

Approximately 80 million Korean people live in dozens of countries throughout the world. The largest populations of Koreans are found in South Korea (46.7 million in 2000), North Korea (23.8 million), China (2.1 million) and the United States (2.1 million).

According to Korean folklore, the birth of the Korean nation took place in 2333 BC. Constant wars with the Chinese contributed to a strong ethnic identity among the inhabitants of the Korean Peninsula. The first united Korean kingdom was formed in the first century AD in the northern part of the peninsula. The next four centuries 'witnessed a



remarkable flowering of the arts, architecture, literature and statecraft. Chinese influences were absorbed, reinterpreted and alloyed with traditional Korean beliefs. Probably the single most formative influence was Buddhism, which in time, became the state religion.¹

The Korean language 'does not have tones like Chinese, but certain words have different meanings depending on whether they are pronounced high and short, or low and long'.²

The Korean war, which began in 1950, resulted in the break-up of the peninsula into Communist North Korea and democratic South Korea. More than two million people died during the fighting. North Korea has turned into an impoverished, myopic and bizarre place ruled by the tyrannical Kim Il Sung and his son Kim Jong Il. A powerful personality cult emerged, with the two leaders being

worshipped as gods.

Mahayana Buddhism entered Korea from China in the 6th century AD. Today there are 18 different sects in Korea. Although atheism and Christianity have made massive inroads into Korean life in the past century, today there remain 11 million Buddhists in South Korea (24% of the population).³ It is difficult to estimate numbers in North

Korea, but there are believed to be more than one million professing Buddhists there,⁴ as well as millions more Korean Buddhists around the world.

It is not recorded if Nestorian missionaries penetrated as far as Korean territory during their time in China between the 7th and 14th centuries, but in 1927 archaeologists excavated a tomb near the present North Korea-China border. 'They found the remains of seven bodies and at the head of each a clay cross . . . they were able to date the grave at between

998 and 1006 by Chinese coins of the Song Dynasty left with the bodies.'⁵ When the first Catholic missionary entered Korea in 1794, he was greeted by 4,000 Korean believers who had been evangelized by Koreans returning from China.⁶ The first Protestants arrived in the 1880s. In the early 1900s a powerful revival saw tens of thousands come to Christ. Prior to the Second World War, Pyongyang, today's capital of North Korea, was known as the 'Jerusalem of the East' because of the large number of churches there. Thousands of North Korean believers have been butchered and tortured in the most demonic ways to the present day, but a secret house church of possibly 300,000 Christians exists in North Korea today, while approximately one-third of the population of South Korea professes faith in Jesus Christ.⁷ South Korea has become one of the great missionary sending nations in the world.



Population:

76,208,200 (2000)
84,414,100 (2010)
93,594,400 (2020)

Countries: South Korea, North Korea, China, USA, Japan, Uzbekistan, Russia, Kazakhstan, Brazil, Argentina, Kyrgyzstan, Paraguay, Guam, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Canada and dozens of other countries around the world

Buddhism: Mahayana
Christians: 17,000,000

Overview of the Koreans

Other Names: Chaoxian, Hanghohua, Hanguk Mal

Population Sources:

46,750,300 in South Korea (2001, P Johnstone and J Mandryk [2000 figure])
23,870,900 in North Korea (2001, P Johnstone and J Mandryk [2000 figure])
2,130,000 in China (2000, P Hattaway)
2,100,000 in United States (2001, P Johnstone and J Mandryk [2000 figure])
675,000 in Japan
320,000 in Uzbekistan
110,000 in Russia
109,000 in Kazakhstan⁸

Language: Korean (language isolate)

Dialects: 8 (South Korea [5]: Seoul, Ch'ungch'ongdo, Kyongsangdo, Chollondo, Cheju Island; North Korea [3]: Hamgyongdo, P'yong'ando, Hwanghaedo)

Professing Buddhists: 25%

Practising Buddhists: 15%

Christians: 22.3%

Scripture: Bible 1911; New Testament 1887; Portions 1882

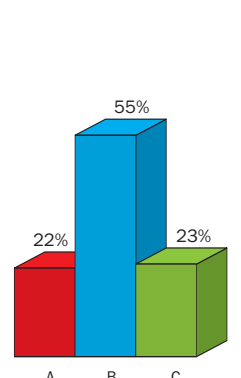
Jesus film: available

Gospel Recordings: Korean; Korean: Northern China

Christian Broadcasting: available

ROPAL code: KKN

Status of Evangelization



A = Have never heard the gospel
B = Have heard the gospel but have not become Christians
C = Are adherents to some form of Christianity