographics-of-North-Korea>
<http://www.imb.org/easia/peopleplaces/upg/korean.htm>

Missiological Implications

1. Evangelical Christians and churches should continue their prayer and concern for the peoples of North Korea. Political stresses should never be allowed to corrupt spiritual love and concern for any people.
2. Evangelical Christians and churches should join in most earnest prayer for the few Christians who can and do openly express their faith in North Korea. Most of these believers are in prison and under massive persecution.
3. Evangelical Christians and churches should join in all projected efforts to reintroduce the Good News to this land. Plans should be continued and supported in every possible way. See the quotation from Operation World below.
4. Evangelical Christians and churches should help Korean believers develop an approach to witness that would incorporate concepts from *Juche* that would show followers of this philosophy how Christianity can more realistically reach the goals of *Juche* than the philosophy itself. This truth should be strongly taught to believers who might have some possible way to share it in North Korea
5. Evangelical Christians and churches should develop plans for starting churches in North Korea. These would probably have to follow some modification of cell groups or house churches due to the extensive persecution.
6. Evangelical Christians and churches should recognize and seek to alleviate the vast physical and social needs in North Korea
7. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek to relate to persons who have some access into North Korea and help develop means to encourage and empower them to share the Good News in the land.

Additional Link:

Thesis on church planting in NK: http://www.nkmissions.net/downloads/nk_thesis.pdf

Aid agencies:

<http://www.helpinghandskorea.org/index.htm>

http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/north_east_asia/north_korea/facts.htm

State Dpt.: <http://www.state.gov/g/prm/rls/rpt/43269.htm>

<http://www.carm.org/list/moonies.htm> <http://www.gospelcom.net/apologeticsindex/u05.html>)

http://www.rickcross.com/reference/unif/Unif12.html#us_businesses.)[/i]"

The NK Missions World Network

The World Network for North Korea Missions (NK Missions) is a Christian ministry dedicated to reaching the people of North Korea with the love and gospel of Christ. Through a dynamic web ministry (www.nkmissions.com) and other channels of influence, NK Missions is active in spreading awareness, mobilizing and coordinating efforts for North Korea missions. The vision of NK Missions is to provide the infrastructure and leadership necessary to mobilize and coordinate efforts for North Korea missions. Our Goals:

1. Spreading awareness: The first step in mobilizing for North Korea missions is spreading awareness of the dire need in North Korea. North Korea is perhaps the most secluded and secretive country in the world. Millions are dying without ever hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ. NK Missions is trying to get the word out and get Christians interested and praying for North Korea.

2. Building a network: NK Missions is working toward building a network of Christians interested in North Korea missions. This network will connect people with current North Korea mission news and opportunities of training and involvement. Further, from this network many other networks can be established to join those of more specific interests, such as by occupation or expertise. NK Missions is also working toward enabling each person on the network to become an active and growing participant in North Korea missions. This network will become the main infrastructure to mobilize and coordinate mission efforts in the case of a sudden collapse of North Korea.

3. Preparing for collapse: In the event of a sudden collapse of North Korea, the Christian Church must seize the opportunity. NK Missions is working toward collecting and storing a Bible for each household in North Korea and coordinating teams that will be able to deliver them within the first 6 months that North Korea opens up. Also, NK Missions is working towards mobilizing a church planting team for every village in North Korea that will enter the country within the first 6 months it opens up. Besides these efforts, NK Missions is working on mobilizing medical, educational, social and other teams that will be ready to enter North Korea. In the case that North Korea does not suddenly collapse but rather gradually opens up, NK Missions will explore avenues of creative access missions into North Korea.

4. Coordinating mission efforts: NK Missions is eager to work together with other missions groups and churches to coordinate mission efforts in North Korea. First, NK Missions is working on coordinating knowledge sharing by pooling expertise and experiences together at Second, NK Missions is working toward coordinating training efforts to get people prepared to share the gospel and impact North Korea. Third, NK Missions is working on facilitating coordination and cooperation with current and future mission efforts inside North Korea.

http://www.nkmissions.com/nk_news_nkmissoverview.php?mid=menu3

<http://www.chosunjournal.com/gilsudrawings.html>
http://www.lonelyplanet.com/mapshells/north_east_asia/north_korea/north_korea.htm
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/northkorea/norkor1102.pdf>
<http://www.gajo.org/>
http://encarta.msn.com/map_701515180/Korea_North.html
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/dprk/dprk-dark.htm>
http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/korea_north/kp02_02c.jpg *Traditional-style houses in Kaesng*
<http://www.koryogroup.com/>
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/picture_gallery/05/asia_pac_unseen_north_korea/html/1.stm
<http://nkgulag.org/bbs/view.php?id=news&no=44>
<http://www.un.org/Photos/korea/>
http://ec.europa.eu/echo/information/library/dprk/index_en.htm
<http://www.kcckp.net/en/one/index.php>
<http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/DPRK/mediacentre/photo%20gallery/index.asp#Ryongchon%20County%20-%20Train%20Explosion>
<http://www.asianinfo.org/asianinfo/issues/North.htm>

VIDEO:

Video of prison Camp (from <http://www.freenorthkorea.net/archives/freenorthkorea/001063.html>):
http://a495.v12430.c1243.g.v.m.akamaistream.net/7/495/1243/127224001710000000/ak-msnbc.msnbc.com/video/100/n_korean_camp_040227.asf
<http://www.northkoreanrefugees.com/fosterkids1.htm>
<http://www.seoultrain.com/>
Executions: <http://www.kccnk.org/Eng/video.html>
PBS video: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kim/view/>

CIA Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/kn.html>
NGS: <http://plasma.nationalgeographic.com/mapmachine/profiles/kn.html>
The Chosun Journal: <http://www.chosunjournal.com/>

[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+kp0009\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+kp0009))
<http://www.worldmap.org/links.html>
<http://www.gmi.org/searchengine.zhtml?q=north+korea&ul=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.gmi.org&ps=20&o=0&m=or>
US State Dept - <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm> (useful page)
CDC Travel info: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/eastasia.htm>
Country Studies (good): <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/kptoc.html> **
<http://www.gajo.org/>
www.nkmissions.com
http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=kor
<http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/northkorea/facts.html>
<http://www.tradeport.org/countries/northkorea/01grw.html>
** <http://www.prayfornorthkorea.org/Resources.htm>
http://www.kcgm.org/north_korea.htm
Measurement calculator: <http://www.metric-conversions.org/area/square-meters-to-square-feet.htm>

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World Christian Encyclopedia: Volume 1. University Press: Oxford, 2001. pp. 558-560
A Dictionary of Asian Christianity. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2001. pp. 446-44