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Indigenous Mission Movement from China: A Current Assessment

By Yi Du Kam

The Real Chinese Missionary

Since the term was reintroduced in the mid-1990s, the so-called Back to Jerusalem (BTJ) movement has drawn much debate. Most of these discussions have been held in conferences, smaller groups and closed-door events rather than through literature. There have not been many reports on the overall movement. The most comprehensive overview is from the *ChinaSource* quarterly journal which devoted its entire spring 2006 issue to the topic.

In the early years of the discussion, a good number of China ministry workers and researchers, based on their personal experiences and projection, openly questioned the validity of the BTJ claim of 100,000 missionaries already sent (or ready to be sent) from China.¹ In hindsight, after more than ten years, it can be safely concluded that such concern is indeed valid. The 100,000 figure is an inflated and unrealistic figure for the year 2000, even today. The logic is simple. Had there been 100,000 missionaries ready to go, workers in the field would have observed a few thousand of them in various locations during the intervening years. However, in the last ten years, workers in the field did not see any evidence that supported such a figure.



Glenn Herr

In spite of this, the newly published *Future of the Global Church* still refers to this figure. One wonders if the definition has been changed in the middle of the game. In the early days of the discussion, the working definition of Chinese missionaries followed that of classical missiology as proposed by people like Ralph Winter. Mission was defined as cross-cultural ministry to an unreached people group. Everyone engaged in the discussion, including the church in China, was using this as the definition, even the promoters of the BTJ movement.

A missionary (in Chinese *xuan jiao shi*) is one working cross-culturally, not an itinerant evangelist (in Chinese *xun hui chuan dao ren*) who practices “preaching as he/she travels.” In other words, an itinerant evangelist sent to serve in another part of China within the same culture, even if such an assignment is a long-term assignment, is not counted as a missionary by the Chinese church at large. He or she should not be counted as such by others, including BTJ.

Indeed, it will be much more helpful for the community to follow the same standards of counting missionaries as in Korea and the West. A missionary is someone who is committed to serving cross-culturally for long-term service, excluding any short-term-mission participants.

It is important for the community to agree on the definition of “missionary.” Otherwise, such a high number of “missionaries” will only cause confusion. It will imply a very mature movement, a notion no one involved in China ministry can wholeheartedly support. Furthermore, the fog over the number of missionaries sent from China should be eliminated so that the Body of Christ worldwide can understand the sending situation in China properly.

Survey of Recent Activities

The high-profile triumphalist call is not the only voice or activity. Even as the BTJ movement peaked and waned, there was a steady stream of others, both inside and outside of China, who worked to facilitate the sending of missionaries from China. These workers had varying backgrounds, from both international and overseas Chinese mission agencies. They included Westerners and overseas Chinese, but all had significant China ministry experience. Some had served for many years among minority people groups; others had long experience in leadership development in China; yet others had been active with mobilization for China. However, all had a burden to see China sending out cross-cultural workers in response to the Great Commission. They did not want to operate under the label of the Back to Jerusalem movement for the reasons mentioned earlier. Instead, different labels were used, such as “Sending Cross-cultural Workers from China” or “China as a Sending Country.” They have all preferred to work in a low-profile, minimal publicity manner.

Throughout the last decade, most of these workers have developed their own focus of ministry within the entire spectrum of “China as a Sending Country.” Some taught and trained prospective missionaries; others organized short-term mission teams. Several explored the possibility of forming a mission agency in China. Although there were no formal partnerships created, there were opportunities for these people to meet in various conferences allowing for significant networking and a sharing of resources.

Now, after many years of steady effort, there have been some exciting breakthroughs.² These breakthroughs cover many aspects

of missions.

- Several mission training programs are emerging. These are not just one or two courses on introduction to missions imbedded in a standard pastoral leadership development curriculum but are more formal mission training programs for aspiring missionaries. They can last anywhere from six to twenty-four months and are the academic equivalent of a certificate or degree program in the West.
- Other shorter training programs focusing on special aspects of missionary training have been offered in the last few years. These are typically three months long and cover topics ranging from cross-cultural internship to Bible translation to prefield evaluation of missionaries. Today, some of these programs are indigenized, administered and taught by Chinese nationals.
- Many networks are organizing weekend mission conferences for a group of churches rather than just one or two individual churches having a missions Sunday.
- Prayer meetings and prayer conferences for missions are held regularly.
- The mechanics of organizing short-term mission teams have been well tested and are practiced in many cities. Short-term teams to international destinations as well as minority groups in China are quite common. Even new models of short-term missions are being tested such as a multiple-week driving vision trip to visit minority people groups.³
- Several groups have developed basic frameworks for their own sending structures and are poised to send large groups of workers.
- Training curriculum on missions for the laity are offered and replicated in China.

All these are grass-root movements, led by national church leaders with minimal input from either expatriates or overseas Chinese.

Building Blocks for a Mission Movement from China

In order for China to be fully engaged as a mission-sending country, several important building blocks must be developed.

First, there has never been a proper label given to this phenomenon. Back to Jerusalem is not adequate to describe the movement nor is it acceptable to most participants. The focus is not Jerusalem; the focus is fulfillment of the Great Commission. Without a commonly acceptable label, there cannot be any meaningful discussion and development. The name Indigenous Mission Movement from China, shortened to IMM from China, has been suggested and seems to be acceptable to the community.

In addition to the name IMM from China, an appropriate missiology also needs to be developed. There are two main streams of missiology today: open-access-nation (OAN) and creative-access-nation (CAN). These were originally developed in the 80s and 90s. They define missiology based on whether the missionary-receiving field is open to mission activities or not. The fundamental theology used for these two streams is a theology of harvest or a theology of sowing respectively. Both assume mobilization and recruitment in the sending base can be done openly with no government restrictions.

However, neither of these two missiologies is applicable to China where mobilization for missions can only be done discretely. China is still a CAN country according to the classical definition of the term. Furthermore, the context of world missions is very different from the traditional model of sending only from the West. As expressed through the Lausanne movement, missions is “from everywhere to everywhere.” Thus, it is appropriate to define a new missiology for sending from China. A proper label for this is “from CAN to All the World,” shortened to CANTALL missiology. This missiology will establish how to do missions in the context of sending from a CAN country to *all* the world. Particular questions such as doing mobilization discretely and government restrictions on the sending base need to be addressed. To express this in another way, OAN and CAN missiology are both field-based missiology. China needs a mobilization-based missiology—a CANTALL missiology.

The third building block is to establish a network between the Body of Christ in China and the worldwide Body of Christ. IMM from China cannot be done solely by China without reference to the mission activities of the worldwide Body of Christ; the church in China needs to work with the global church. Such connections are beginning to develop, not just for urban churches in China with exposure to the world but also for rural networks. What is more exciting is the emergence of a new generation of mission leaders who have gone outside of China to study missions and are now actively engaged in leadership both on the field and at the home front.

The Reality of IMM from China

Given these developments, the global church may be very tempted to jump on the bandwagon. However, the same warnings voiced in earlier articles in the *ChinaSource* quarterly must be repeated here.⁴ They were raised seven or eight years ago, yet they are still applicable today.

In recent months, there were some rather high profile announcements from several prominent international agency leaders working with Back to Jerusalem and giving it significant public endorsement. However, front line workers from these same agencies are repeating the same concerns discussed years ago. Can BTJ really represent IMM from China? Can the leaders of BTJ speak for China?

The most significant contribution from the global Body of Christ is to pray. Most Western agencies (and Korean as well) are much more interested in actual involvement. However, could it be that the outsider’s role is limited to prayer support, allowing national leaders to lead IMM from China at their own pace? That was how the church in China grew in the 50s, 60s and 70s—

The Indigenous Mission Movement from China: A Historical Review

By Kim-kwong Chan

Before we look into the history of indigenous missions from China, we need some clarifications on the concept of “China” or “Chinese” as to what it denotes; otherwise, we may easily end up with broad slogans and vagueness. It must be clear from whom and from where the mission comes and to whom or where it reaches. There are three basic concepts which we need to distinguish: missions from China (福音出中國), missions from Chinese (福音出中華), and missions from Central China 福音出中原.

When we say “missions from/out of China,” we are talking about gospel missions that comes from within, and out of, the geopolitical boundary of China (be it Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong or Macao). It means that citizens under Chinese sovereignty travel out of this geopolitical region to preach the gospel regardless of the target group—be it Chinese or some other ethnic group. This missions concept emphasizes the nationality, hence the geopolitical sphere, of the missionaries as well as the mission field. For example, Chinese missionaries from Mainland China travel aboard to engage in mission work.

“Missions from Chinese” focuses on the Chinese culture of ethnic Chinese who, regardless of their citizenship, take the gospel to other people, be they ethnic Chinese or otherwise. The emphasis is on the cultural and anthropological aspect of the missionary and his or her work. It can be a Chinese (Han) in Mainland China who engages in mission work among ethnic minority people in China or an ethnic Chinese from Indonesia who evangelizes Chinese or non-Chinese in Russia.

“Missions from/out of Central China” denotes mission work that originated in the geographic area of Central China where, before 1950, ninety percent of the Chinese population (almost all Han Chinese) lived. It is strictly a geohistorical framework. It could be Chinese or foreign missionaries who came from Central-coastal China and established mission work in peripheral areas of China, such as Xinjiang or Yunnan, with the target group being Han Chinese or minority groups, such as Tibetans or Mongolians. Before the 1930s, very few Han Chinese had traveled beyond Central China into the peripheral regions; it was as if those regions were as foreign as a country abroad. It was not until the mid-1930s, when a large number of Han Chinese, displaced by war and natural disasters, began to migrant to those places, that they began to be known to the ordinary Han Chinese. Border regions soon became new and exotic mission fields for Christians from Central-coastal China, even though these regions were politically already part of sovereign China.

Historical Review

Methodist Minister Reverend Uong Nai-siong (黃乃棠) from Fuzhou, Fujian, made one of the first attempts at taking the gospel from/out of China. In 1901, he brought about 1,000 people from China to Sarawak (now East Malaysia) and built a church as well as Christian-based communities there. He and his followers also established a mission to both Chinese and other ethnic groups. Today, the church that he established is the largest Christian church in East Malaysia. Reverend Uong was the first Chinese missionary who left China (during the Qing Dynasty) and built Christian communities outside of sovereign China as Sarawak, at that time, was under the White Rajah, the Brooke Dynasty.



Rev. Uong Nai-siong
mengleiwong.blogspot.hk



Rev. Zhu Xin-wen
stevechukw.blogspot.hk/

One of the first Chinese missionaries who came out of China to preach the gospel exclusively to non-Chinese was Reverend Zhu Xinwen (朱醒魂) of the Chinese Foreign Missionary Union (CFMU). He began to build churches among the Vietnamese in Colon of Saigon in Vietnam (1921) and later among Indonesians in Indonesia in 1928. The churches he established in Colon are still operating today. The churches he established in Indonesia are now known as the Badan Kerja Samatiga Sinode Ex CFMU.

From the 1930s to the 1940s, there were several well-known missions out of Central China to Xinjiang, which captured the attention of some advocates of the Back to Jerusalem (BTJ) movement who have attempted to link the current BTJ with some of these mission legacies. The following is a brief summary of some of these missions.

Chinese Christian Evangelistic Band (中華基督徒佈道會)

This was an indigenous Christian mission group based in Shanghai with supporting agencies such as the North China Theological Seminary (華北神學院). In 1950, it had close to one hundred coworkers in many border regions such as Xinjiang, Qinghai and Yunnan. It had sent a team of missionaries to Xinjiang to do extensive research for three years. They did feasibility studies for a mission and in 1950 came up with a clear mission objective for Xinjiang: targeting the Uighurs as the main people group they would evangelize. They had also come up with some strategies: missionaries must have Uighur language studies, and medical/ agricultural work would be the platform allowing them to evangelize. However, this mission group was disbanded when the new Communist regime came into power.

Northwest Spiritual Band (西北靈工團) Reverend Zhang Guquan of North China Theological Seminary established this band in the early 1940s modeling it after the Jesus Family as a faith mission where all members shared things in common. There was no administrative structure; it was a prototype of the early Christian community. Most of its members were from Shandong with some from Henan, Shaanxi and Shanghai. This band had no clear objective in mind, no map and no funding, but they kept traveling toward the northwest region and most ended in Xinjiang. At its height, it had about forty members; many joined and left. Along the way they targeted Han Chinese for evangelism. No one learned the Uighur language and no attempt was ever made to evangelize the Uighur. In 1950, this group was disbanded by the new Xinjiang government. Reverend Zhang was arrested and later died and buried in Xinjiang. Most of the remaining members stayed and died in Xinjiang.

Preaching the Gospel to All Places Band (遍傳福音團, translated as the BTJ Band by Helen Bailey) In the early 1940s, Reverend Mark Ma challenged some students, at a China Inland Mission (CIM) Bible School in Shaanxi, to mission work. After fasting and prayer, some students felt moved to preach the gospel from Northwest China, through Central Asia and on to Mount Zion in Jerusalem as the penultima of the Second Coming of Christ. They formed a band beginning with a handful and eventually numbered about twenty. They went to Xinjiang and attached themselves mostly to the local Han Chinese church established by CNEC (see following group). There was no attempt to evangelize the Uighurs. Their mission concept was to travel through these regions passing out gospel tracts along the way. A couple of their members arrived in Kashgar in 1949 which was the farthest they reached. In 1950, the new Xinjiang government also disbanded this group. Reverend Mark Ma and about half the members had left this band before the Communist took over Xinjiang. Rev. Ma had settled in Chongqing and never returned to Xinjiang. About half of the remaining members of this band shared the fate as the members of the Northwest Spiritual Band mentioned above.

Christian Native Evangelistic Crusade/Chinese National Evangelism Commission (CNEC) (中華傳道會) In 1945, Paul and Cora Li, missionaries of CNEC in Yunnan, applied to be relocated to Xinjiang to begin mission work there. In 1945, they built the first church in Dihua (now Urumqi) Xinjiang with trilingual services: Chinese, Uighur and Russian. In 1946 they baptized more than twenty-five people. Paul Li was later ordained, perhaps as the first Chinese minister in Xinjiang, and more coworkers from the interior of China joined them. By 1950, CNEC had already established seven churches in Xinjiang. It also ran a small Bible school, and its students later established more churches there. All the churches and the school were forced to close down in 1956 and all the CNEC workers were jailed; later they all died in Xinjiang. All of the churches established are still operating today.



Paul and Cora Li
CNEC Newsletter, September 1947



Dihua Church
CNEC Newsletter, March 1950

Reflections

For more than a century there have been many indigenous mission movements experimenting with mission endeavors from China, from Chinese, as well as from Central-costal China. Their experiences and lessons are vital for us as we formulate our mission strategies within our current context so that we do not “reinvent the wheel” nor repeat some broad, vague mission slogans. The legacies of these forerunners may easily become legends—if not mythologized. The facts are that they tried their best within their limited theological and missiological resources to carry out the task of evangelism. Most laid their life upon the altar for God and the sake of the gospel, and they established solid spiritual foundations for us to carry on the work of missions. To continue their legacy, we have no excuse for not doing a better work than they did. Since we have more sophisticated tools, as well as many more resources at our disposal, we must establish better defined objectives, clearer strategies and more in-depth theological foundations than our forerunners.

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Beyond the Books: The Heart of Prefield Mission Training

By Dan Chevy

I can still remember the sense of God’s call on my life like it was yesterday.

I was in Ukraine on a summer mission trip in 1994. It was a fresh Saturday morning in late May, the sky was blue, the clouds were white—and I was angry. The previous summer, I had first heard of the opportunity to go to Ukraine. I had taken the spring term off from my university studies so I could raise support and prepare for my departure on May 9th. I was very excited about what God was going to do through my life that summer. God raised the support and I was ready to go—or so I believed.

I had been reading books on cross-cultural missions, had learned how to share my faith and readied myself to weather whatever apologetic conundrums I might face. I had read the biographies of a few people I considered lucky enough to be among my forebears in Christian mission. What a legacy—and what a future. I was going to change the world! It was exciting to imagine how God’s pleasure in me would grow because of my heroic obedience. Yet, there I was—having been “in mission” for less than two weeks—utterly disillusioned. By that point, I had been pick-pocketed and my wallet stolen. I had been given a black eye from running into the shoulder of a teammate while swimming in a pool that was built prior to the invention of water—and certainly chlorine. I had sprained my ankle to such a degree that bruised and bulbous swelling extended from my knee to my toes. Upon seeing the pain I was in, my team leader had brought me four ibuprofen pills and a bottle of beer. One elderly local earnestly suggested I spend the next few days alternating compresses of vinegar and urine on my ankle. A teammate had to carry me slung over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes wherever we went.



Gaylan Yeung

The stark contrast between how well I thought I was prepared for mission work and the realities of my experiences was nearly too much to bear. I was miserable. In a frank discussion with my leader, I told him I had been swindled into believing “God would work powerfully through your life in mission. God is going to use you!” I remember specifically telling him, “If I were to leave today, I would never look back. I hate it here, and I don’t like you much either!” I genuinely believed God had called me to take part in this trip; I had felt so zealous for God before I left. Still, here I was “suffering” immediately with the culture and not understanding why God would be allowing these painful things to occur. The experiences I was having didn’t seem to fit the level of obedience I thought I had offered to God in coming. Didn’t he owe me?

But something happened that day in late May. Despite my pride, anger, bitterness and immaturity, I had been given an opportunity to share the Good News with a Ukrainian athlete. His name was Igor. He was slightly shorter than me and had dark brown hair. As we approached the end of the gospel tract I was using, I sensed something in him I had never been blessed to witness before. I asked him if the prayer in the tract expressed the desire of his heart. He said “Yes,” and placed his faith in Jesus. It is difficult to capture the moment within the confines of words, but what happened next left my life changed. I experienced the presence of God tangibly within his love for me and for Igor. God spoke to me in that moment about his love, his patience and his grace juxtaposed to my selfishness and pride. It wasn’t laced with condemnation or exasperation. I just sensed that, against all reason, he was delighted in me through Christ. I was stunned. It was the first moment in my life where the thought hit me, “If God’s love is like *this*, and if he can use someone like me to communicate his love, then I can’t think of anything I’d rather do with my life than point people to Jesus.”

One of the most important components of that summer for me was the wise, mature, Christ-centered leadership God had provided. My life was coming apart. My selfishness, complaining about unmet expectations and critical spirit reasonably deserved exasperation and frustration from my leaders. It would have been understandable if they had sent me home. Instead, I was treated with care and understanding. I sensed they loved me out of *their* character, not my own. They accurately detected a disconnect between my academic knowledge of Jesus’ righteousness credited to me, and how I actually went about ministry. They helped me identify several things that had become idols for me, things which had served as my “functional saviors,” things I trusted in for my righteousness other than Christ. Here are a few of those things:

- obedience
- zeal for the lost
- personal disciplines
- ministry results
- the intensity of my hard work
- superior theological training
- sacrifices
- skills
- strategic mission objectives
- Public recognition for any of these

It was not until these things were stripped from me that I realized they had been my idols. God was gracious to give me wise leaders who could sniff these things out in my life and help me begin the process of resting completely in Christ’s finished work on the cross.

As our current team helps train Chinese to answer God’s call on their lives for mission, we think we can learn a few things from my experience. As we all know, these experiences are not unique. Many of us go into mission work with a great amount of zeal, believing ourselves to be ready to face whatever may come. Yet, we don’t know anyone in mission who hasn’t experienced these things in one way or another. As prefield trainers for new Chinese missionaries, we see them struggling with many of the same things. The purpose of this article is not to suggest another set of lessons to incorporate into the training experience; rather, we are suggesting a kind of training *environment* essential to seeing Chinese missionaries well prepared for what they will face on the field.

Many excellent things have been written about what components should comprise prefield mission training curricula. These components include theological knowledge, missiological instruction, ministry skills training, strategy formulation, platform preparation and so on. We affirm these whole-heartedly, but, as we have repeatedly learned the hard way, the “academics” of this preparation are not enough. We cannot simply add a module to satisfy this need. We must *be* people who are deeply at rest in what Christ has done for us. There are no short-cuts. (Let us as trainers also be vigilant so as not to allow our “productivity” in cranking out trainees to become a functional savior in our own lives.) Prefield training must consist in a large part of drilling the gospel deep into the hearts of those preparing to go. Trainers must bear in mind that these things may not sink in until the functional saviors the trainees have trusted in prove to be false. Yet, as ministers of the gospel ourselves, we must be part of pointing our brothers and sisters to Jesus.

Please read the two columns below from side to side. The bullet points go together. The left column describes a person who is a minister of the gospel, but not experiencing it personally. The right column describes a person who is a minister of the gospel and *is* experiencing it personally. As you may suspect, the left column is highly auto-biographical.

A Minister of the Gospel NOT Experiencing It Personally	A Minister of the Gospel Experiencing It Personally
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • becomes over-worked and unable to rest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is able to work hard and rest well
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has a manic-depressive experience of ministry joys and pains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experiences a light yoke of following Christ in ministry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will eventually experience the departure of joy personally, professionally and in the family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is characterized overall by growing joy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • becomes a driven person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is able to sabbath
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • becomes forceful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is attentive to the leading of the Holy Spirit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fears failure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can risk much and rest well
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • becomes terrified to hope that God can/will “do immeasurably more” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can walk forward in joyous faith trusting that God is at work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • functions in a system of merit, i.e. I am worthy of respect, admiration and financial support to the degree that I have seen visible ministry fruit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • senses God’s call on his/her life and is patient for him to bring the fruit in and through his/her life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is prone to believe that ministry results have come because “I’m all that,” or more likely, believes a lack of ministry results are because “I’m so screwed up.” This neutralizes the power of the gospel and robs God of glory and robs the person of indomitable joy, peace and patience as well as the rest of the fruit of the Spirit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is liberated into Christ-centered self- forgetfulness—or true humility. God’s glory is manifest, his power is made perfect in our weakness and his love is communicated with power. Those around this person are drawn to Jesus. This person experiences the fruit of the Holy Spirit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can articulate all the “right” answers but lacks personal conviction and the corresponding fruit of the Spirit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lives and loves in the light of Jesus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • causes words that are intended to give life, bring hope, allow rest and foster peace to become a gravel-dry mockery in the heart of him who is uttering them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is ineffably stunned by Jesus’ love for him when given the chance to point someone to Christ
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • does not ultimately build followers of Jesus but rather harried religious practitioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • builds people who are not moralistic but Christocentric
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has a reduced chance of longevity in ministry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will follow Jesus through joy and pain regardless of occupation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • becomes more vulnerable to addictive behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is satisfied deep within because God is satisfied with him in Christ
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is likely to build disciples who reflect similar issues further exacerbating the spread of non <i>Christ</i>-centered laborers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is likely to build disciples who reflect similar strengths resulting in <i>Christ</i>-centered lifetime laborers who build <i>Christ</i>-centered lifetime laborers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is likely to become bitter at God when results don’t come 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is likely to be indomitably joyful through whatever comes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • becomes angry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is filled with joy observable to himself and others

View from the Wall

Warm-hearted; Cool-headed

Thoughts and Reflections on International Mission Experiences

By A Mission Agency Member*

I often recall meeting with a missionary from China. Touching his heart, this missionary said, “The heart for missions work needs to be fervent.” Then patting his head, he proceeded to say, “However, the head needs to remain calm, never the reverse: hot-headed and cold-headed.”

I feel that being “warm-hearted and cool-headed” is a fitting description for the progressive growth to maturity of Mainland Chinese missionaries and their teams. This article is not a description of the overall structure and system of Chinese missions; rather, it is intended to describe, from my observations and experiences, several often overlooked areas in China’s early involvement in international missions. This self-reflection and sharing with fellow workers hopefully will result in intercessory prayer from members of Christ’s Body and in their enlightenment.



[flickr.com/photos/stalkerr/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/stalkerr/)

Visa and Status

I believe that most churches and organizations in China involved in international missions would agree that missionary visa application is a very difficult problem. First of all, a Chinese passport is a very “inconvenient” one to use. Most countries have very complicated conditions for a visa application when using a Chinese passport. If a visa is easily obtained, a longer stay is hard to attain. If a visa permits a longer stay, then it is harder to apply for. Secondly, though some “open” mission field countries have religious worker visas, mission organizations in China cannot, or have to be careful whether to, apply for such visas.¹



Chinese missionaries will more likely apply for student visas and business visas. Some Western and overseas Chinese mission agencies as well as overseas Chinese Christian businessmen have used businesses and work in the field countries as platforms to help Mainland China missionaries. Recently, I have met some China house church leaders who visited mission field countries and quietly found ways to apply for longer duration visas. This excites me, but I am also worried that some Chinese churches and mission agencies, when faced with the difficulties of visa application, will resort to short cuts. They may entrust their applications to visa agents of questionable background. For these agents, with money, any visa is possible. Even when some agents are able to get visas for longer stays (six months to one year), they do not inform the applicants of the specific conditions required by the immigration department for their stay. As a result, during their stay, the missionaries holding valid visas unknowingly violate the immigration requirements. They may also find out during visa renewals that their agents forged documents in their original visa applications.

The missionaries are then faced with the subsequent problem of having bad records with the immigration authorities that have nothing to do with religious persecution. This leaves the missionaries with testimonies they should not have in their field countries or intermediate stations.

Mainland Chinese mission organizations have already, or have gradually, been establishing various models for long-term visa application for certain countries. Given that most Chinese mission organizations are still operating “underground” or “partially underground,” it is not easy for them to exchange knowledge and information with one another. However, I still encourage mission organizations and Chinese churches faced with troublesome visa applications to refrain from taking risks when faced with pressure to send workers out quickly.²

Language Learning

Increasingly, Chinese churches and mission organizations have been focusing on field country language learning. However, the length of time and level of language education are still debatable. For example, a worker with only several months of language education was sent out to the field without being given a period of time clearly marked for further language learning.

Expectations from sending agencies and the initial excitement of being on the field will easily make language learning for the missionary nonstrategic and unimportant in the short-term. However, as the ministry expands over time, the worker will definitely experience difficulty in making social contacts, let alone deeper conversations with the locals. Then language learning becomes a priority for ministry with its marked demand on time and energy. This scenario should not be repeated.

There are also missionaries who, under pressure to be effective, turn to ministries targeting overseas Chinese or international students from China. Such ministries are easier to initiate. Though this population is definitely a strategic ministry target for some mission organizations, for some missionaries this shift in target easily becomes an excuse and escape from the challenging demands of language learning. I suggest that Chinese churches and mission agencies be proactive and give long-range consideration to their ministry strategies and care of missionaries. This includes more teaching of methodologies for learning language during cross-cultural training as well as providing a period for language learning with proficiency requirements once on the field. During this period, ministries need to be reduced or eliminated and provision made for the care of the missionary. (During this phase, missionaries are more likely to feel ineffective). For foreign, cross-cultural missionaries (E3³), the investment in money, time and energy involved in language learning is by no means small, but it is well worth it.

Supervision and Care

The concept of caring for the missionaries should be infused throughout the mission organization. Everyone involved with the process, from those working back home in the background to those on the field, should understand this. This concept should be reflected in their work in practical ways. Another suggestion is for the Chinese mission organizations to early on consider setting up a care department capable of providing professional care periodically or in special circumstances as needed. I also appeal to Mainland Christians who are professional counselors to be trained and ready for working in the field of missionary care.

E3 missionaries should not simply be regarded as overseas workers; their life-long ministry is very valuable and important. I strongly suggest that Chinese churches and mission agencies pay close attention to the relationship between a missionary's current mission assignment and his or her lifelong service. The system of supervision and care should be one way to help grow these missionaries. Rigorous screening, strategic training, a systematic plan of care, early participation in the aforementioned short-term missions, visa and status, language learning, field management, supervision, care and so on, are all integral parts in forming the framework and system of a mission organization and should not be ignored or neglected in the early development of its international mission work.⁴

Prototype of ministry

Recommendation #1: Make a collaborative effort in developing any new field ministry. It is not difficult to find Western, Chinese and Korean missions as well as local churches that already exist in most new mission field countries. They are usually very open to assisting and collaborating with Chinese missionaries and their ministries. The churches in China and the mission organizations need to consider using "double sending mission" as a way to begin international mission works. This means that for a certain period of time, the Chinese mission organization commissions another more mature mission field supervisor in the field country to care for the missionary from China. The missionary can be totally involved in the ministries of this mature mission agency during this period. The commissioned care and supervision should have agreed upon parameters such as ministry progress, life guidance, daily living care (that is, supplying information and resources for living arrangements but not the provision of living expenses) and similar items. This model of "double sending mission" should be based on trust and mutual agreement between both parties. I suggest that in this type of collaboration, the Chinese missionary's living and ministry expenses as well as benevolent funds should come from China.

Recommendation #2: Consider using the short term to confirm or refute the long term as a way to start a new missionary's work. Often, intermediate stations to the fields are used as a way for missionaries to know if they indeed have a burden for long-term mission work. What I mean by using the short term to confirm or refute the long term is having a short-term assignment (two years suggested) for the missionary in the previous model of "double sending mission" to participate in and observe how a ministry is established under the care of a mature mission agency while the missionary discerns if he or she is called to long-term missions. The reason it should not be for less than two years is that the first year is usually for adjustment. Contribution to ministry emerges gradually during the second year or after. These two years should not include language learning. If language learning is included, then care should be taken when considering taking part in ministries.

Within the churches in China and the mission organizations, there is hardly anyone with intercultural field experience. Almost all decision makers and participants in mission organizations have no cross-cultural experience. The first generation of Chinese field directors needs to emerge, and mission teams and systems also need to grow. Therefore, the two aforementioned models may be the best choices for the initial involvement of Chinese churches and missions on the international scene which currently is most prominent in ministries with teaching Chinese as a strategy. May the churches and the mission organizations in China mature to the extent that they in turn can bless new missionaries from other countries on the fields in the future.

The emerging mission organizations in China and their missionaries whom I came to know well are, for the most part, very humble. They are humble because they understand that they do not know international missions (especially E3) or their knowledge of them is very limited. I hope that the Chinese churches and mission organizations will become informed, and after gaining knowledge, experience and effectiveness will remain humble but courageous. All glory unto the One who deserves it!

¹ Taiwan Missionary Care Fellowship; Professor Chen Zhangyi's "Chinese Missionary Care" seminars.

² The vast majority of house churches in China are not registered with the government due to faith issues and various other reasons. Mission organizations definitely have no way to register. If they are registered, it is as cultural exchange agencies or business entities; as such they cannot satisfy the religious worker visa application requirements. There are also concerns that those missionaries who hold religious worker visas might be obstructed in leaving once they have returned to China.

³ E3 identifies evangelism of people from radically different cultures. It is supposed that evangelists attempt to cross at least three barriers in E3 efforts. For example, for Americans to work with Saharan nomads it would require crossing church barriers, a language barrier and a major lifestyle barrier. E3 is the most difficult kind of evangelism.

⁴ Currently overseas Chinese mission organizations and gospel organizations have had more and more experience and research in missionary care. This can be a good source of help to the churches and mission organizations in Mainland China.

*The author is a member of a local mission agency in China and has been involved in international cross-cultural sending for several years.

Peoples of China

Current Needs for Missional China

By John Zhang

With the growth of China's economic and political power in recent decades, China's becoming a missional country has been discussed and debated within the world of missions. The Back to Jerusalem (BTJ) vision has been shared broadly among Chinese churches and has raised much interest in missions among Chinese Christians. Over the past twenty years, with the growing openness towards the western border of the country, many Chinese Christians have tried at various levels to put into practice this vision. Frankly speaking, we are still at the beginning stage of joining the world family of missions. This article seeks to explore some current needs based on past experiences and lessons.



Joann Pittman, <http://joannpittman.com>

A Concrete Missions Strategy beyond Slogans

BTJ has become so well-known that every time missions is shared in a local congregation, some people are already familiar with the term BTJ. However, missions mobilization usually stops there. Over the past fifteen years, not many new hymns about missions have been composed by Chinese Christians. The few existing missions-related hymns are usually sung only at missions-specific occasions. Quite often the word "missions" is considered a "big" term for a project. The more missions is promoted as slogans, the more distant it becomes to daily Christian life.

Chinese churches need to make missions more concrete; a more concrete plan, a more concrete project, a more concrete expression of faith and a more concrete life-style are required. While it is not bad to use some big terms for missions, it would be more effective to start with smaller, practical changes in Christian life and the practice of faith. In order to achieve that, we need the following to be part of missions strategy.

- a. Prayer should be made by every congregation and individual asking God where he is leading in regards to specific mission needs. BTJ is a good idea, but not every Chinese church needs to distribute gospel tracts on the streets of Jerusalem. If this is true, then what should my/our involvement in missions be in this age as commissioned by our missionary God? How can we move towards that goal in our daily life? Indeed, in this age of information and technology, we are literally able to access any people group without making much effort.
- b. Churches need to work together practically for missions. Individual Christians with God's calling need to dedicate themselves to mission work. Churches need to develop plans to support such individuals. Literature about missions needs to be published and circulated. Mission concepts need to be shared at all age levels. All of these things should be done in partnership across congregations and geographic cities.
- c. Missions should be considered a long-term process with a concrete strategy. What should be the step-by-step strategy for each given target? For example, most churches that have sent people into the Sichuan earthquake ministry have never considered a long-term plan. The maximum duration of any ministry that I have heard of is about three years. With such a short-term perspective, it is no wonder that we see little strategy for most of the field teams. The majority of workers are satisfied with a "fast-food" mentality level of resources and training (such as one week to learn childhood education skills, three days of counseling training, three days of instruction in community development and so on). Sending churches often expect quick results from mission involvement.
- d. Chinese churches need to spend time developing a model of mission mobilization and mission sending for today's circumstances. It is fairly easy to copy what worked in North America and apply it to today's China; however, it would not be effective. It is the task of Chinese churches to work this out for China. For example, how can Chinese missionary endeavors use any open, available, channels that China has in Africa and other countries? What laws are already available for Christians to use to protect themselves as they do mission work?

In summary, concrete, long-term, sustainable plans need to be developed and implemented among Chinese churches. Good, practical collaboration needs to take place among churches.

A Practical Training Process beyond Classroom Lectures

Over the past decades, almost every church network has been working hard on training programs for ministers to serve in their congregations. With the threat of cults and heresies very real, biblically-centered training has been the core of most training programs. As a movement towards missions takes place in China, current missionary trainers believe it is natural to add some mission-related subjects to current curriculums that will help to shape cross-cultural missionaries. During dozens of interviews with the trainers and graduates from such training programs, this thinking has been confirmed. However, this does not necessarily produce cross-cultural missionaries. To be frank, such training programs are not even successful in training ministers for today's Chinese churches.

Another misunderstanding is who the missionary candidate trainees should be. During the 1970s and 1980s, most of the trainees did not even have junior high degrees. Today, many training centers are proudly able to announce that all their trainees are high school or even college graduates. It seems that the higher academic level the trainees have, the more successful is the missionary

candidate training.

These two practices definitely have their value. However, cross-cultural missionary training has a unique purpose, and thus there are unique evaluation criteria for the outcomes. Cultural understanding should be the key indicator for missionary training with solid biblical training as a foundation. This two-pronged approach puts most of the training effort in the classroom setting which inevitably limits the development of some key areas. This author thinks the following aspects need to be considered in a cross-cultural missionary training program.

- ***A clear vision and calling.*** This should be the basic qualification for missionary candidates—and it is not necessarily “taught” in a missions class. Thus, a good missionary training program has to connect with good discipleship programs.
- ***Cross-cultural sensitivity.*** The passion for another culture is to some extent God’s gift to a missionary. Missionary candidates can be exposed to various cultures during training programs and thus develop that passion and sensitivity. Cultural sensitivity also involves the ability to learn new ways in a new culture.
- ***Self-reflection on Chinese culture.*** This is important because missions mean sharing the gospel rather than selling Chinese culture. This self-awareness is based on solid biblical understanding.
- ***Life-skills for sustainable missions.*** These skills include those necessary to obtain gainful employment and using creativity in a new environment.
- ***Intentional discipleship approaches.*** In the term “discipleship” we include both evangelism and leadership training as different stages of the discipleship process.

As can be seen, all of the above characteristics have little to do with the academic level of achievement; rather, they must be acquired and tested in real-life situations. In one sentence, *missionary training needs to be expanded beyond the classroom.* In China’s situation, it is the missionary trainer’s responsibility to develop models that bring the trainees out of the traditional classroom. An effective missionary training program is less likely to be secretive.

A Field Coordination Infrastructure beyond Just Sending to the Fields

Over the past two decades, Chinese churches have sent missionaries to less-evangelized provinces within China and to other countries. Initial studies indicate two major components of the sending structure that are missing, namely, a plan for missionary care as well as for field coordination (the area director’s role). The missionary care program is partially covered by the church’s partnerships and partially addressed from the on-field coordination side. This allows us to discuss it as one need: effective field coordination.

Most missionaries are sent to the field because of their passion for a people group or a specific country. Being the first Christian worker on a particular field, it is natural for that individual to encounter all the struggles. However, if the missionary workers that follow must deal with the same problems, it is due to a lack of field coordination. In general, field coordination handles (sometimes only partially) the following issues.

- ***The orientation of new missionaries*** to the field.
- ***The distribution of assignments*** in the field. This involves providing direction in ministry, working in collaboration and partnership with other workers on the team and/or with other agencies and providing job evaluation.
- ***Field pastoral care*** for the workers and their families. This includes financial sustainability.

We suggest the following solutions for these needs:

- ***Establish partnerships with existing on-the-field mission agencies and indigenous ministries or churches.*** These agencies will be able to direct Chinese churches to the fields with the greatest needs and advise how mission work should be done in those fields.
- ***Train field coordinators starting now.*** We propose sending special observers with specific tasks to the fields. These observers are to work *under* existing indigenous ministries to serve whatever needs they may have. During this process, these observers will become “spotters” for Chinese churches regarding missions. They will also focus on collaboration and partnerships for future missionaries from China.

These solutions are possible and, to some extent, necessary, because today within the 10/40 Window there are indigenous Christians in almost every country. God has already begun to work—before missionaries even arrive.

A Missiological Reflection on the Chinese Church beyond the Mission Task

We also need to reflect on how God has shaped today’s church in China. It is not hard to say that the level of mission involvement reflects the level of local gospel ministry. Missions is not just a task or project; rather it is God’s calling to Chinese churches—even before China becomes economically strong. Without reflection on the status of Chinese churches today, we would be ignorant of what God is doing in us and through us.

Honestly speaking, the status of the Chinese churches is not necessarily optimistic. There are large numbers of new converts reported; however, the impact of the gospel on the community is still minimal. Atheistic teaching has been present in China for more than a century. History and values have been distorted to some degree within the basic educational system—and we grew up in this environment. With a history of more than three thousand years as an empire, Chinese, especially Han Chinese, are quite ethnocentric. We implicitly despise people who are different from us. Throughout the past half century, Chinese churches

Book Review: *Following the Servant Role of Jesus* *Cross-Cultural Servanthood: Serving the World in Christlike Humility*

by Duane Elmer

Reviewed by Mary Ann Cate

Cross-Cultural Servanthood: Serving the World in Christlike Humility by Duane Elmer. IVP Books, 2006, 212 pages. ISBN-10: 0830833781; ISBN-13: 978-0830833788; paperback, \$12.68 or Kindle edition \$9.99 at Amazon.com.

I remember the 1958 debut of Eugene Burdick's *The Ugly American* as I was in my final years of high school. While I'm not sure when I actually read the fictional stories of Americans living abroad, I do remember my reaction to the sometimes gross mistakes and negative impressions those overseas Americans made. I said to myself, "I don't ever want to be like that." Brash, bullies, self-promoting, insensitive American travelers and residents pranced across the pages making enemies of their hosts, giving the impression that this is what America produces.

It was 1965 when upon graduating from college I entered the Peace Corps and became another American living overseas in North Africa. Our training programs, both prior to our arrival and in-country, helped prepare us for the varieties of culture we would face, and for how we should present ourselves as American women in a Muslim country living among village people. While my Christian faith informed many of my decisions of how to act, memories of how others preceding me had "blown it" caused me to be very careful so that I would not be perceived as "another one of those ugly Americans."

Duane Elmer's *Cross-Cultural Servanthood* seeks to prepare Christians for cross-cultural service by looking at Jesus-style servanthood. Reflecting back on his and his wife's successes and failures to be servants of the master engaged in kingdom work, he exposes attitudes of superiority, paternalism and status which accompany many of us as we begin cross-cultural ministry. The author suggests that we divest ourselves of our own culture and be willing to "play" a new culture in order for our message to be perceived. While this may be hard at the beginning, it brings rewards as we follow the humble servant role of Jesus.

"When God chose to connect with humans, he did so as a servant." Jesus chose "the order of the towel" as he stooped to make a way for us to have a permanent eternal relationship with God the Father through his death and resurrection. While he is Lord—a role he shares with no one else—we are to follow him in his servant role, one of humility, openness to others and acceptance of them, of trusting, listening, learning, understanding and serving. The majority of the book unwraps the process of becoming a servant.

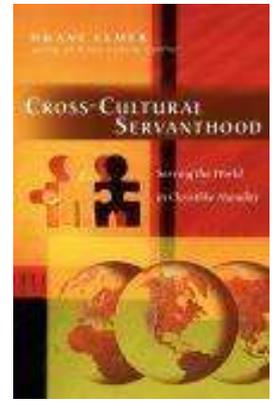
Dr. Elmer suggests that throughout scripture **humility** is mandated for believers, "...but the way it is expressed takes on a cultural face." In order to understand how it is expressed in each culture, we need to understand and appreciate the culture, repent of our ignorance, arrogance and our Western judgmental attitudes and enter into dialogue with our hosts. This way we will find "...those cultural equivalents that express humility."

Openness is an ability to welcome people into our presence and make them feel safe. Hospitality captures the biblical ideal. My time living in three Middle Eastern cultures taught me more about welcoming strangers than America ever could. Arabs say that a guest is a gift from God. Welcoming me at the door with extravagant words of welcome, ushering me into the parlor and serving me tea and sweets was all part of making me feel honored and safe in their home. Learning to give and receive hospitality opens a place for dialogue, continuing friendship and witness.

Acceptance, says Dr. Elmer, is "...the ability to communicate value, worth and esteem to another person." He suggests that Western culture is largely a culture of rejection; biblical acceptance begins with God who accepts us and should lead us to accept others in his name. Elmer reminds us that all men are created in the image of God and his likeness appears in every person. Therefore no one is small, worthless. We cannot honor God and treat others with less value. For the cross-cultural worker, language study and the ability to communicate in the local language communicates that we value others. Learning to wait in cultures that require patience is a frustration to many and we need to learn how to cope with it. Ethnocentrism with its unfavorable judgments is a handicap especially for Westerners. Rigid boundaries stymie dialogue.

Trust is like a bridge over which relationships travel, says Dr. Elmer. How can we build those bridges with people who are different from us? He suggests that building trust takes time. Learning language helps to bridge that gap as we learn to know the people we are serving. Trusting also takes risks—bumps in our relationships that we have to work out; learning to view life from the other's perspective. I remember shopping for our maid and her family while on a furlough one time. As there were children in the family, I bought some nice clean clothes for them and presented them to her when we returned. However, I never saw the children wear them. I suspect they were too nice for her neighborhood, or perhaps she needed cash more and sold them, or maybe she was afraid the "evil eye" would harm the children in their new clean clothes, so she put them away. She would have been happier with a bag of rice, I'm sure.

Building trust across cultures is a challenge. Trust busters can be things such as lateness, considered impolite in the West but totally acceptable in many non-Western cultures where "events and people" are held dear. Our Western preoccupation with money, when nationals ask how much we pay for rent or some other item, is another example. In some cultures, handholding by



males may be a sign of friendship. Direct confrontation as a way to resolve conflict is very Western but not common in other cultures; the use of a mediator is much more acceptable in much of the world.

Learning is an intentional ability to get information about others, from others and with others. As new arrivals in another culture, we should be consumed with learning about the history, culture, values, religion, family values—everything we can possibly learn about in order to show that we care about our new friends. When we learn from someone, we are showing them honor. Hours spent with our language coaches, dependant on them for our daily welfare, tells them that we need and want their insights. In both the countries where my husband and I learned a language, our language teachers were life-lines into the culture helping us with cooking lessons, shopping, visiting landmarks, explaining the culture to us and teaching me how to dress appropriately for that culture. Learning with another person suggests synergy in relationship as we become brothers and sisters and members of his body.

Understanding according to Dr. Elmer is “. . .the ability to see how the pieces of the cultural puzzle fit together and make sense to them and to you.” A basic question to have on the tip of our tongue is “Why?” This is not easy, but it treats others with dignity and is a way of serving them.

Serving, the last of the process abilities, seeks to affirm others’ dignity by empowering them to live godly lives. Our example is Christ. Dr. Elmer contrasts leadership and servanthood but says “If we servants emerge as leaders, let it be that God’s people have seen the servant attitude and wish to affirm our giftedness. . .and [this] is honor bestowed on us by others.”

This book concludes with a chapter on the life of Joseph and his example of biblical servanthood.

While this book is a bit tedious, it is important. It could be helpful when used as a discussion book between cultures learning from each other how to flesh out the subject of servanthood. For me, parts of it were convicting as I examined the way I welcome others, affirm them, judge them—or not. I would prefer a more biblical study looking at the life of Christ in all the areas Dr. Elmer has suggested so that definitions do not dominate but rather Jesus’ patterns of relating to people and other cultures.

Mary Ann Cate has served with Christar for 39 years mainly in Middle Eastern cultures and as director of Women’s Ministry at Christar. Currently, she and her husband are in the process of moving to North Carolina to continue ministry with International Students on local campuses.

Beyond the Books Continued from page 7

The risks of not providing an environment where trainees are pointed to Christ’s finished work on the cross are enormous.

No one has done any formal study on Chinese missionaries who have been sent out: how long they last on the field and the cross-cultural effectiveness of their eventual ministry. Some have ventured to estimate that in several countries in Southeast Asia, out of 100 or so such workers who arrived in these countries, less than ten managed to stay beyond six months and engaged in actual cross-cultural work. The rest either returned home, having made no perceivable plan to stay long-term, or they ended up reaching the immigrant or business population from China. Most front-line practitioners have seen similar trends. It is our assertion that this attrition rate is because most of the training currently available is primarily addressing the academics of mission preparation.

The gospel-centered training environment we are suggesting is not easy; it is messy—but it is essential.

Dan Chevry and the Sojourner Cross-Cultural Training Team coauthored this article as a joint-effort. Sojourner provides prefield training for Chinese missionaries.

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Current Needs for Missional China Continued from page 11

have been under great pressure from the government. Naturally, we hesitate before someone with great authority. In addition, churches have been fighting heresies and cults; community involvement has often been neglected or a low priority. How then should Chinese churches be witnesses of the gospel against such a background?

The answer will inevitably affect the course the Chinese church takes regarding missions. The discipleship training program will shape the future generation of Chinese missionaries. A practicum in China will provide first-hand experience to missionary candidates. The missiological and theological emphasis of the Chinese churches will naturally become their missionaries’ emphasis in their mission fields.

This task needs the collaboration of Chinese pastors, theologians and missiologists. So far, there are gaps among these groups. For Chinese churches to join in with other of God’s people in the endeavor for world missions is still a long ways off. It is a huge task—but also a huge honor. May the Lord bless us!

John Zhang is a member of a local mission agency in China. He has been involved in mission mobilization, cross-cultural training and international partnership for several years.

Indigenous Mission Movement from China: A Current Assessment Continued from page 3

with no foreign intrusion but only the working of God.

Expatriates must resist the temptation of financing IMM from China with outside money. Dependency will kill IMM from China. Many outside agencies, out of good will, are paying for entire training curricula. Participation in a three-month training program outside of China can be presented in two very different ways. It can be promoted as a cross-cultural training program only for those who are serious about missions, or it can be misrepresented as an all-expense-paid visit to a foreign country. The former will draw high caliber candidates committed to missions; the latter will only attract people with little understanding of missions and much less commitment. Several of the training programs outside of China are facing this significant challenge. They are heavily subsidized. They do not lack students, but they do not have the quality students such training requires. Many of the students are clearly not interested in missions. Indeed, the case can be made for requiring students in these training programs to demonstrate their commitment by paying for the cost, or a portion of it, commensurate with their financial ability.

Pieces of the jigsaw puzzle are falling into place. The picture is slowly coming into focus. There are positive indicators that give us hope and the expectation that IMM from China will become a reality. Outside of the traditional Western sending bases, there has been significant sending from Asia (Korea and India), Latin America (the COMIBAM movement) and even Africa (the MANI movement). We long for the day when missionaries from China will work in international teams. We long for the day when the unreached world, thinking of a missionary, will see a Chinese face working alongside Caucasians, Asians, Iberians and Africans.

¹ See, for example, Sam Chiang's review of the Back to Jerusalem Movement book in WEA's *Connection Magazine*, 2005. He states: "...many China church watchers have become resoundingly concerned with the claims of this movement." The spring 2006 issue of the *ChinaSource* quarterly details such concerns.

² Due to security concerns, no specific details about these developments can be openly identified.

³ A personal driving tour in China is not such a far-fetched idea today. See, for example, the experience of a non-Christian expatriate driving through the countryside in China in *Country Driving* by Peter Hessler.

⁴ See the fall 2005 and spring 2006 issues of the *China Source* quarterly. The reader is encouraged to get these back issues and read them in detail.

Yi Du Kam has extensive Chinese ministry experience and now works with multiethnic teams in China.

Resource Corner

365 宣教靈修日引 (365 Daily Mission Devotionals)

edited by Ng Yein Yein
Available in Chinese only

This daily devotional guide is a helpful tool for Chinese-speaking Christians who want to be intentional in their prayers for missions. It includes:

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- Prayer items for every day of the year.

For a preview of the book go to [365 宣教靈修日引](#)

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Editorial

More Than a Label: “Back to Jerusalem” to “Indigenous Mission Movement from China”

Guest Editorial by TT and Mu Xi*

Back to Jerusalem (BTJ) has raised the expectation that China can be a significant missionary-sending country. With an exciting slogan, a clear target and a specific number of missionaries, it claims China is to take up the last baton of the Great Commission and bless the nations. This optimistic projection assumes:

1. The baptism of fire experienced by the Chinese church in earlier decades will be a new driving force for missions.
2. The house church model developed under very restrictive government policy will become a new paradigm for ministry in CAN countries.
3. Explosive economic growth in China will finance this missions endeavor.
4. A big church membership base will make sending a large number of workers possible.

Yet, after many years of much publicity, these words have been like thunder with no rain (“只见楼梯响、不见人下来”). In a recent international conference, in response to reports of 29,000 workers sent by the United States, 20,000 from Korea and 300 from Mongolia, the Chinese delegate’s input was “we are still waiting.” This response has drawn emotional outcries of “cheater and international scandal” from some circles.

The most urgent steps to make IMM from China a reality are:

1. *A clear missiology*: This is pointed out by several authors in this issue. The Great Commission is not exclusively Chinese. One African delegate in the 2012 Ethne Conference expressed this clearly by saying: “Even if Jerusalem is the goal of missions, it is approaching Jerusalem from all directions—not just the East. The Great Commission is not an exclusive mandate given only to East Asia.” The high profile BTJ publicity has already caused backlashes from Islamic states in the Middle East, even through diplomatic channels. Such an approach is contrary to the low-profile, non-confrontational Christian witness practiced in most CAN ministries today. In the place of BTJ, IMM from China has fast become a more acceptable label and model.
2. *A cooperative network*. Up until now, the few churches involved in cross-cultural missions have been working independently. Most projects were coordinated and funded by overseas organizations with China providing the labor. This is similar to the way China has become the world’s factory for manufacturing. A cooperative network would involve the following:
 - a. Organizing regional and national mission conferences that will support regional sending agencies.
 - b. Learning from the rich experience of overseas sending agencies through exchange and participation in international conferences.
 - c. Adapting mobilization tools that are effective in other parts of the world.
3. *A resource center*. A center of world missions, similar to the ones in the West and Korea, should be established as suggested by Kam. The role of the center would be as follows:
 - a. Collect Chinese missiological writings and encourage development of indigenous authors.
 - b. Translate and publish overseas writings to broaden local missiological thinking.
 - c. Organize mobilization and training courses while establishing a standard for missionary training.
 - d. Train field directors so that in ten years time there can be a group of indigenous leaders. The “double-sending model” suggested in *Warm-hearted; Cool-headed* is a viable model to implement this.
4. *A financial base*. No doubt China will need foreign financial support given the current religious policy. However, any subsidy should only be considered after the Chinese church has contributed to the fullest extent possible. In other words, local support must be the main support; overseas contributions should only be supplemental. Full financial independence should be achieved within fifty years.

* This editorial is a joint effort by two, seasoned, cross-cultural workers who have extensive experience in exploring IMM from China. The most significant contributions in this spring issue come from mainland Chinese authors.

Intercessory Notes

Please pray

1. For the national leaders in the Indigenous Missionary Movement from China. Ask God to give them wisdom in making decisions that will shape this movement in the present and the future.
2. For those providing prefield training for Chinese missionaries. Pray that the gospel will become deeply rooted in the hearts of those they prepare.
3. For China’s churches as they increasingly become missionary-sending churches and deal with issues distinctive to China.
4. That Chinese who are serving as missionaries or preparing to serve will have the wisdom, grace and humility to go as servants and the ability to adapt to new cultures.
5. For cooperation and collaboration among China’s churches, training programs, sending agencies, missionaries and potential missionaries as they work together to obey the Great Commission.

