Perspectives and analysis for those who serve China

ChinaSource

Ken Benintendi

Today, millions continue to head for the city in search of jobs and with hopes of a better life.

China's burgeoning cities

John A. Swem

Urbanization in China is occurring at an accelerated pace. According to statistics from a survey taken last year, more than 40 percent of the Chinese population will live in cities and towns within the next decade. Some of these are mega-cities with populations in the several millions; more than 30 have a population of over one million—and when migrants and other agricultural residents are included in these populations, there are over 150 such cities.

Although China's current "period of reform" began in 1978, its visible impact on China's cities did not become significant until the '90s. The results have been immense changes in the physical and social environments of China's cities, and changes to a lesser extent in the spiritual environment. While there are significant differences between coastal cities and inland cities, northern cities and southern cities, mega-cities like Shanghai and Beijing and the others, nevertheless, there are some common elements that are observable across the entire country. This article will provide observations about the changes in the physical, social and spiritual environments in China's cities in

the last two decades. The hope is that the church, both inside and outside China, will take a deeper look at how to minister to this rapidly growing urban population.

Physical Environment

Although China has an ancient culture and extensive history, far too little of it has been preserved. Apart from a few scattered exceptions such as Beijing's Forbidden City, warfare and natural disasters have combined to leave surprisingly little of her ancient cities intact. Modernization has added one more element to this destructive tendency as city planners all too often let the old go to make space for the new.

Infrastructure and Transportation. As late as the '80s, city roads tended to be two-lane streets filled mostly with busses and bicycles. The main streets have now been widened to four lanes and cloverleaf or overpass exchanges have been built at major intersections to keep traffic moving. Bikes and busses still clog the roads, but now taxis, motorcycles and even private cars have joined them to create one massive and seemingly never-ending traffic jam. Various regulations have been enacted to reduce the number of vehicles in the

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China's Eleven Largest Cities*
(Population in millions)

Chongqing (municipality)	30+
Shanghai (municipality)	13.5
Beijing (municipality)	10.9
Tianjin (municipality)	8.8
Wu-han	3.9
Shenyang	3.9
Guangzhou (Canton)	3.6
Harbin	3.1
Chengdu	3.0
Nanjing	2.6
Xi'an	2.6

*These numbers include the city and the surrounding suburbs.
Source: www.welcome-to-china.com/china/city/city.htm, Blue Bridge Enterprises, Inc., 1996.

cities at any one time. One city's plan keeps trucks of certain sizes out of town during daylight hours. Another plan allows taxis or private cars on the streets only on certain days in accordance with the last digit of the license plate. One plan allowing taxis to operate only on odd or even days was abandoned after a general strike by the taxi drivers brought the city to a standstill during an important convention of security personnel.

Changes in the skylines of China's cities have been even more dramatic than the road improvements. Buildings more than ten stories tall were rare in the '80s; now, even smaller cities strive to have at least one 25-story tower as the signature building in their downtown areas. Entire city blocks are being torn down to make room for new office and apartment buildings. Residents displaced by these projects are often given only promises of new housing, inadequate compensation, or are moved to remote suburbs with few of the conveniences of urban life. Stories are increasing of citizens suing developers or city officials or organizing demonstrations due to failure to make new and affordable housing available.

Population. Westerners since at least the time of Marco Polo have been amazed at the sheer number of people in China's cities. Today, millions continue to head for the city in search of jobs and with hopes of a better life. While China was only 15 percent urban in 1980, urbanization estimates now range from 35 percent upward. The draconian registration system designed to keep peasants down on the farm is not enforced with the same strictness as previously. Newly affluent urbanites look to migrants to handle menial jobs such as construction work and domestic tasks.

Yet, while the overall numbers grow, the age of the urban population has risen as one age group has declined—the urban children. As a result of the One Child Policy, sixty million of China's three hundred million children age fourteen and under are "only" children. Since peasants continue to have two or more children, it is the urban child population that has shrunk most dramatically.

Consumer Goods. China's new urban consumers have come to look, smell, eat and live like their counterparts in Tokyo, Hong Kong and Singapore. Older people are still dressed in their blue or gray Mao-style clothing as they congregate in the parks in the morning—but their children and grandchildren are not. For young women especially, urbanization has been accompanied by a fashion revolution. The latest styles in clothing, makeup and hair can be seen everywhere. Beauty parlors can be found on every street corner. Hair bleached orange or even yellow is not uncommon. Commercials on television and in magazines beckon China's young to find their meaning by using the right toothpaste, deodorant, or shampoo.

China's new urbanites not only look very modern, but their eating habits are also changing rapidly. McDonalds and Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurants seem to be packed all day long. Street peddlers dispense Coke and Sprite for a few cents a cup. China's planners worry about the rapid disappearance of local brands as interna-

tional companies use market savvy to grab large chunks of the consumer's *yuan,* with prices often much higher than those of local brands. The old peddlers of fried dough treats are still there, but one wonders for how much longer.

The urban upper and middle class are no longer content to live in tiny one- or two-room apartments with bare concrete floors, drab furnishings, and a single light bulb hanging from the ceiling in each room. Homes are now smartly styled with parquet floors, patterned wall paper, elaborate light fixtures and the latest in karaoke sound and DVD systems. Windows are covered with iron bars, and massive security doors protect each apartment entrance as a reminder that China has quickly become a land of haves and have nots rather than the egalitarian worker's paradise touted by Mao Zedong.

Pollution. A downside to these many improvements is the residue left behind in the form of pollution. For many years China's cities have had air pollution problems due to the extensive use of soft coal. The government recently issued a report noting that the air in 137 cities—nearly 40 per cent of China's total—was so foul that it exceeded medium-range government targets, and that there was a serious shortage of sewage treatment facilities as well. Additionally, in recent years the landscape has also become blighted by the widespread use of non-biodegradable plastic containers. To improve the environment, some urban areas are using sod to build up "instant" green areas and are also making significant use of trees and shrubs to make up for years of neglect. Yet the lack of funds invested in basic environmental protection is sure to result in problems that get much worse before they get better.

Social Environment

Fear and Mistrust. China's fifty-year experiment with Communism has left one overwhelming scar upon her soul: a climate of fear and mistrust. In traditional Chinese culture, trust was based on relationships, above all, the rela-

tionships within the family. The Communist Party attempted to build a new society based on class warfare, and the struggle sessions that were a feature of Chinese society for so many years pitted one group against another in a brutal survival of the fittest. Bonds of trust between teacher and student, parent and child were torn apart. These bonds were replaced by shackles of fear and mistrust, chains that wait to be broken by the love of Jesus Christ.
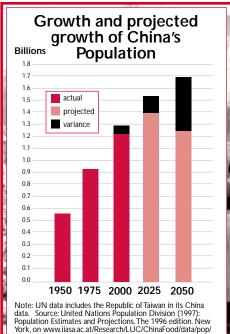
While the fear and mistrust may not be as palpable as they were during the Cultural Revolution or in the years immediately after Tiananmen, they are still there, just below the surface of relationships. In office buildings, if conversations have important content, people will meet in hallways or outdoors to talk. The *Falungong* organizers made extensive use of cell phones and the internet, but the security organs are working overtime to master ways of controlling and monitoring these advanced means of communication. This type of atmosphere is exceptionally difficult for Westerners, who have not lived under communism, to appreciate. Most have no concept of how pervasively a totalitarian society controls the lives of its citizens. The dream of many Chinese parents in urban areas is that their child will not

have to live under such chilling restrictions, and these parents will work long hours in the attempt to give their child the talent or wealth to leave the country.

The One Child Policy. The impact of China's "One Child Policy," implemented after Mao Zedong's death, is becoming more apparent in China's cities. Recent studies have indicated that this policy has been far more strictly observed in the cities than in the countryside. Few Chinese urban youth under twenty have a brother or a sister. Concern over the impact of this policy on future care for the elderly has led to a law that permits a couple in which each is an "only" child to have two children. It remains to be seen whether or not the sixty million who have no brothers and sisters will exercise this choice after a generation of population control propaganda that has emphasized the allegedly terrible financial burden of raising children and the joy of being able to devote parental affection to only one child.

A Chinese woman who learns that she is pregnant must face a set of concerns not faced by women in the West. If she already has a child, she knows that there is virtually no way for her to avoid a trip to the hospital for an abortion. Even if this is her first child,

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Growth and projected growth of China's Population

Billions

Note: UN data includes the Republic of Taiwan in its China data. Source: United Nations Population Division (1997): Population Estimates and Projections, The 1996 edition. New York, on www.iiasa.ac.at/Research/LUC/ChinaFood/data/pop/pop-9a.htm, 1999.

there may be problems. If she has not obtained a certificate allowing her to give birth, she must consider whether or not she will need to bribe someone to get a certificate and the kind of bribe required. If she cannot get the certificate, she too must face the awful reality of the trip to the hospital to abort what may be the only child she will ever carry. Sadly, many young women have been so heavily influenced by the relentless "one child" propaganda that they have abortions without even pondering their action or its impact on their ability to have another child.

Corruption. The corruption of the soul of China exacerbated by the "One Child Policy" has been accompanied by the corruption of her economy. The puritanical communism espoused by Mao Zedong succeeded in eliminating much of the corruption left from the Kuomintang era although, admittedly, China was so impoverished that there was relatively little to corrupt. This has changed dramatically during the era of the Four Modernizations.

The cliché that relationships (*guanxi*) are needed to get anything done in China has been amended to add the need to pay a bribe. Ironically, money—and not class status—has become the key to life in China. Every layer of Chinese society is now pervaded by corruption and even the church has all too often become infected with this evil. It is perhaps no surprise that most business deals are greased with bribes. But the impact reaches further. Elementary teachers are bribed to give good grades to students so they can advance to a good high school. Doctors are bribed to give priority to patients waiting for surgery. Environmental inspectors are bribed to ignore massive pollution. Building inspectors are bribed

to allow shoddy construction to pass muster.

Periodically the government mounts a major campaign when scandals become too large to ignore. The Beijing Communist Party Secretary, Chen Xitong, was finally imprisoned after embezzling $2.2 billon. Jiangxi's Vice Governor for the Religious Affairs Bureau, Hu Changqing, was executed in May of this year after taking hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes. The problem is rooted in man's corrupt nature and in a materialistic system that has attempted to banish any concept of God's absolute truth that would act as a check on that nature.
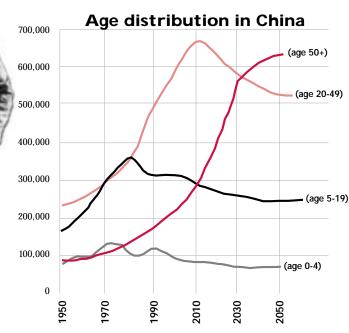
This corruption has also led to the revival of old social evils thought to have been banished in the "New China." Police are bribed to overlook prostitution, gambling, and drug use. To one who saw the spartan life in China's cities in the '70s or '80s, the gaudy and glitzy neon scenes of the '90s seem almost unimaginable.

Spiritual Environment

While the physical and social changes of the last decade have been significant, those of the spiritual environment seem more limited. The

great revival that has swept China in recent years has been largely rural and, to a lesser degree, on college campuses, leaving China's average urban dwellers largely untouched. This urban population can truly be considered among the least reached people groups in China.

Although the Communist Party seems to have reached some level of accommodation with the idea of the control of significant economic activity being in private hands, it has yet to do so in the area of religious activity. As the ferocity of the government campaign against the *Falungong* has illustrated, the urban Chinese have yet to experience in the arena of religious activities anything like the changes they have seen in the economic sphere. For Christians living in urban areas, there are several major problems with the current situation, including the number of registered church buildings, their location and condition and the plight of unregistered house churches.

Number of Registered Church Buildings. Most Chinese cities have at least one Protestant and one Catholic church building open—sometimes a few more. Given the level of interest in the countryside and on campuses, it is

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Age distribution in China

(age 50+)

(age 20-49)

(age 5-19)

(age 0-4)

700,000
600,000
500,000
400,000
300,000
200,000
100,000
0

1950   1970   1990   2010   2030   2050

Note: Data includes people in mainland China and Hong Kong. Source: United Nations Population Division: World Population Prospects. The 1998 Revision. New York on www.iiasa.ac.at/Research/LUC/ChinaFood/data/pop/pop-1.htm, 1999

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Rural and Urban Population in Mainland China

	% Rural	% Urban
1952	87.5	12.5
1962	82.7	17.3
1975	82.7	17.3
1980	80.6	19.4
1985	76.3	23.7
1990	73.6	26.4
1995	71.0	29.9
1997	70.0	29.9

Source: China Statistical Yearbook, Beijing, 1998 (p. 105) on www.iiasa.ac.at/Research/LUC/ChinaFood/data/urban/urban-5.htm, 1999

certain that the current number of registered buildings in the cities do not begin to meet the need. The registered congregations usually meet in old buildings given back to the Three Self authorities after the Cultural Revolution. However, the vast majority of church buildings closed down in the '50s and later still have not been returned. Moreover, often these buildings are located in areas that have become prime space for development. In Tianjin, Kunming and Xi'an to name just three, the main church building was torn down. The churches in Kunming and Xi'an are experiencing major problems in getting a new building, while the situation in Tianjin was helped by the fact that the church already owned property a few blocks away and did not need to incur the huge expenses of acquiring new land.

Location and Condition. Many of the older buildings are in areas that are no longer primarily residential or areas that are not easily accessible from the newly developed residential areas. In reality, urban congregations need to retain their current buildings while they plant churches in newer areas. The authorities have not only not given back all the older buildings, but they are not permitting congregations to build or register in newer areas. Urban churches have only been able to register "meeting points," often under the guise of serving older members who can no longer travel to the older buildings. This does not begin to address the need for an aggressive evangelism strategy which would allow Christians to freely gather in homes, schools, or

other places to meet the needs of China's urban peoples.

In addition to buildings inadequate in number and location, many are also in poor condition. The facilities were abused for years when used as factories or warehouses and the government has made no real effort to compensate for this abuse. Few urban Christians have the wealth, or perhaps the motivation, to donate the kinds of sums that would be required to upgrade the old facilities.

Unregistered House Churches. China's urban Christians are much more restricted than their rural brothers and sisters in regard to meeting outside the control of the Three Self. There seems to be an unpublished rule that in the cities unregistered groups can meet as long as they are not "too large," a number that seems to be around fifty in many places. When numbers grow beyond this size, the authorities step in and discipline the leaders until the situation is resolved.

The cities in north and northeast China seem to be somewhat more restrictive about unregistered house churches than those in other parts of the country. This may be due in part to the fact that geographical proximity increases the control of Beijing and in part to the more open atmosphere in the economically vibrant cities of south China. However, oftentimes the degree of restriction is greatly affected by the personalities of local officials, so accurate generalizations based on geography can be somewhat tricky.

Christians in the central areas of Henan and Anhui have been intensely

persecuted in recent years as the huge growth of the church has created fear and resentment in Communist Party officials. In addition, the campaign against the *Falungong* undoubtedly has spilled over to the church. Shanghai is one city where house churches recently reported an increase in troubles, sometimes fostered by Three Self leaders.
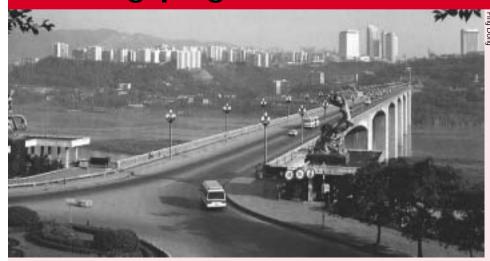
Conclusion

China's cities have shaken off the sterility and stagnation of the Mao years. The entrepreneurial spirit of the Chinese people becomes more evident with each passing year. If the Gospel is to penetrate all of China, these great cities must be reached. The rapidly growing portion of the population housed in China's cities need to hear of Christ. The urbanization of China should be viewed as a wonderful opportunity to reach many minority peoples who may be away from the spiritual bondage of their tradition-bound cultures for the first time. In addition, cities are strategic centers for disseminating the Gospel to smaller towns, villages and rural areas. May we carefully study their characteristics and prayerfully develop strategies to reach them so that their inhabitants will find their rightful place in the body of Christ.

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Chongqing: China's "Mountain City"

Ping Dong

On March 14, 1997, when the Chinese government officially made Chongqing, known as China's "Mountain City," into the country's fourth municipality, it was claimed to have become China's—and even the world's—largest city.

Located in the southwestern province of Sichuan, with a population of over 30 million, it covers 31,660 square miles.[1] However, this area is comprised of rural counties and other large cities such as Wanxian. The actual urban area of Chongqing is much smaller than either Shanghai or Beijing and has a population of only 3.1 million (1994 official census).[2] Situated on the upper portion of the Yangtze River, it is the juncture at which economically developed eastern China meets western China with its rich natural resources. The government's plans are that Chongqing will act as the bridge between these two regions. As a municipality, it now comes directly under the Central Government allowing it direct access to various resources and the attention of the government in Beijing.

An ancient city with its first wall built about 320 B.C., it served as a capital at several times during its history. Its commercial development was related closely to the progress of steam navigation. The conquest of the 400-mile Yangtze Gorges by British and Chinese

shipping companies in the late '20s opened the way for commerce to expand. In 1937, during the Sino-Japanese War, many factories followed the move of the Chinese government from Nanjing to Chongqing resulting in its becoming a thriving industrial city.

During World War II, bombings virtually leveled the city so that after the war a new, modern, industrial city was built to replace the previous city core. Airports, roads and rail systems were constructed linking the city to numerous other cities. Chongqing became the gateway to Sichuan province.

Modern industries have continued to develop and now, as a municipality, the city is strategic for speeding economic development in the central and western regions as well as lessening the development gap between eastern and western China.

Chongqing is also seen as instrumental in the resettlement of both people and industries being displaced by the Three Gorges Dam Project. Currently 1.07 million of the 1.2 million people displaced by the project reside in Chongqing Municipality.

At present, the city is in the midst of a "face-life" campaign to rid itself of slum areas. Old, shabby houses are being replaced by modern apartment buildings. Those benefiting from this campaign are the urban poor who have been living in *diaojiaolou* or "the houses with dangling feet," so called due to extensions made to them using logs on upper stories. In the past three years, close to US$3.6 billion has been put into apartment buildings and offices and 4,700 people have been moved.

Spiritually, Chongqing is a very needy area. According to TSPM sources, there are at least 200,000 Christians in the new municipality. About 100,000 of these are in the Greater Chongqing area of 16 million people and another 100,000 are scattered over largely rural and mountainous areas. Across the large region there are only 56 approved meeting-points that are served by 49 church workers. Without doubt, as Chongqing becomes involved with extensive economic development as well as the challenge of relocating a large population, the church will be in a strategic position to minister in an area of rapid social change.[3]

ENDNOTES

1. Every large city in China has both an urban and a rural area. This dates back to the Chinese tradition of establishing city boundaries independently of the typical "built-up" areas that define Western cities. In most cases, the rural portions of the cities are decreasing while the percentage of the total population living in the urban portions is increasing. Source: "Five Things You Should Know About Cities in China" in Background Information for Workshop on Urban Services in China, at www.library.unsw.edu.au/~jazerby/urbansrv.htm, The Australia-China Chamber of Commerce and Industry of New South Wales.

2. Tony Lambert, *China's Christian Millions*, Monarch Books, UK, 1999, p. 208.

3. Ibid, p. 209.

Sources: "A Profile of a Mega City in China, Chongqing—The World's Largest City," David Gray, *Dawn of Asia*, Pacific Rim Foundation, Hong Kong, December 1999 and "Facelift Benefits the Poor," Wen Chihua, *China Daily*, 9 May, 2000, pg. 9.

China's Migrant Population

Kim-Kwong Chan

Prior to 1978, population migration in China was under government control in order to serve the political and economic objectives of the country. There were several large-scale population migrations. In the early '50s, the Chinese government resettled large segments of the population from the coastal and central areas to the sparsely populated border provinces, especially those of the northwestern regions. Their objective was to develop these areas. Most of the migrants were technicians and skilled laborers along with their family members. During the Cultural Revolution, large numbers of youth (former Red Guards) were sent to the countryside to maintain political stability in the urban areas. Other than these officially organized migrations, few Chinese have had the privilege to choose where they would like to live, for every inhabitant in China must register under the residential registry (*Hukou*) system. Under this system, every individual is classified as either a rural or an urban resident. The system basically limits the movement of population for every Chinese citizen. Once registered in a certain location, all social benefits, as well as one's livelihood, are dependent upon the registration. If one opts to live elsewhere, one must obtain a de-registration permit from the original place of registration and an agreement from the new place where one wants to move—an extremely difficult procedure.

However, the policy of reform and opening to the outside world in the early '80s offered increased options to choose from for making a living, thus opening new opportunities as well as challenges for the Chinese. Population increase, as well as an increase in agricultural production, has suddenly generated a large amount of surplus rural labor. The rapid construction boom in major cities, compounded by the huge demand of labor in newly built factories in the Special Economic Zone in coastal cities, attracts the surplus laborers by its wages. With the economic boom in coastal regions, service industries also begin to expand—from waitressing to prostitution. These services draw many rural migrants who otherwise would have no opportunity for living in a city nor for a regular income. Furthermore, rural populations see city life not only as an opportunity to earn money but also to acquire new skills—tools for them to take back to aid in developing new enterprises in their home villages or towns.

During the past two decades, Chinese society has experienced a huge population migration not initiated by the Government. While there are no clear statistics, estimates from various experts indicate that from 80 to120 million of the rural population are currently not living at home and are engaged in non-agricultural activities to

During the past two decades, Chinese society has experienced a huge population migration not initiated by the Government.

earn a living. In other words, these individuals are living elsewhere, mostly in cities, to earn money as laborers. Legally speaking, these people need to register with the local authorities as "transient population" or "temporary residents"; few choose to do so because of the high administrative fee and the bureaucracy. While they may retain a non-residential status in their home village, this is on paper only. When reporting is done, they tend to fall through the cracks so that legally, most of this population is non-existent. In reality, you cannot hide a population of 100 million—especially in China!

Almost all the welfare and social benefits are given to registered residents in urban areas. The transient population and those who are not registered have no right to claim these social services. A rural resident cannot change into an urban resident without paying an astronomical fee. For example, it costs up to one million RMB (US$125,000) to obtain an urban residential status in Shanghai. Therefore, although the migrant population may work hard as factory workers, housemaids, construction workers, cooks, waiters, hairdressers—or in a variety of occupations that provide services and contribute to the economic prosperity of urban life in China—they enjoy no social services at all. Their children, if they attend the local school, must pay an extra non-resident premium; few can afford it. Unlike their urban neighbors who may enjoy subsidized housing, medical services and other social amenities, they must pay for everything. Furthermore, they have no job security, pension plan or unemployment benefits—benefits that are taken for granted by workers with urban registration in State Owned Enterprises. The only area of government that deals with this migrant population is the Public Security Bureau that rules it as a law and order issue. Whenever there is a political campaign, these migrants often become scapegoats, for there is no way for them to defend themselves. One sinologist recently concluded that the migrant population is the "most disadvantaged group" in China.

This current year, the Chinese Government is facing a tremendous social challenge. Several tens of millions of workers will be laid off from the State Owned Enterprises (SOEs). This is double to triple the size of the estimated 20 million currently under- or unemployed workers. Although the Chinese Government has begun to focus on this social issue of the migrant population, it has very few resources to deal with it. There are some local volunteer groups who, often with help

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Areas with Greatest Migrant Population

Percentage of population **NOT** living where registered (by municipality and province)

Beijing (municipality)	16.5%
Shanghai (municipality)	13.3%
Fujian (province)	10.8%
Tianjin (municipality)	9.8%
Liaoning (province)	8.8%
Guangdong (province)	8.6%
Inner Mongolia (province)	8.5%

Source: China Statistical Yearbook, 1998. State Statistical Bureau, People's Republic of China, Beijing, p. 111 at www.iiasa.ac.at/Research/LUC/ChinaFood/data/urban/urban-2b.htm, 1999.

from the Government, have begun to help these migrant people. For example, there are some legal hotlines, magazines, and social clubs organized for them, but their numbers are just too few.

Migrants often form closely-knit informal groups based on their kinship and clans. These groups serve as mutually supportive communities and provide services to their members. Still, these are people that are separated from their families and homes. They have been uprooted from their social context. In sophisticated urban settings, they often feel disoriented, confused, homesick, inferior and insecure. The urban population, especially in

times of economic difficulties, often discriminates against them. Despite the fact that these very people have contributed much to a city's development, they are living in a legal limbo and are the most marginalized people group in China.

If Christians are the peacemakers on earth, is there some way they can help to ease the tension between the migrants and their neighbors who are their hosts? If justice is a Christian value, can the church help these people to attain social services and protection which, in all fairness, they should be given? If equality among human beings is a Christian value, can the church not speak out to those in authority on the discriminatory residential registration system which separates people into two distinct classes, urban and rural—especially when the former group enjoys most of the social benefits at the expense of the other? It is indeed an apartheid system. Although there are some Hong Kong-based Christian groups that are ministering to these people, most of them focus on the work of evangelization. Can these groups also recognize the physical needs of these people and provide them with concrete social services?

There is much that we should and can do for this migrant population. China is a very complex society that is facing tremendous social, political and economic change. This change may force us to look at China from a fresh perspective. We may need to start with basic knowledge of the current social changes in China. This knowledge can then open our eyes for new spiritual challenges—challenges that may be quite different from the classic or stereotype needs we often see (such as those of the more exotic national minorities). Let us take an in-depth look at this sector of the population and meet the challenge it presents.

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Rural Urbanization in China
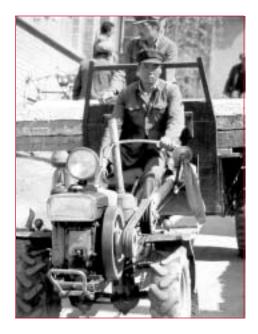
Jim Nickel

The phrase "rural urbanization," at first glance, appears to be an oxymoron. Yet it is an apt phrase to describe what has been happening in China, especially in the eastern regions, over the past two decades. A huge and growing surplus in the agricultural labor force has created a

engaged in farm work. What about the rest? Some 45-80 million rural residents actually work in the cities, while the rest (30% of the rural labor force) are employed by township and village enterprises (TVEs).[2]

A huge and growing surplus in the agricultural labor force has created a need for non-agricultural jobs in rural areas.

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need for non-agricultural jobs in rural areas. To meet this need, and to protect her large cities from being overwhelmed by large-scale migration from rural areas, China has been developing industry in rural areas. This has led to a new way of urbanization in which farmers are urbanizing rural areas instead of migrating to the large cities of China.[1]

A 1996 census revealed that while China has a rural labor force of 452 million, only 250 million are actually

TVEs are a new form of corporate organization blending private enterprise with community ownership. Township and Village Enterprises may be described as business units that belong to the residents of the rural communities where they are typically located. The name comes from the fact that rural communities in China are classified into two types, townships (*xiangban*) or villages (*cunban*), depending upon size. Townships have about 3,500 households while villages have around 200. At the end of 1992, there were 48,200 townships and 806,000 villages in China. On average, each township has 8.2 township enterprises with 66 employees each, and each village has 1.4 village enterprises with 23 employees each.[3] There are around 20 million TVEs in China.[4]

The workforce in most TVEs is made up of farmers who have "left the land but not the rural area, entering the factory but not the city."[5] While these enterprises are not state-owned, neither are they privately owned. Ronald McKinnon, a Stanford economist, describes them as "a form of corporate

organization that hasn't been created before."[6] They are controlled by local government units (counties, townships, villages), and their managers are answerable to local officials and investors (often the same people).

This local control and accountability to investors is what distinguishes TVEs from State Owned Enterprises (SOEs). A significant portion of the revenue of local governments depends upon them, so the bureaucrats in charge are highly motivated to keep them profitable. While the central government, due to its control of the banking system, can bail out failing SOEs, no such safety net exists for TVEs. They are governed by hard budget constraints and must produce or perish![7]

Many TVEs are export-oriented, and an increasing number are seeking foreign investors as joint-venture partners. This, of course, represents a good opportunity for those who have a desire

to serve China to get involved in local communities. Those considering such involvement should proceed with caution, however, as there are many pitfalls. TVEs can easily go bankrupt, and almost no laws or regulations exist to guide their development. While the central government is trying to change this,[8] the sheer number of TVEs, coupled with their essentially local character, will continue to make for a chaotic situation for years to come.

While the growth rate of TVEs over the past 20 years has been phenomenal, there are some indications that it is now leveling off, and even declining. Many carry crushing debt loads, and others suffer from narrow product lines and poor management. The temptation is always present for the local governments that control these enterprises to treat them as cash cows, using profits to finance municipal budgets instead of reinvesting or reducing debt.[9]

Still, opportunities abound, especially in central and western China. The vast majority of TVEs are currently located in eastern China, where rural areas have better infrastructure and access to markets. As of 1995, only four percent of the total production by TVEs came from western China, compared to 33% from central China and 63% in eastern China.[10] Since then, many township enterprises in eastern China have begun to focus their interest on central and western regions.

The development of more and better TVEs in central and western China is also seen as a highly desirable goal by the central government. The Chinese Embassy in the UK recently reported that the East-West Co-operation Programme, which was started in 1995 with the approval of the State Council, has, over the past five years, signed 30,000 contracts involving investment of 70 billion *yuan* (US$8.4 billion).[11]

This trend has important implications for the spread of the gospel in China. As the church is much stronger in eastern China than in central and western China, opportunities for Christians from the former to travel to the latter represent potential for expansion

of the church. In addition, many of the poor rural areas in central and western China, that would be natural targets for the development of new TVEs, are home to unreached people groups. Recent reports indicate that Christians in China are catching the vision to take the gospel to the unreached peoples within the nation, and cooperative ventures focused on the development of TVEs could well be one key to turning this vision into reality.

Rural industrialization also represents a significant opportunity for expatriates desiring to serve the cause of Christ in China. Businesspeople, with funds and expertise to invest in existing TVEs throughout China, have the opportunity to develop relationships in communities that Jesus Christ can use to build His kingdom. Those who have the willingness and capacity to make a contribution to the development of TVEs in the rural areas of central and western China should, in like manner, find open doors to serve the cause of Christ among the needy peoples of these regions.

END NOTES

1. "Small town development and rural urbanization in China" Gabe T. Wang and Xiaobo Hu. *Journal of Contemporary Asia* v. 29, n. 1, 1999, pp. 76-94.

2. "Farm Demographics." *China Today.* February 1999, pp. 10-11.

3. "Institutional Environment, Community Government, and Corporate Governance: Understanding China's Township-Village Enterprises." Jiahua Che and Yingyi Qian, pp. 1, 25.

4. *Contemporary China.* Alan Hunter and John Sexton. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999, p. 63.

5. Wang & Hu, loc cit.

6. "Down off the Farm," *Economist* v. 325, n. 7787, p.11, Nov 28, 1992.

7. Loc.cit., p.12.

8. See "On Agriculture, Rural Economy" at <www.peopledaily.com.cn/english/npc/reports/page 6.html>

9. "Municipal-run Firms Helped Build China; Now, They're Faltering," by Craig Smith. *The Wall Street Journal*, October 8, 1997.

10."'Hey, Coolie' - Local Migrant Labor" *ICWA Letters.* Institute of Current World Affairs, January 1999, p. 7.

11. <www.chinese-embassy.org.uk/news/BB9802.html>

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MoreThan a Concrete Jungle

While people living today in the early 21st century have little recollection of life in China in the early 1900s, most would agree with the simple summary of the situation at that time as "an incompetent emperor trying to govern a mass of peasants loose as sand."

One hundred years ago the word "city" was a symbol of luxury; it was also a vague and irrelevant term for most Chinese. In the '50s, after the communists took power, the word "city dweller" remained as a synonym for power and privilege. For those based in the countryside, making a trip to the nearby county seat took a great effort—let alone adventuring into bigger places like Beijing, Shanghai, Hankou (now Wuhan) or Guangzhou. An individual with some travel experience, such as having crossed a few county seats and districts, would surely win the respect and admiration of the local people.

Running water, electric lights, public transportation, cinemas, newspapers, hospitals and neon-lit tall buildings seemed to match the rural people's dream of what heaven on earth must be like. Millions desired city life, dreamed of it and hoped fervently that one day they might become an official city dweller. This desire has been masterfully exploited by the communists of China in their political maneuvering. As early as the '20s, communist guerrilla leader Mao Zedong used the slogan " The rural squeeze conquers the city." His Red Army, composed mostly of peasants, fought enthusiastically to take over as many cities and towns as possible. They measured success by the number of cities that sank in front of them.

In 1958, the communists launched the "Great Leap Forward" that was aimed at "catching up to the United Kingdom and surpassing the United States." It hoped to turn the theory of communism into an instant reality. The splendid slogans filled with promises that the communists used to entertain peasants included rhymes such as: "Upstairs or down, lights and phones" and "Lights without oil, plows without oxen." Across the entire country people were stirred up. They went through a period of extreme excitement expecting the soon elimination of the "three major differences": the difference between city and country; the difference between industrial jobs and peasant labor; and the difference between blue collar and white collar jobs.

View from the Wall

By Huo Shui

Ironically, what really happened, did not make the three major differences go away; rather some city dwellers ended up in exile in the country as a result of the failure of the "Great Leap Forward." Up until the '70s, eighty percent of the Chinese population were still peasants living in the country. The terms "city" and "city dweller" remained as remote and strange as they had always been to peasants in China. In those days, a peasant could starve outside any city restaurant. All restaurants requested the *"liangpiao"* or "grain ration coupon" in addition to cash at payment—but the *"liangpiao"* was the exclusive privilege of city dwellers. For four out of five Chinese, a city in China was a different world.

In 1979, Deng Xiaoping began a reform that defied anyone's imagination. China quietly went through a revolution: urbanization. In less than 20 years, the once glorified and mystified "city life" came to be the common people's everyday lifestyle. Even the term "city dweller" was replaced by "locals" or "out-of-towners." Today, everyday, there are 100 million former peasants busy serving in almost every corner of China's cities. In Beijing, there are about three million who are labeled by Beijing locals as *"Min Gong"* or "out-of-town peasant workers." Without their services, Beijing would be cut off from its supply of fresh vegetables, fruits, meats, eggs and milk; various restaurants, hotels, bars, and discotheques would not be able to operate; many construction sites would be idle; and Beijing's sewer system and sanitation services would not be maintained.
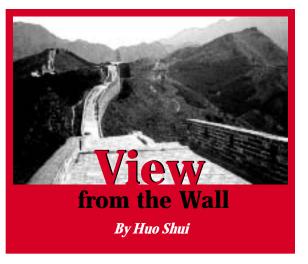
"Peasant workers" appeared to be the first, and most important, sign of change on the road to urbanization. They toppled the *"Baojia"* (communal monitoring) system that had been imposed for several thousand years along with the *"Hukou"* (identification that set city people apart from peasants and dictated where individuals should live) system that has been practiced for the past 50 years. These peasant workers, who have unchained the fetters of the fields, demonstrate great economic energy in mega-cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen and in the large provincial capitals as well as in the smaller cities and towns that formerly were townships.

Other prominent changes include the sharp increase in the number of new cities and the fast expansion of older small and mid-sized cities. These have all resulted from the mushrooming of new rural-based factories and the free flow of the peasant labor force. The increase in the expansion of these cities and their numbers has helped to fill the gap between the mega-cities and the rural country-side.

Large numbers of peasants have achieved non-peasant status without leaving their province, town or township. The

1999 government statistics show that there are "only" 400 million Chinese who are now directly engaged in agricultural work. This number will continue dropping over the next 20 years. With the program of turning county seats into cities, and city neighborhoods into separate cities, there are now nearly 400 county-seat level and district-level cities in China. Provincial capitals and independent municipalities are turned into super- or mega-sized cities. Urbanization has entered an unprecedented time of growth in China.

Then, in 1999, in the middle of the urbanization wave, the Chinese government suddenly stopped granting permits to create new cities or promote various towns to city level. It issued further restrictions on peasants migrating to cities looking for work. Is this the same government that had been eager to destroy the rural-city divide and proud of its ability to initiate and manage an urban revolution? Why has urbanization become an issue? Are there conflicts between the urbanization and the modernization of China? To answer these questions we need to know what urbanization really signifies.

For a peasant living in a poor rural area, urbanization can bring a changed official status of his *"Hukou,"* increased monetary gains, and equal treatment with city dwellers—in short, a better life. At the start of the '80s, there was a popular movie titled *The Life*. It portrayed perfectly the peasants' thirst for urbanization. But from the government's point of view, urbanization means severe employment pressure along with greater demands on transportation, medical care, education and housing facilities. It also means almost uncontrollable pollution and an ever-increasing crime rate. However, these are only surface issues; what really concerns some government leaders is the scary threat of what happens when this free flow of people meets a free flow of information. Throughout China's history, the governing class has monopolized the supply and distribution of information. In addition to military controls and prisons, the infor-

mation monopoly has been the best way to keep citizens at their own residences and to hinder them from receiving information, reflecting upon it and freely expressing or acting upon it. If the governing class had to choose between granting their subordinates freedom of action or freedom of information, they would prefer to give up their control of people's actions. Freedom of action can be granted if necessary, they believe, but people should never be allowed to know what's going on. This has been an effective governing tool for the last several thousand years; it was a "wisdom" of the feudal rulers found in Oriental philosophy. Now, we call it "obscurantism," a policy that tries to keep people in ignorance.

Urbanization, as a natural result of industrial and economic globalization and information technology development, is undermining the foundation of obscurantism. Personal telephones, cell phones and the internet are becoming the everyday companions of hundreds of millions of people in China. As effective tools of communication, they are replacing state-controlled, one-way, propagandizing TV and radio as major sources of information for the people. What can prevent people from thinking independently on issues such as democracy, human rights and freedom now that they are stimulated by this massive flow of new knowledge and information? When news from around the world can spread overnight into every corner of China, the totalitarian powers that govern the country will have to figure out other means than just the military, the police and newspaper editorials to suppress its people. When one considers the minimal infrastructure available for communication into and out of the city, however, it is apparent that this free flow of information would not be the case if it were not for the free flow of peasants physically moving in and out of the cities.

Urbanization has done more than just create concrete jungle upon concrete jungle; it has stirred up the desire for political rights within the city's in-

habitants and within its newcomers. During the revolutionary era, the communists took over cities and in so doing gained power over the whole of China. Today, the challenge before them is the dilemma of urbanization. Without it, there will be no economic growth and development, and China will continue to lag behind or even drop out of the world economic system. On the other hand, urbanization accompanied by universal education and a global economy will surely severely weaken their totalitarian rule. What is to be done? Even as Lenin wrote *What is to be Done?* it will probably take another Lenin ("postmodern") to answer that question.

Huo Shui is a former government political analyst who writes from outside China. Translated by Ping Dong.

Peoples of China

"City Slickers" and "Country Bumpkins"
Are they people groups?

Jim Nickel

The urban-rural cultural divide seems to be a nearly universal phenomenon. I'll never forget the glee with which my language teachers in Taichung taught me how the syllables in the Taiwanese word for "country person" could be transposed to form a derisive name they used to describe rural people. I will also never forget how difficult it was for me to gain even a grudging level of acceptance from the ranchers in the small town in Texas where I served as a young pastor, fresh from the city. I don't even want to know what they called me behind my back! I suspect you have similar memories.

In an incisive issue of *ICWA Letters*,[1] China researcher Dan Wright comments on the cultural divide that separates migrant laborers from the rural areas around Duyun from their bosses in this prefecture capital of southeast Guizhou.

Life is difficult in the mountains; but for farmers-turned-migrant laborers in the city, it is bitter, degrading and dangerous....

"What do you enjoy most about working here in the city?" I ask this to see their reaction to something they probably don't think about very often: pleasure.

No response. I don't fill the silence. Finally, one of them says, "Full stomachs."

"And the hardest thing?"

The answer comes more quickly: "City people look down at us. We occupy the bottom of society."

"Why?"

"Because we're from the countryside. The work we do is dirty."

Wright goes on to confirm that the laborers' comments are more than just perceptions by relating another conversation:

"Dirty" is the first word used by a young urban woman when I ask her about migrant laborers in Duyun. "Of course, though, I don't feel that way," she adds when she sees the look on my face.

"When we were children," she explains, "our parents often told us that if we didn't study hard we would end up like them, working on the streets."

He observes:

"...Prejudice runs deep. In the eyes of most urban residents, rural folk are just, well, filthy."

Though the primary ways in which the urban-rural divide was institutionalized in the 1950s—household registration and migration restriction—have been eased or eliminated, they produced a two-caste mindset that remains until today. The result has produced perhaps China's greatest wall: little understanding or appreciation between its agricultural and non-agricultural populations.

Wright also observed a strong sense of community among the migrant laborers. The closest ties, naturally, seemed to exist between those from the same village. However, there was also a strong sense of community based on their common occupation.

Throughout the time I spent observing and getting to know pushcart pullers around Duyun, they would often describe their work as *ku li* [literally translated: 'bitter labor']. But it was not until one noonday when I was home speaking in Chinese with my wife, Guowei, that it suddenly struck me: *ku li* sounds like the English word "coolie." I asked the guys about it. My "distant relative" Lao Tang gave confirmation: "We porters have a long legacy; we are one and the same with the Shanghai dockworkers of old."[2]

These insights highlight the fact that there are other kinds of people groups in China than those we commonly think of. In our zeal to identify and reach every ethno-linguistic people group with the gospel, we must not forget that there are other kinds of barriers to the spread of the gospel, especially in the cities.

The urban-rural divide is only one of them. People groups may be identified by educational level, occupation, socio-economic status, and in many other ways. The crucial issue is *how they see themselves.* The gospel will spread more quickly, and churches will expand more rapidly if we pay attention to these differences and develop appropriate strategies for each group.

There are, of course, also, ethno-lin-

Photos by Ken Benintendi

guistic issues that must be taken into account as we seek to reach the cities of China with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The State Ethnic Affairs Commission estimates that, as of 1997, 20% of the total minority population were living in the cities, up from 8.4% in 1982.[3] That is 20 million people!

Beijing alone has 414,000 ethnic minority people (3.8% of the population), representing all 55 official minority nationalities. The Chinese capital has a complete ethnic education system, more than 2,000 shops,

200 restaurants, and 117 enterprises that cater to the needs of the city's ethnic minorities.[4] Per capita income and education level of minorities in Beijing are both lower than those of the Han majority, creating a challenging combination of distinctives.

Minorities who move to the cities tend to live in their own communities creating what someone has called "Chinatowns within China." Those who feel called to serve the cause of Christ among a particular minority nationality would do well to consider

> **Those who feel called to serve the cause of Christ among a particular minority nationality would do well to consider seeking out one of these communities as an option to the traditional focus on reaching minorities in rural areas.**

seeking out one of these communities as an option to the traditional focus on reaching minorities in rural areas.

Throughout Scripture God calls upon us to take the gospel to people where they are. Increasingly, the people groups that have yet to hear the gospel may be found in the cities. Whether "city slickers" or "country bumpkins," they all need the Lord.

As we look for ways to advance the kingdom of God in the cities of China, let us carefully consider the many different people groups in the cities, and seek God's wisdom to develop appropriate strategies to reach every one of them.

ENDNOTES
1. *ICWA Letters* is a publication of the Institute of Current World Affairs, The Crane-Rogers Foundation, Four West Wheelock Street, Hanover, NH 03755 USA.
2. Daniel Wright, "'Hey, Coolie!'—Local Migrant Labor," *ICWA Letters*, January 1999, pp.1-8.
3. "More ethnic people becoming urbanites," *China Daily*, 14 February 2000.
4. Tang Min, "New minority regulations to aid ethnic development," *China Daily*, 6 January 1999.

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Book Review

A Lifeline for China's Unreached Cities

China's Unreached Cities, Volume 1, A Prayer Guide for 52 of China's Least Evangelized Cities, by Paul Hattaway, Asian Minorities Outreach, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 1999. ISBN 974-85303-8-8. In the U.S. order from AMO, PO Box 901, Palestine, TX 75802. International email amo@xc.org US$13/each; US$8.50/2-5 copies.
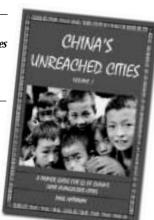
A review by Gary Russell

At a recent pastors' conference, it was found that despite their training and experience as pastors, access to a free press, web sites and a genuine commitment to the great commission, these men knew very little about the half of today's world that has not been reached with the Gospel—specifically, the portion that resides in the People's Republic of China. As I reflected on this, it seemed to me that perhaps the greatest obstacle in China ministry is neither division nor apathy, materialism nor persecution; rather, it is simple ignorance. Hattaway's *China's Unreached Cities* is an effort to break down that obstacle.

Between our understanding of China and her present reality, a "grand canyon" exists. On the one side are

Selection Criteria for the 52 cities profiled in Hattaway's *China's Unreached Cities*

"There are more than 800 official cities in China of which a large majority could be considered most unreached by the Gospel. In determining which cities to include in this first volume, several criteria were considered:

- The size of the city
- The presence of Christianity within the city
- The presence or absence of known missionary endeavors (foreign or Chinese) in that city
- The city's strategic potential as a gateway city to surrounding unreached people groups
- The city's history as a key spiritual stronghold

"Because this book will be used to mobilize new workers to the field, many cities where there is already a known "strategy coordinator" present were not considered. One or two large, well-known cities were included as exceptions to this rule—including Beijing—so that the book will be of interest to a wider audience and not just contain a list of little-known cities that few people have ever visited.

"When comparing cities, preference was given to those whose people have less opportunity to hear the Gospel at the present time. There may be more unreached individuals in a city like Shanghai, but the church there is also larger and stronger than Beijing, for example. Even though both are extremely needy cities, the lost in Shanghai have been judged to probably have a better chance of hearing the Gospel than their counterparts in Beijing."
—*China's Unreached Cities*, pp. 7, 8.

the cities of China with their famous millions riding buses and bicycles, commuting in taxis and even private cars. On the other are the Christians in the outside world—for decades cut off from contact with those cities. Even now, while receiving regular news about them, that news for most is almost always second-hand, almost always political, and almost always contradictory. And so, between these two sides a wide canyon of ignorance and confusion remains. Lack of knowledge inevitably translates into lack of action while paradoxes paralyze. Even as Scripture asks for the unreached, "How shall they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?" we may ask for the reached, "How shall they be sent to those of whom they have not heard?"

China's Unreached Cities, Volume 1, is a lifeline thrown across the canyon in the hope that prayer and workers will cross over as a result. Let us thank Paul Hattaway for the lifeline! It is one of too few.

His book consists basically of two-page profiles on each of 52 relatively unreached cities in China. The format is similar to that of his earlier book, *The 50 Most Unreached People Groups of China and Tibet*, but incorporates some improvements over the earlier one.

In this volume, Hattaway writes with passion. His lengthy introduction, for example, is a heartcry to those on the "reached" side of the canyon to cross over to the "unreached." It is moving without being emotional and challenging without being condemning. In addition, the page of quotes from earlier missionaries, found at the beginning, is powerful, providing motivation as well as historical perspective.

His use of the term "unreached" in the title of his work is an accurate description and realistically describes the contents. In addition, specifically denoting that this book is a "prayer guide," not just a Christian coffee-table book, enhances its usefulness. The foreword he has included provides a quality, independent perspective from Jim Nickel of the Institute of Chinese Studies. Also included is an excellent four-page section on "What Should You

Do Next?" Space is used very efficiently to provide useful information such as historical background, demographics, city-specific prayer points and graphs indicating the status of each city's evangelization.

Inevitably, the choice of which 52 cities were included can be debated. I am somewhat familiar with a number of the cities listed, but not all of them and would probably have made some different selections. These possible

variations, however, are minor critiques; the overall work he has done is significant. May we learn from brother Hattaway's labors, and let God break our hearts for these lost cities, wherever they may be on the scale of "lostness!"

Gary Russell is the international director of China Harvest and travels frequently to China taking short-term mission teams.

A Second Look at China's Urbanization

In the minds of any who have traveled or lived in China, the word "urbanization" conjures up familiar images: endless processions of taxis clogging narrow streets, construction cranes towering over centuries-old temples and city gates, peasant migrants swarming around crowded train and bus depots, and quaint *hutongs* giving way to towering skyscrapers, each one taller and more imposing than the next.

These pictures aptly symbolize the collision of modernization and tradition taking place in cities across China. Yet China's rapid urbanization has another look as well.

Brent Fulton

Ten years ago Pudong was little more than farmland and low-rise housing across the river from China's quintessential metropolis, Shanghai. Today Pudong is a showcase of China's economic success and, with its new airport and state-of-the-art communications facilities, an important interface with the rest of the world.

Pudong is the crowning achievement of a unique urbanization strategy, described in this issue of *ChinaSource*, which creates new cities from the ground up in order to alleviate pressure on China's existing cities and to spread the benefits of modernization more evenly among its population.

According to an urban planning official in Shanghai's Pudong area, social change in these new cities takes place in three stages, all three of which have obvious implications for witness and service in urban China.

Urbanization itself is the process of creating the environment in which hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people will live and work. Rather than wait and see where these new cities spring up, we should be proactively seeking out opportunities to be involved in the urbanization process as it occurs.

Industrialization in China's new cities is primarily high-tech. Entrepreneurial youth are learning the latest in cyber technology to create an increasingly connected world. Who will connect with them, and how?

Globalization, the last step in the process, is moving China toward greater economic integration with the outside world. In Pudong, joint ventures account for a large part of the area's economic growth, one-third of these projects being financed by overseas Chinese. Cultural integration is also occurring, making the emerging generation of urbanites seem remarkably similar to those in cities around the world. This growing cultural similarity provides new bridges of communication and understanding, but with these come the materialistic mindset, moral ambiguity, and philosophical relativism commonly found in other urban centers.

This is the other face of China's urbanization. Today's village is becoming the city of tomorrow. How we look at urbanization now may well determine whether it will be "a city on a hill" or yet another arena where, in the words of missiologist Roger S. Greenway, "the fiercest battles for minds and hearts are waged on city streets."[1]

1. Roger S. Greenway, "Introduction" in Harvie M. Conn, Ed., *Planting and Growing Urban Churches* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books) 1997, p. 17.

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