

MISSION ATLAS PROJECT

Christmas Island

SnapShot

Country Name: Territory of Christmas Island

Country Founded In: Christmas Island is a territory of Australia and they celebrate Australia's Independence Day, January 26, 1788.

Population: 361 (as of July 2006) note: In 2005, the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported a population of 1,520.

Government Type: Based on the laws of Australia, however they do have some local laws.

Geography: Southeastern Asia, the island is in the Indian Ocean, south of Indonesia

Number of People Groups: 7

Picture of Flag:



Religion Snapshot: They are 36% Buddhist, 25% Muslim, 18% Christian, 21% other

Government interaction with religion:

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook>

Basic Facts

Country Name: Territory of Christmas Island

Demographics: As of July 2006, there were 361 people on the Christmas Islands. These inhabitants are mostly made up of ethnic Chinese, European, and Malay peoples. Most live on the northern tip of the island.

Language: English is the official language; however, Chinese and Malay are also spoken.

Society/ Culture: The culture of the Christmas Islands is influenced by the diversity of those who have settled on the island. Most living on the island hold Australian citizenship.

English is the official language; however, many residents speak either Malay or one of the four Chinese dialects.

Several different religions are practiced on the island and there is little conflict between the religions. They are 36% Buddhist, 25% Muslim, and 18% Christian. Another 21% of the people are Taoist, Confucian, Baha'i, or practice folk religions. This diversity on the island has led to an adaptation and blending of ideas. Many religious cultural festivals are observed on the island. These include Christmas, Easter, the Chinese New Year, and Hari Raya. Other holidays include New Years Day and Australia Day in January, Labor Day in March, Anzac Day in April, Vesak Day in May, Month of the Hungry Ghost and the Mooncake Festival in August, Territory Week and the Arts Christmas Island Festival in October, Deepavali in November, and Boxing Day in December.

There are some cultural factors to consider if visiting the Christmas Island. Visitors should dress conservatively out of respect to the Muslim community when visiting the Kampong area. A visitor should cover his or her shoulders and knees. Shoes should always be removed when entering a house, mosque, or temple. Using the left hand for eating, giving, or receiving is not polite. It is best to use the right hand for most things, especially in shaking someone's hand. Also, it is disrespectful to touch someone on the head. Unless the front door of a house is open, it is more polite to go around to the back door than to knock on the front door.

Government: The government of Christmas Island is based on the laws of Australia. They do, however, have some local laws. Governing of the island is based on the Christmas Island Act of 1958-59. This was amended by the Territories Law Reform Act of 1992. The executive branch is made up of the chief of state, Queen Elizabeth II. She has been chief of state since February 6, 1952 and is represented by the Australian governor general.

The head of government, who represents the monarch and Australia, is Administrator Neil Lucas. He was appointed to this office on January 30, 2006 by the governor general of Australia. The legislative branch of Christmas Island is made up of the unicameral Christmas Island Shire Council, which is made up nine seats. Terms last four years, however, approximately half of the council retires every two years. Elections for the council are held every two years to replace those who retire. The judicial branch is made up of a Supreme Court and the Magistrate's Court.

Economy: Until 1987, the economy of Christmas Island was almost completely dependent on phosphate mining. The Australian government closed the mine in December of 1987, however, reopened it in 1991. The mines are nearly depleted. The government helped the island open a casino in 1993, however, the casino closed in 1998. In 2001, the government agreed to help fund the creation of a commercial space

launching site, however, this has not yet been constructed and it does not appear that the plan will go forward.

Literacy:

Land/Geography: Christmas Island is in Southeastern Asia in the Indian Ocean. It is located 2,360km northwest of Perth in Australia and 500km south of Jakarta, Indonesia. The islands make up an area of 135 sq km, an area about three quarters the size of Washington DC. Christmas Island has steep cliffs along the coast that rise steeply to a central plateau. It is mostly covered with tropical rainforests, 65% of which is now protected as a National Park.

History of Christmas Island

Around the early seventeenth century, British and Dutch navigators included the island on their charts, but it was not until 1643 that the first person came to the island. On December 25, 1643, Captain William Mynors of the East India Ship Company landed the Royal Mary on the Island. It was still over 20 years before the island appeared on a map. Pieter Goos published this map and labeled the island Moni.

The island was first visited by William Dampier in 1688 when he accidentally came to the island after being off course on his way to the Cocos Islands. He found the island to be uninhabited and two of his crewmen were recorded as the first people to set foot on the island. The next recorded to have visited the island was Daniel Beekman in the 1700's.

From 1872-76 the Challenger expedition to Indonesia, lead by Dr. John Murray, carried out extensive surveys of the island. In 1887 Captain Maclear brought a group to the island and collected samples of the flora and fauna on the island. The next year, Pelham Aldrich and J.J Lister came to the island for 10 days and gathered a large biological and mineralogical collection. They submitted the collection to John Murray and found that many were nearly pure phosphate of lime. After reporting his findings, the British Admiralty annexed the island on June 6, 1888.

In 1888, Christmas Island was settled when the Clunies-Ross brothers from the Cocos Islands established a settlement at Flying Fish Cove to collect timber and supplies for the Cocos Islands. Phosphate mining began in the 1890's using workers from Singapore, China, and Malaysia. The mining continued until World War II, when many of the European residents were evacuated in fear of a Japanese invasion.

The island was administered jointly by the British Phosphate Commissioners and District Officers from the United Kingdom Colonial Office through the Straits Settlements, Later; it was administered by the Crown Colony of Singapore. In 1942, Japan occupied the island and remained there until the end of World War II in 1945. During this time, the Japanese continued mining the phosphate, but they stopped mining after their first two shiploads were torpedoed. In 1957, the Australian government paid the government of

Singapore 2.9 million pounds and the United Kingdom transferred sovereignty of the island to Australia. In 1958, the first Australian Official Representative arrived. Since 1997, the Cocos Islands and Christmas Island have shared a single Administrator resident.

Since the late 1980's and early 1990's, Christmas Island has taken in refugees, mostly from Indonesia. This has been a source of some international disputes. In 2001, the island received asylum seekers from the Middle East. A Norwegian cargo vessel that had rescued people from an Indonesia fishing boat arrived on the island and caused a diplomatic standoff between Australia, Norway, and Indonesia. This vessel had 420 asylum seekers from Afghanistan, 13 from Sri Lanka, and 5 from Indonesia. As a result, John Howard, the Australian Prime Minister, passed legislation which excised Christmas Island from Australia's migration zone. This meant that that asylum seekers arriving on Christmas Island could not automatically apply for refugee status. The Department of Immigration began construction an "Immigration Reception and Processing Center" on the Island and it is due for completion in late 2006.

Christian History

Non-Christian Religions

Islam

25% of the people on Christmas Island are Muslims. Of these, most are Sunni. Most Muslims on the island live in the Kampong area. Some of the Muslim celebrations that take place are house blessings, welcomes, farewells, boat launchings, remembrances of deceased relatives, circumcisions, Koran readings, and other family events. The most celebrated tradition among the Muslim people is the celebration of Hari Raya Puasa, which marks the day Ramadan ends.

Buddhism

36% of the people on Christmas Island are Buddhists.

About 18% of the people on Christmas Island are Christians. Of these about 40.8% are Anglican, 5.9% are Independent, 19.4% are Protestant, 28.2% are Roman Catholic, and 5.6% are other denominations.

Protestants/ Evangelicals/ Pentecostals

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People Groups in the Midway Islands

46960

Anglo-Australian/ European (161)

Among the Anglo-Australian and British living on the islands, approximately 80% of them are Christian adherent. Approximately 10% of those claiming Christianity are Protestant. There may be up to 200 Anglo-Australians living on the Island. Their language is English.

18325

Han Chinese (565)

There may be as many as 1,000 Han Chinese on Christmas Island. Most of these are Mandarin speaking; however, there is a small population of Cantonese speaking Han on the island. The Han are the largest people group on the world, making them about 1.3 billion in number. Although most are founding China, the Han Chinese are found in almost every country in the world. They are also called Beijinhua, Cantonese, Chinese, Guanhua, Guoyu, Hakka, Sino-Mauritian Han Chinese, Mandrin, Hoton, Huizui, Kreol, Mandarin, Northern Chinese, Pei, Potinhua, and Putonghua. In Kazakhstan, they speak Mandarin.

The Han are from China and ruled China for centuries. In 1276, after the Mongol invasion, they began fleeing to other countries. In many places, the Diaspora of Han are usually not welcomed and are mistreated. Many of them settled in urban areas and got involved with business and commerce and became influential where they settled. They often believe their culture to be superior, so many have been able to maintain their culture and language, depending on which country they live in. They have maintained many of their customs, especially those concerning marriage and family. Children are treated affectionately and boys are often indulged. Growing up, children are pushed to do well in school and they are expected to spend a lot of time on their studies. They are known for their politeness and avoid conflict and confrontation. Saving face is very important to them, so they must not lose ground in an argument, or it will cause great embarrassment. Their traditions are centered on harmony. Relationships are very important among the Han people, and it is often who you know that is more important than what you know or what you can do.

The Han are a superstitious people that value luck as a way to get through life. They believe their ancestors are in the spirit realm. Many are irreligious in practice; however their primary religion is Buddhism. About 24% are Christian adherents and about 9% are believed to be evangelical. The Bible, Jesus film, Christian radio broadcasting, and audio gospel recordings are available in the Mandarin language.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

<http://www.imb.org/easia/peopleplaces/upg/han.htm>

<http://www.adoptapeople.com/Profiles/clusters/8072.htm>

18329**Javanese (42)**

There is a small number of Indonesians on Christmas Island, most descending from the Malay people cluster. They are also known as Javanese Indonesian, Madurese Indonesian, Minangkabau Indonesian, Malay Indonesian, Sundanese Indonesian, or Oran Toraja. The Javanese adopt a paternalistic system, and trace their hierarchic lineage through the father.

They are 85% Muslim. About 15% Of the Javanese on Christmas Island are Christian Adherent, with about 5% being evangelical. They are known for syncretism of their religious beliefs. A small number of Javanese practice Kejawen, which is an animistic religion that has been influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

18330**Malay (239)**

The Malay are of the Malay people cluster. They can also be called Javar, Malao-Polynesian, Melaju, or Melayu. There are currently no Christian resources available to them in their heart language. The cornerstone of life among the Malay people is their adherence to Islam. According to Malay law, a Malay is a person who belongs to any Malayan race who speaks Malay and professes the Muslim religion. It is unknown how many believers are among them and it is estimated that about 0.20% may be evangelical.

Most practice the teachings and observances of Islam. Some of the celebrations that take place are house blessings, welcomes, farewells, boat launchings, remembrances of deceased relatives, circumcisions, Koran readings, and other family events. The most celebrated tradition among the Malay people is the celebration of Hari Raya Puasa, which marks the day Ramadan ends. There are, however, some foods, dances, and musical influences that can be traced back to European influence.

Food is typically Malay. Dishes include a selection of rice, noodles, curry, chili, chicken, beef, lamb, and seafood. The Malay are rural people, living together in small villages, known as kampungs. Most are farmers, growing coconuts, pawpaws, vegetables, and bananas.

Courtesy is very important to the Malay people. Commitments and loyalty to groups are not as important as being courteous. There are no kinship groups among the Malay. In general, they are known to be kind towards women, children, and animals. Most Malay are polite, introspective, slow to speak, and passive. When angered, however, they may lose self control and go into a frenzy. Cleanliness is valued, and most homes are well kept. Marriage is also important to the Malay people, and every person is expected to marry. According to Islamic law, a man may take up to four wives; however, this is not

commonly practiced among them. Marriages are typically arranged, however, the consent of both parties is required.

There are some cultural things to consider if visiting Christmas Island. Visitors should dress conservatively out of respect to the Muslim community when visiting Muslim areas. A visitor should cover his or her shoulders and knees. Shoes should always be removed when entering a house or mosque. Using the left hand for eating, giving, or receiving is not polite. It is best to use the right hand for most things, especially in shaking someone's hand. Also, it is disrespectful to touch someone on the head. Unless the front door of a house is open, it is more polite to go around to the back door than to knock on the front door.

Almost all of the Malay on Christmas Island are Muslims. About 0.5% are believed to be Christian adherents, with all of those being evangelical. The Bible, Jesus film, Christian radio broadcasting, and audio gospel recordings are available in their language.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

Missiological Implications

1. Christians should learn to observe the cultural practices that relate to polite behavior in Christmas Island. Visitors should dress conservatively out of respect to the Muslim community when visiting Muslim areas. A visitor should cover his or her shoulders and knees. Shoes should always be removed when entering a house or mosque. Using the left hand for eating, giving, or receiving is not polite. It is best to use the right hand for most things, especially in shaking someone's hand. Also, it is disrespectful to touch someone on the head. Unless the front door of a house is open, it is more polite to go around to the back door than to knock on the front door.

2. Christians should seek ways to share the Gospel with followers of Islam. Field missionaries suggest that only 6 out of 200 believers in the Muslim world are women. In order to balance out the proportion of men to women, there needs to be an effort to reach entire families. Among the Malay and Javanese, it takes women to reach women, however, just targeting Muslim women would one reverse the problem. Entire families need to be reached and discipled.

3. Christians should seek to witness through the examples of their family relationships. Christians can be taught to model Christian families for non-believers and new believers. Harold R. Cook says, "When a couple goes out to the mission field, its witness to Christ and the Christian life is more than that of two individuals. Something else has been added. It is their joint witness as a Christian family. Here is a place where one and one equals more than two."

3. Christians should seek to develop ways of presenting the true picture of Christianity to Muslims. One of the biggest challenges facing those seeking to work with Muslims is

how Christians are perceived. Muslims believe that Christians have perverted historical data as well as their Scriptures, with a bias against Islam.

The first step to removing this barrier, or any other, is prayer. The battle is a spiritual one,

4. Christians should provide means for assimilating Muslims who convert into some type of Christian community.

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Notes from "The Persecuted Church" workshop.

Pictures

Links

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<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/christmas/index.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas_Island

http://naa.gov.au/publications/fact_sheets/FS157.html

<http://www.travel-images.com/christmas-island.html>

<http://www.dotars.gov.au/terr/xmas/index.aspx>

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http://www.janeresture.com/christmas_bombs/index.htm