

# asian missions advance

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## Diaspora Mission: Glocal Mission and "Mission at Our Doorstep"

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### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to explore the practice of "diaspora mission" by combining "Glocal Mission" and "Mission at our Doorstep," based on the phenomenon of movement of people at a large scale globally. For the sake of clarity, several key-terms are defined below:

- **Diaspora Ministry** – serving the diaspora in the name of Jesus Christ and for His sake in these two diaspora, i.e., mobilizing the diaspora to serve others.<sup>1</sup>
- **Diaspora Missiology** – a missiological framework for understanding and participating in God's redemptive mission among diaspora groups.<sup>2</sup>
- **Diaspora Missions** – Christians' participation in God's redemptive mission to evangelize their kinsmen on the move, and through them to reach out to natives in their homelands and beyond.<sup>3</sup> There are four types of diaspora missions (see Figure 1.1)<sup>4</sup>:

1. **Missions to the Diaspora** – reaching the diaspora groups in forms of Evangelism or pre-evangelistic social services, then disciple them to become worshipping communities and congregations.

2. **Missions through the Diaspora** – diaspora Christians reaching out to their kinsmen through networks of friendship and kinship in

host countries, their homelands, and abroad.

3. **Missions by and beyond the Diaspora** – motivating and mobilizing diaspora Christians for cross-cultural missions to other ethnic groups in their host countries, homelands, and abroad.

4. **Missions with the Diaspora** – mobilizing non-diasporic Christians individually and institutionally to partner with diasporic groups and congregations.

• **Glocal mission** - practice "global mission" by engaging in cross-cultural mission locally.

• **International Migrant** - "a person who moves

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1. Enoch Wan, *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice* (second edition). Institute of Diaspora Study – USA. 2014:6.

2. Enoch Wan, *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice* (second edition). Institute of Diaspora Study – USA. 2014:6.

3. Enoch Wan, "Global People and Diaspora Missiology," presentation at Plenary session, Tokyo 2010-Global Mission Consultation, Tokyo, Japan, May 13, 2010.

4. Adapted from Enoch Wan, "Research Methodology for Diaspora Missiology and Diaspora Missions," presentation at Regional EMS Conference, North Central, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL., February 26, 2011.

away from their place of usual residence across an international border, temporarily or permanently.”<sup>5</sup>

- **Mission at our Doorstep** - “Fulfilling the Great Commission by practicing diaspora missions locally with global significance”

## GLOBAL TREND OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

In alphabetical order, the G7 countries are: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. International migrants are being drawn to these nations of which the U.S. historically having the highest number of migrants among the seven.<sup>6</sup> The total population of these seven nations is merely 16% of world population yet 33% of the global diaspora population: moving from east to west and from southern hemisphere to the north.<sup>7</sup>



Figure 1 – Mega-trend of Human Mobility (2013)<sup>8</sup>

*“The current global estimate is that there were around 281 million international migrants in the world in 2020, which equates to 3.6 percent of the global population.”<sup>9</sup>*

The extensive quote below is an excellent snapshot of the global trend:<sup>10</sup>

*“May 7, 2024 – The report highlights*

5. “Top Statistics on Global Migration and Migrants” by Veronica Paez-Deggeller, Migration Information Source, August 26, 2025 @ <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/top-statistics-global-migration-migrants> (Accessed Nov. 14, 2025)

6. For detailed demographic data of international migration to G7, readers are recommended to visit the following websites:

- “Net migration of the G7 countries from 2000 to 2025, by country” @ [https://www.statista.com/statistics/1372901/g7-country-net-migration/?srsltid=AfmBOork-fA2o0PFrb97alq\\_jii\\_grY\\_0AVGkUWHnUyDOPYhBJ4vbTeZ](https://www.statista.com/statistics/1372901/g7-country-net-migration/?srsltid=AfmBOork-fA2o0PFrb97alq_jii_grY_0AVGkUWHnUyDOPYhBJ4vbTeZ) (Accessed Nov. 14, 2025)
- International Organization for Migration (IOM). WORLD MIGRATION REPORT 2024 (367 pages in pdf format) @ [https://www.developmentaid.org/api/frontend/cms/file/2024/05/pub2023-047-l-world-migration-report-2024\\_0.pdf](https://www.developmentaid.org/api/frontend/cms/file/2024/05/pub2023-047-l-world-migration-report-2024_0.pdf) (Accessed Nov. 14, 2025)

7. Eleonore Loeb Adler and Uwe P. Gielen, eds. *Migration: Immigration and Emigration in International Perspective* (Westport, CT: 2003:16.)

8. “Migration: The Human Journey” - National Geography Action! @ <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/activities/09/gapacket05.pdf> (Accessed Dec. 20, 2013)

9. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). This figure is a statistic from the United Nations’ 2024 World Migration Report and the UN’s International Organization for Migration. (Accessed Nov. 14, 2025)

10. World Migration Report 2024 Reveals Latest Global Trends ... <https://www.iom.int/news/world-migration-report-2024-reveals-latest-global-trends-and-challenges-human-mobility> (Accessed Nov. 14, 2025)

*that international migration remains a driver of human development and economic growth, highlighted by a more than 650 per cent increase ...*

Global immigration is increasing, with a growing number of international migrants and a significant rise in forced displacement. Factors like economic opportunity and conflict continue to drive migration, with Europe having the largest number of international migrants, but Asia and North America also receiving many. While international migration is rising, it still constitutes a small portion of the overall global population.

### Current trends

- **Growth in migrant numbers:** The estimated number of international migrants reached 304 million in 2024, an increase from 275 million in 2020.
- **Forced displacement:** There is a significant and growing number of forcibly displaced people, with 117 million individuals displaced by persecution and conflict as of late 2024.
- **Regional concentration:** Europe and Asia host the largest populations of international migrants, while North America is third. Some regions, like North America and Western Europe, see more intercontinental migration, while Asia and Eastern Europe experience more intraregional movement.
- **Increase in “South-South” migration:** A notable trend is the rise in migration between countries in the Southern Hemisphere.
- **Economic drivers:** Economic factors like the search for jobs and better living conditions remain a primary reason for voluntary migration.
- **Increased risk:** The number of recorded deaths among migrants worldwide has been high, with drowning being a leading cause.

### Factors influencing migration

- **Push and pull factors:** Migration is influenced by “push” factors like poor living conditions and crises, and “pull” factors such as economic opportunities in wealthier countries.
- **Technological advancements:** Revolutions in communication and transportation have made migration more feasible.
- **Policy changes:** Immigration policies, such as those in Japan which increased processing fees, can affect migration patterns and corporate hiring.

In the last few decades, globalization ushered in the realities of an interconnected world. Key factors of “who moves, where, and why” are “economic opportunity, political instability, demographic shifts, and environmental change.” In 2020, there were 275 million international migrants and in 2024 there was an impressive increase:

*“a record 304 million people lived in a country other than their country of birth, representing about 3.7 percent of the world’s 8.2 billion people, according to UN Population Division estimates. This is up from, who comprised 3.5 percent of the global population. To put this in perspective, if the population of international migrants was considered its own country, it would be the world’s fourth most populous, after India, China, and the United States.”*<sup>11</sup>

Diaspora people move based on voluntary or involuntary forces<sup>12</sup> because of the options they have in their situations. Diaspora migrants have more proactive choices for the voluntary “pull factor” while the involuntary “push factor” leaves them in a reactive state of desperation.<sup>13</sup> Understanding the push and pull factors increases our ability to discern the needs and desires of the migrants and offer venues for witness opportunities.<sup>14</sup>

These large-scale movements are missional acts considered providential because when people move, the Gospel moves.<sup>15</sup> It is God who controls movements of people and uses them for His purposes.<sup>16</sup> The apostle Paul when addressing the Athenians stated: “From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries” (Acts 17: 26). North American evangelicals should realize what is happening in our community and embrace it as a divine opportunity.<sup>17</sup> Every Christian is a missionary to reach them with the Gospel since people in transition are more receptive to change including conversion<sup>18</sup> because they are usually hoping for something new. The Gospel may be the newness they have been looking for, for a new start.<sup>19</sup> We may not completely understand God’s call and intention for the growing diversity in our community, but we can be assured that it is for a good reason.<sup>20</sup>

11. “Top Statistics on Global Migration and Migrants” by Veronica Paez-Deggeller, Migration Information Source, August 26, 2025 @ <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/top-statistics-global-migration-migrants> (Accessed Nov. 14, 2025)

12. Wan, “Diaspora Missiology,” in Wan, 3.

13. Mark Hausfeld and Joshua Fletcher, “The Muslim Diaspora,” in *Diaspora Missiology: Reflections on Reaching the Scattered Peoples of the World*, eds. Michael Pocock and Enoch Wan, Evangelical Missiological Society Series no 23 (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2015), 40-1.

14. Hausfeld and Fletcher, “The Muslim Diaspora,” in Pocock and Wan, 42.

15. Tereso C. Casiño, “Why People Move: A Prolegomenon to Diaspora Missiology,” *Torch Trinity Journal* 13, no. 1 (May 30, 2010), 34.

16. Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization Issue Group No. 26 A and B, “Lausanne Occasional Paper 55.”

17. Andy Olsen, “The Migrant Missionaries,” *Christianity Today* 61, no. 6 (July/August 2017), 45-6.

18. Enoch Wan and Sadiri Joy Tira, “Diaspora Missiology and Mission in the Context of the 21st Century,” *Global Missiology English* 1, no. 8 (October 2010), 11, under “Diaspora Studies,” <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/viewFile/383/994> (accessed November 10, 2017).

19. Ingleby, “Postcolonialism, Globalization, Migration and Diaspora,” 3.

20. Raafat Girgis, “House of Prayer for all People: A Biblical Foundation for Multicultural inistry,” *International Review of Mission* 100 (April 2011), 73.

Diaspora missiology emerged recently in response to the new demographic reality as articulated below:

*“Diaspora missiology” as a focus of missiological research and a contemporary strategy of Christian mission is promising due to the following factors: the changing landscape in Christian missions (i.e., the shifting of Christendom from the West to the rest, and from the Northern Hemisphere to the Southern Hemisphere, increasing impact of globalization on Christian mission, the emergence of majority mission, and the ever-increasing size and scale of the phenomenon of diaspora.”*<sup>21</sup>

Being informed of the global trend of international migration, we shall turn our attention to the study of diaspora missiology and the practice of diaspora mission.

## The Study of Diaspora Missiology and the Practice of Diaspora Mission

Diaspora missiology is a relatively new missiological paradigm in response to the movement of people at a large scale internationally. The figure is a visual summary of diaspora missiology and diaspora ministry/missions.

Diaspora Missiology	Diaspora Ministry		
	Type	ministering to the diaspora	ministering through the diaspora
	Means	the Great Commandment: pre-evangelistically serving others	
	Target Group	serving the diaspora by attending to their social & spiritual needs	mobilizing diaspora Christians to serve other diaspora people
	Diaspora Missions		
	Type	missions to the diaspora	missions <i>through</i> the diaspora
Means	motivate & mobilize diaspora individuals & congregations for the Great Commission in evangelistic outreach and missions		
Target Group	members of diaspora community	kinsmen in homeland & elsewhere; not cross-culturally	cross-culturally to other ethnic groups in host society and beyond

Figure 2 - Diaspora Ministry and Missions<sup>22</sup>

The statement below explains the “why” and “how” regarding the emergence of diaspora missiology:

*“Diaspora missiology as a focus of missiological research and a contemporary strategy of Christian mission is promising due to the following factors: the changing landscape in Christian missions (i.e., the shifting of Christendom from the West to the rest, and from the Northern Hemisphere to the Southern Hemisphere, increasing impact of globalization on Christian mission, the emergence of majority mission, and the ever-increasing size and scale of the phenomenon of diaspora.”*<sup>23</sup>

The paradigm of diaspora missiology is different from that of traditional missiology which is described

21. Michael Pocock and Enoch Wan (Editors). *Diaspora Missiology: Reflections on Reaching the Scattered Peoples of the World*. William Carey. 2015:20.

22. Enoch Wan, *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice* (second edition). Institute of Diaspora Study. 2014:8.

23. Michael Pocock and Enoch Wan (Editors). *Diaspora Missiology: Reflections on Reaching the Scattered Peoples of the World*. William Carey. 2015:xx – “Introduction”



below:

*“Traditional missiology” is represented by organizations such as the American Society of Missiology (“ASM” which publishes the journal Missiology) and the Evangelical Missiology Society (“EMS” which publishes the Occasional Bulletin and annual monograph).<sup>24</sup>*

The figure below is a comparison of traditional missiology and diaspora missiology in four dimensions of the continuum. Background information is provided below to help readers understand the continuum between the two opposing poles.

On one end of the continuum the characteristics of traditional missiology are summarized as follows:

1. The focus is polarized and dichotomized, with separation between “saving souls” and the “social gospel”; “church planting” and “Christian charity”; “paternalism” and “indigenization”; “long-term missions” and “short-term missions”; “career missionaries” and “tent-makers.”
2. Conceptually, traditional missions are “territorial,” with a sharp distinction between “here” and “there.” It is “lineal,” meaning that movement goes in one direction: “sending” more important than “receiving,” “assimilation” more important than “amalgamation.”
3. The perspective is geographically divided into foreign missions versus home missions, urban versus rural, state/nation versus country/state. As a discipline it compartmentalizes between “theology of missions” and “strategy of missions.”
4. In the paradigm of traditional missiology, priority is given to the “unreached people groups” in the most “unreached” regions of the world over “reached people.”

At the opposite end of the continuum, the characteristics of diaspora missiology and diaspora missions are summarized as follows:

1. The focus is on holistic missions and contextualization, integrating evangelism and social concern. For example, Christian workers cannot just start a local church among refugees without also addressing their physical needs and becoming their advocate.
2. The concept is “de-territorialized,” i.e., the “loss of social and cultural boundaries” in mission strategy. A practical example of this is the evangelism training in Tokyo among Japanese believers who plan to evangelize Brazilians residing in Tokyo. Brazilians who no longer reside in Sao Paolo have become reachable through Japanese Christians for they are living in Tokyo! Diaspora mission is also “GLOCAL”<sup>25</sup>

24. Enoch Wan, *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice* (second edition). Institute of Diaspora Study. 2014:98.

25. “GLOCAL” missions is ministry outreach being carried out simultaneously locally and globally, i.e., what we do out there,

in contrast to the “lineal” concept of traditional missions because diaspora missions is multi-directional.

3. The perspective of diaspora missiology is non-spatial, not geographically divided or confined to home/foreign, regional/global, urban/rural; rather, it is borderless! It is transnational and global. Thus, church planting is carried out not only on land, but also on the ocean aboard ships among seafarers.
4. Diaspora missiology as a discipline is integrated with biblical studies, theology, evangelism, social sciences, arts, and technology.
5. As a paradigm, diaspora missions goes wherever God providentially places people spatially and spiritually, in contrast to the “sending and receiving” in traditional missions.
6. The priority of diaspora missions is every person outside the Kingdom everywhere; there is no difference between reaching out to Buddhists in New York or Thailand, Muslims in London or Iran, and communist Chinese in Africa or inside China.<sup>26</sup>

#	ASPECTS	TRADITIONAL MISSIOLOGY ← → DIASPORA MISSIOLOGY
1	FOCUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Polarized/dichotomized</li> <li>• “Great Commission” ↔ “Great Commandment”</li> <li>• saving soul ↔ social gospel</li> <li>• church planting ↔ Christian charity</li> <li>• paternalism ↔ indigenization</li> </ul>
2	CONCEPTUALIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• territorial: here ↔ there</li> <li>• “local” ↔ “global”</li> <li>• lineal: “sending” ↔ “receiving”</li> <li>• “assimilation” ↔ “amalgamation”</li> <li>• “specialization”</li> </ul>
3	PERSPECTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• geographically divided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• foreign mission ↔ local, urban ↔ rural</li> </ul> </li> <li>• geo-political boundary: state/nation ↔ state/nation</li> <li>• disciplinary compartmentalization: e.g. theology of missions/strategy of missions</li> </ul>
4	ORIENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OT: missions = gentile-proselyte — coming</li> <li>• NT: missions = the Great Commission — going</li> <li>• Modern missions: E-1, E-2, E-3 or M-1, M-2, M-3, etc.</li> </ul>

Figure 3 - Four Dimensions of the Continuum: from Traditional Missiology to Diaspora Missiology<sup>27 28 29</sup>

we do it here simultaneously. See Bob Roberts Jr., *Transformation: How Glocal Churches Transform Lives and the World* (Zondervan, 2006). Also “Glocal Church Ministry: Bob Roberts has an idea that may change American congregations, if not the world,” interview by Mark Galli (posted 8/02/2007); available at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/july/30.42.html>

26. Enoch Wan, *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice* (second edition). Institute of Diaspora Study. 2014:99-100.

27. “deterritorialization” is the “loss of social and cultural boundaries”

28. Enoch Wan, *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice* (second edition). Institute of Diaspora Study. 2014:99.

29. See Sadiri Joy B. Tira, “Filipino International Network: A Strategic Model for Filipino Diaspora Glocal® Missions,” *Global Missiology*, (October 2004); available at [www.GlobalMissiology.org](http://www.GlobalMissiology.org).

The figure below lists out opportunities and challenges when working with the diaspora.

CHALLENGE TO CHANGE	OPPORTUNITY (diaspora missiology)	NEW APPROACH (diaspora missions)
<b>Old focus:</b> polarized/dichotomized • "great commission" ↔ "great commandment" • saving souls ↔ social Gospel • church planting ↔ Christian charity • paternalism ↔ indigenization • "laity" ↔ "clergy"	<b>New focus:</b> • no longer polarized/dichotomized: • holistic perspective • no disciplinary compartmentalization	<b>Strong integration:</b> • evangelism + Christian charity • "Great Commandment" + "Great Commission" • motivate and mobilize diaspora without dichotomy of "laity" and "clergy" • interdisciplinary, etc.
<b>Old conceptualization:</b> • territorial: here ↔ there • "local" ↔ "global" • lineal: "sending" ↔ "receiving" • "assimilation" ↔ "amalgamation"	<b>New conceptualization:</b> • non-spatial, no boundary • transnational & global • "unreached" → accessible • "borderless" → "ministry without borders"	<b>New approach:</b> • "deteritorialization" • "glocal" and "liquid church" • hyphenated identity and hybridity • "Mission at our door step" • "borderless church," "bus church," "church on the oceans"

Figure 4 -Working with the Diaspora: Opportunities and Challenges  
"Glocal mission"

Definition of "glocal" given by Roland Robertson is "the simultaneous co-presence" of both universalizing and particular tendencies.<sup>30</sup> Glocalization in business practice refers to the practice of maintaining a global brand identity while adapting its menu for local preferences in taste and style. The American international companies McDonald and Kentucky Fried Chicken are excellent cases as such. They are popular eateries in China featuring menu items specifically tailored for local tastes; instead of serving only hamburgers and fried chickens originally in the USA. In the mission context, cross-cultural communication and evangelism (of the unique Messiah Jesus to any people/social group that is different from our own) are taking place locally – that is glocal mission as shown in the figure below.



Figure 5 – Glocal mission and "mission @ our doorstep"

With the flow of international migrants from many countries and with various religious backgrounds in G7 nations, the concept of "unreached people" of traditional missiological framework is no longer relevant, thus the emergence of diaspora missiological paradigm.<sup>31</sup> As such, glocal mission is to be practiced within the context of multi-ethnicity and religious pluralism. The organization introduced below is a good example of "glocal mission" –

- "Glocal Mission" is a Christian non-profit organization based in Houston, TX, founded in October 2016 by Rev. Dr. David Kim, together with a network of missionary pastors and congregations."

30. Roland Robertson - 1997 International Conference on "Globalization and Indigenous Culture." The proceedings of this conference were published in a volume titled *Globalization and Indigenous Culture*, edited by Nobutaka Inoue, by the Institute for Japanese Culture and Classics, Kokugakuin University, in 1997.

31. Enoch Wan, *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice* (second edition). Institute of Diaspora Study – USA. 2014:part 3.

- "At Glocal Mission, our mission is to equip, mobilize, and resource believers to engage in God's work both locally and globally – glocally. We believe the Great Commission is too big for anyone to accomplish alone and too important not to pursue together."<sup>32</sup>

God is bringing people to us, but we are reluctant to take part in His glocal missions because of our sense of security of the strange or new. God always has the nations in His mind, but we are staying in our cultural prison to avoid emotional stress produced from intercultural relationships.<sup>33</sup> The orientation of glocal missions is: simultaneously embracing the global scope of Christian mission and engaging in local action/adaptation for Kingdom purpose. Due to the seamless integration between the local and the global,<sup>34</sup> it means local evangelistic outreaches have global ripple effects.<sup>35</sup> The figure below is a glocal model for missions to the diaspora in the case study by T.K. Stephen Lin on ministering to Indonesian migrant workers in HK.<sup>36</sup>



Figure 6 – A Glocal Model of Mission to the Diaspora Indonesian Migrant Workers in HK<sup>37</sup>

A biblical precedent of the practice of glocal mission is found in Acts 9:1-20. Being a disciple in Damascus, Ananias was guided by a vision from Jesus to find Saul who came from Jerusalem to persecute Christians in Damascus. In obedience to the small task of finding Saul, laying hand on him and healing his blindness. Though hesitated to do so because Saul being known

32. Glocal Mission @ <https://www.glocalmission.org/> (Accessed Nov. 14, 2025)

33. Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 117.

34. Bob Roberts Jr., *Glocalization: How Followers of Jesus Engage a Flat World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 24.

35. Sadiri Joy Tira, "Glocal Evangelism: Jesus Christ, Magdalena, and Damascus in Greater Toronto Area," *Lausanne World Pulse*, (June 2010), <http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/perspectives.php/1291/06-2010> (accessed September 26, 2018).

36. Stephen Tat-Kit Lin, "Mobilizing Chinese Congregations in Hong Kong to Engage in Local Diaspora Missions to Indonesian Migrant Workers: From Informing, Inspiring, to Equipping." Unpublished Dissertation, Western Seminary, 2016.

37. Stephen Tat-Kit Lin, "Mobilizing Chinese Congregations in Hong Kong to Engage in Local Diaspora Missions to Indonesian Migrant Workers: From Informing, Inspiring, to Equipping." Unpublished Dissertation, Western Seminary, 2016:223.

as persecutor of Christians and the church, Ananias placed his hands on Saul who later regained his sight when scales fell from his eyes then was baptized. By carrying out “the mission to heal Saul’s blindness then baptizing him locally,” Ananias was instrumental in Saul’s conversation, calling and commission to become the apostle to the gentiles globally. For the apostle Paul’s ministry spanned from Asia to Europe in outreach and church planting. The impactful life of apostle Paul with “global significance” is to be credited to the obedience of Annias to the “simple local mission” - helping, healing, baptizing Saul who had “global significance in Kingdom ministry. Ananias was not a missionary: crossing ocean to reach people in foreign land for church planting. Yet his practice of glocal mission is an example of obedience in Christian mission.

Therefore, local congregations in cities within the G7 contemporary context are to be informed and inspired to practice glocal mission. Christians are to be motivated and mobilized to be involved in glocal mission.<sup>38</sup> A helpful reference is written by Bob Roberts Jr. is GLOCALIZATION: How Followers Of Jesus Engage A Flat World. Zondervan 2016. Another helpful reference is: The Church Going Glocal: Mission and Globalisation. co-authored by Tormod Engelsviken, Erling Lundebj, Dagfinn Solheim, Fortress Press, 2011.

### “Mission at our doorstep”

“Diaspora missions” is very practical as illustrated below in terms of “missions at our doorstep” that can be practiced at local congregations (see publications such as *The World at Your Door: Reaching International Students in Your Home, Church, and School*,<sup>39</sup> *Missions Have Come Home to America: The Church’s Cross-Cultural Ministry to Ethnic*,<sup>40</sup> *Missions within Reach*,<sup>41</sup> *Reaching the World Next Door*,<sup>42</sup> *Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration and Mission*,<sup>43</sup> etc.

Unlike time of old when missionary had to travel abroad to reach the lost in foreign land, now we can engage in cross-cultural mission in our own neighborhood where transnational migrants came as refugee, international student, victims of human-trafficking, diplomats, businessmen, etc. Movement of people at global scale presents wonderful opportunities for engagement of cross-cultural

mission right on our doorsteps. While the Church continues to send missionaries to foreign fields, it also has an opportunity to consider appropriate ways to reach communities that are coming to our locations. Diaspora missiology provides a method for learning ways to build relationships with global people groups, learn their culture, and invite “the stranger” into our local context (see Matthew 25:35). This, then, is an opportunity for glocalized evangelism: the world at our door. The figure below is a summary of how powerful, and practical is the practice of “Mission at our Doorstep.”

NO	YES
-No visa required	-Yes, door opened
-No closed door	-Yes, people accessible
-No international travel required	-Yes, missions at our doorstep
-No political/legal restrictions	-Yes, ample opportunities
-No dichotomized approach	-Yes, holistic ministries
-No sense of self-sufficiency & unhealthy competition	-Yes, powerful partnership

Figure 7 – The “yes” and “no” of “Mission at our doorstep”<sup>44</sup>

The figure below shows “the “CORRECT” way of 7 step” in practicing “mission at our doorstep.”

opportunities	challenges	relational paradigm
compassion	motive	Horizontally compassionate towards diasporas
Obedience		Vertically in obedience to God’s “Great Commandment”
Relationships of grace	means	Vertically God is gracious to mankind (especially to Christians) thus they should be gracious to diasporas horizontally
Reality of community		Vertically the Church is “the household of God.” Horizontally new spiritual community as Christ’s body in local congregations
Empowerment		Vertically depend on God for empowerment and horizontally empowering diaspora; instead of paternalism
Christian multiplication	missions	Vertically dependent on God for the increase and multiplication. Horizontally doing the seeding and watering faithfully in diaspora missions
The full circle		Vertically and faithfully fulfill the “Great Commission” and horizontally motivate and mobilize the diaspora for a full circle of reproductive Christian missions.

Figure 8 – Opportunities and challenges of “diaspora missions” – the “CORRECT” way of 7 steps<sup>45</sup>

“CORRECT” is the acronym of seven steps in the practice of “mission at our doorstep” relationally. Explanation is provided below for practical implementation:

Step 1: There are plenty of opportunities to practice Christian charity and the challenge is to have a correct motive of love and compassion (horizontal relationship), as in the case of Jesus Christ and the crowd - Mt 9:35-38; 1Cor 13:1-3.

Step 2: There are plenty of opportunities to be obedient to the “Great Commandment” vertical relationship to God (Matthew 22:36-40). And the

44. Enoch Wan, “Diaspora Missiology,” *Occasional Bulletin*, Spring 2007:6.

45. Enoch Wan, “Practical diaspora missiology: evangelizing immigrants,” *Ethnic Summit*, Seattle, WA, April 2007.

38. For reference, “Glocalization, Diaspora Missiology, and Friendship Evangelism” by Tuvya Zaretsky. *Lausanne World Pulse*, May 2010. (accessed September 26, 2010)

39. Phillips, Tom and Norsworthy, Bob (1997) *The World at Your Door: Reaching International Students in Your Home, Church, and School*. Minnesota: Bethany House.

40. Jerry L. Appleby, (1986), *Missions Have Come Home to America: The Church’s Cross-Cultural Ministry to Ethnic* Missouri: Beacon Hill.

41. Wan, Enoch (1995) *Missions Within Reach: Intercultural Ministries in Canada*. Hong Kong: Alliance Press.

42. Thom Hopler and Marcia Hopler. *Reaching the World Next Door: How to Spend the Gospel in the Midst of Many Cultures*. InterVarsity Press, 1994

43. J. D. Payne. *Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration and Mission*, IVP 2012.



challenge is to have a pure heart and correct motive horizontally when relating to diaspora.

Step 3: Vertically God is gracious to mankind and special grace yet for Christians (Ro 5:8; 2Cor 5:1) thus they should likewise be gracious to diasporas horizontally.

Step 4: Vertically the Church is “the household of God” (Heb 3:5,15) and horizontally new spiritual community as Christ’s body in local congregations (Eph 2:11-22; 4:11-16).

Step 5: Vertically depend on God for empowerment (Acts 1:8) and horizontally empowering diaspora; instead of paternalism, e.g. the case of the Philippian congregation in kononia for the Gospel.

Step 6: Vertically dependent on God for the increase and multiplication blessing as promised within the “Great Commission” (i.e. presence – Mt 24; power – Acts 1:8). Horizontally doing the seeding and watering faithfully (1Cor 3:6-9).

Step 7: Vertically fulfilled the “Great Commission” in obedience. And horizontally motivate and mobilize the diasporic individuals and congregations to engage in partnership towards the full circle of reproductive Christian missions.

## **PRACTICAL WAYS TO ENGAGE DIASPORA GROUPS IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD**

As shown in figure 2 above, there are four types of diaspora mission: “to,” “through,” “by and beyond,” and “with” the diaspora.

### **Mision to the diaspora**

Reaching the diaspora groups in forms of Evangelism or pre-evangelistic social services, then disciple them to become worship communities and congregations. For example: Intentionally building relationships with coworkers, neighbors, fellow PTA members, etc. from diaspora groups, and modeling (or sharing) the Gospel with them when appropriate. Learning more about other cultures through immersion or experiencing the local diaspora communities. Discovering the needs of diaspora groups and helping them meet those needs.

#### *Case Study: Intermarried Couples*

Diaspora does not necessarily involve crossing international borders. It can refer to people who are in social transition. The American Jewish community, for example, has been experiencing dramatic culture change where since 1985, fifty-two percent of all Jewish people who married have married Gentiles. A 2004 study on the challenges experienced by Jewish-Gentile couples in the United States found that one of their most significant issues reported is the inability to find spiritual harmony. That realization had missiological implications in helping strategize for appropriate evangelistic ministry to these couples.

### **Mision through the diaspora**

Diaspora Christians reaching out to their kinsmen

through networks of friendship and kinship in host countries, their homelands, and abroad. For example:

- Training, empowering, and sending out diaspora Christian leaders to build relationships, plant churches and evangelize among their own people
- Building relationships with other diaspora people or those back in the homeland through already existing diaspora relationships
- Diaspora-to-Diaspora ministries: Some mega-churches in Korea (e.g. Onnuri) have planted churches under the same name in Los Angeles to minister to Korean immigrants. These churches, in turn, have planted other churches in other metropolitan cities, such as New York or the San Francisco Bay Area, to minister to Korean immigrants in those cities.

#### *Case Study: Onnuri Church*

The first Onnuri Church was founded in Korea in 1984.

1. Onnuri Church expanded campuses all throughout Korea in the 80’s and 90’s.
2. Onnuri Church Los Angeles was founded in 1984.
3. Other Onnuri Churches followed, such as Onnuri New York and Onnuri Yokohama. Many of the sent out church planters moved from one diaspora community to another.

### **Mision by and beyond the diaspora**

Motivating and mobilizing diaspora Christians for cross-cultural missions to other ethnic groups in their host countries, homelands, and abroad. For example:

- Training, empowering, and sending out diaspora Christian leaders to build relationships, plant churches and evangelize to other diaspora people locally or elsewhere
- Business as Mission: Encouraging diaspora Christians to establish business in other countries that are not welcoming to Christian missionaries and supporting them in this endeavor.
- Utilizing Business Travelers: High tech industry environment requires a lot of business travel. These present short-term opportunities to network and build relationships with people in other cultures and countries.

#### *Case Study: Oikos University*

Oikos University, a small Christian university located in Oakland is run by a group of Korean pastors, such as Namsoo Woo, who is currently the chairman of the board. Throughout the 2000’s, some of these Korean pastors educated and trained several Mongolian students who had immigrated to the United States. A few of these Mongolian students became missionaries and were sent off not just to their own country of Mongolia, but to other locales and countries as well.

### **Mision with the diaspora**

Mobilizing non-diasporic Christians individually and institutionally to partner with diasporic groups and

congregations. For example:

Joint fellowship, activities, or ministries with other ethnic churches in the area

Short-term mission trips in a multi-ethnic church

Trips back to the motherland with diaspora friends

Establishing or joining industry or field related clubs and events, and networking with other Christians.

Partnerships and joint programs between non-church Christian institutions, such as between educational institutions.

Planting of multi-ethnic churches

The following figure is a summary of the concept and practice of “with” approach in the practice of diaspora mission.

CONCEPTUAL	PRACTICAL	
	Relational Pattern	Practical Way
Bridging & Bonding	Networking: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bridging by regional proximity or linguistic/racial affinity</li> <li>• Bonding: kinship/friendship/mutual interest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hospitality</li> <li>• Reciprocity</li> <li>• Connectivity &amp; complexity</li> <li>• Solidarity</li> <li>• Unity</li> </ul>
	Partnership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National &amp; transnational individual</li> <li>• Local congregations or institutional entities of multiple variety</li> </ul>	

Figure 9 – The concept and practice of “with” approach<sup>46</sup>

*Case Study: San Jose Christian College in the 1990’s*

- San Jose Christian College, now called William Jessup University and relocated in Rocklin, CA, launched the Multi-Cultural Bible Institute in the late 80’s and early 90’s to train Christian leaders from the ethnic communities in the Bay Area. The program taught in 7 different languages. Through this program, SJCC partnered with many of its graduates to plant ethnic churches not only in Northern California, but all over the world.
- In a 1996 report, there were 14 Cambodian churches, 6 Korean churches, 3 Khmu churches, 4 Iranian churches, 3 East Indian churches, 3 Hispanic churches and 1 Filipino church planted in Northern California through this program.

### “Mission at our doorstep” and Chinese diaspora

The practice of “mission at our doorstep” has significantly blessed the Chinese church globally and in church planting among Chinese diaspora locally in North America.

For reference on diaspora missiology generally, two key texts are recommended below:

- Enoch Wan (Editor), *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice*. (Second Edition) Institute of Diaspora Studies – USA (Second Edition – 2014).
- Michael Pocock and Enoch Wan (Editors), *Diaspora Missions: Reflections on Reaching the Scattered Peoples of the World*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2015.

A text specifically dealing with “mission at our doorstep,” ministering to international students in the

series on diaspora missiology is:

- Enoch Wan (Editor), *Diaspora Missions to International Students*. IDS, 2019

For more publication on diaspora missiology by the author is listed in Appendix 1.

Having been honored as “the Father of the Republic of China,” at age thirteen (1879) Sun Yat-sen (孫中山) followed his mother visiting his older brother in Hawaii. In Honolulu, he enrolled in Iolani School and Punahou School where he received Western education and Christianity – a case of “mission at our doorstep” of student ministry locally in Hawaii.<sup>47</sup> Later he gave up his medical practice in Hong Kong and focused on political activities. On November 24, 1894, he began the efforts in launching a series of revolution based on Western political ideology (“of the people, for the people and by the people”) to replace the millennium-honored imperial government of China.

## International students of Chinese ethnic descent were being reached by those who practiced “mission at our doorstep” on college campuses in US and Canada.

By motivating and mobilizing diaspora Chinese in Hawaii, Hong Kong and elsewhere, he fought against the dynastic power of Ching dynasty from Manchuria. In 1911, he introduced Western style of democracy and successfully found the Republic of China – the first democratic government in Asia. For that accomplishment, he had been honored by the Chinese as “the father of modern China” with impact on many Asian countries in people movement for democracy. As a believer both in Christianity and democratic ideology, his impact extended beyond Chinese society and inspired Asian political leaders moving towards democratic governance.

International students of Chinese ethnic descent were being reached by those who practiced “mission at our doorstep” on college campuses in US and Canada. The historian of Chinese Christianity in America, Fenggang Yang in his book *Chinese Christians in America Conversion, Assimilation, and Adhesive Identities* (Penn State University Press, 1999) documented how Christianity in general and Chinese churches in particular have integrally influenced the identity formation of Chinese immigrants.

The successful and fruitful student ministry to Chinese diaspora is to be credited for the founding and flourishing Chinese diaspora congregations in North America. According to the research findings of chapter contributors to the title *Diaspora Missions to Interna-*

46. Enoch Wan, “Practical diaspora missiology: evangelizing immigrants,” Ethnic Summit, Seattle, WA, April 2007.

47. A similar case is Nelson Mandela, studied in the United Kingdom with exposure to Christianity and Western democratic ideology, who later brought the practice of racial prejudice to an end and became the president in South Africa.



tional Students, all four types of diaspora missions (see Figure 1.1) are being proven to be effective strategies in the practice of “mission at our doorstep.”

There are organizations specializing in reaching international students. For example, at the website of InterVarsity Fellowship there is a statement: “InterVarsity is a family of international students and scholars on campuses across the US gathering for friendship and to discuss faith, culture and the things we care about most.”<sup>48</sup> Jamie Wang who serves with “Power to Change” at McMaster University in Canada stated well: “Reaching International Students Is Strategic for Global Missions.”<sup>49</sup> Van Simmons serving on the Student Pathways Team of the International Mission Board articulates well the essence of “mission at our doorstep” in serving international students succinctly:

*“According to the Institute of International Education (IIE), over one million students from countries around the world are currently studying in colleges and universities in the United States. When we think of taking the gospel of Jesus ‘to the ends of the earth’ (Acts 1:8), we can begin by reaching out to the international students that God has brought to our campus and community.”*<sup>50</sup>

In addition, he suggested practical ways such as - be a friend, conversational English, welcome bags, attending international events, day trips, programs for international wives, invite them to your home, airport pickups, develop good relationships with the International Student Office at university.<sup>51</sup>

In an attempt to integrate “diaspora missions” with international student ministry, the following quotation from an unknown author is very helpful:

**Ministering to international students is a great way for Christians and local churches to participate in the Great Commission!**

#### **Why Is International Student Ministry Important?**

Many international students come from **Unreached People Groups (UPGs)**. UPGs are **ethnolinguistic groups with limited or no access to the Gospel**.

We consider a people group unreached when there is no indigenous community of Jesus’ followers able to engage this people group with church planting.

**Technically speaking, in a UPG, less than 2 percent of the population actively follows Jesus.**

The USA receives international students from countries that have hundreds of unique UPGs. While studying abroad, these UPG students have

the freedom to hear the Gospel.

Let’s break down the stats on international students in America to see the trends.

#### *So Many Students!*

**In 2023-24, there were over 1.1 million international students in the USA.**

In 2025, there were over 135,000 international students in New York Alone.

While America’s international students come from all over the world, certain countries consistently send the most students. **The top 2 countries where international students came from in 2023-24 were India and China.**

India is home to 2,041 distinct UPGs totaling over 1.3 billion people.

China is home to 444 distinct UPGs totaling over 139 million people.

In the Great Commission, Jesus commanded His followers to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). UPGs represent nations around the world that still have yet to hear the Gospel.

**International student ministry is strategic because when these UPG students hear the Gospel in the USA, they take the message of Jesus back to their families.** This is how the Gospel can spread into countries and regions closed to traditional missionaries!<sup>52</sup> (original emphasis)

## **CONCLUSION**

In this paper, we began with a description of the global trends of international migration, followed with explanation of diaspora missiological paradigm. Then two approaches in the practice of diaspora mission are introduced: “glocal mission” and “mission at our doorsteps.”

Instead of being merely theoretical, practical ways to engage diaspora groups in your neighborhood are proposed. The paper is concluded by the use of Chinese diaspora as a case study.

## **APPENDIX 1 – SELECTED PUBLICATIONS BY ENOCH WAN ON DIASPORA MISSIOLOGY**

### **Books**

Wan, Enoch, and Ria Martin. *Diaspora Missions Engagement in the Global North through Intercultural Campus Ministry: ‘By and Beyond’ Filipinos*. Western Academic Publishers, 2023.

Abdon, Nestor, and Enoch Wan. *Marginality of Visible Minorities in Canada: A Missiological Study*. Western Academic Publishers, 2023.

Wan, Enoch, and Tin Nguyen. *A Holistic and Contextualized Mission Training Program: Equipping Lay Leaders for Local Mission in*

48. See website: < <https://www.internationals.net/> > (accessed September 26, 2010)

49. Jamie Wang, “What I’ve Learned about Reaching International Students. January 21, 2019 @ <https://ca.thegospelcoalition.org/article/what-ive-learned-about-reaching-international-students/> (accessed September 26, 2010)

50. Van Simmons, “Reaching International students” @ <https://collegeministry.com/reaching-international-students-on-campus/> (accessed September 26, 2010)

51. Van Simmons, “Reaching International students” @ <https://collegeministry.com/reaching-international-students-on-campus/> (accessed September 26, 2010)

52. Author unknown, “International Student Ministry: A Hidden Door to the Nations” @ <https://internationalproject.org/international-student-ministry/> (accessed September 26, 2010)

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Wan, Enoch, and J. David Lopez. *The Hispanic Hybrid Identity in Miami: Ethnographic Description and Missiological Implications*. Western Academic Publishers, 2021.

Wan, Enoch, and John Jay Flinn. *Holistic Mission through Mission Partnership: An Instrumental Case Study in La Ceiba, Honduras*. Western Academic Publishers, 2021.

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Wan, Enoch, and Jacky Lau. *Chinese Diaspora Kingdom Workers: In Action and With Guidance*. Western Seminary Press, 2019.

Wan, Enoch, and Jeremiah Chung. *Engaging Chinese Diaspora in the Ministry of Bible Translation*, 2019.

Wan, Enoch, Dennis C. Bradford, Leiton E. Chinn, Lisa Espineli Chinn, Sam Green, William Murrel, Katie J. Rawsom, Christopher D. Sneller, Florence PL Tan, and Chin T. Wang. *Diaspora Missions to International Students*. Western Seminary Press, 2019.

*Diaspora Missiology: Reflections on Reaching the Scattered Peoples of the World*. (Co-editing with Michael Pocock). EMS Series no. 23, William Carey Library, Pasadena, California.

*Relational Theology: An Exploratory Study*. With Gund Wen-hui (in Chinese) TienDao Publisher, Hong Kong.

*Diaspora Missions to Pakistani in Hong Kong*. With Abigail Au (in Chinese) TienDao Publisher, Hong Kong.

*Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice*, rev. ed. (Portland, OR: Institute of Diaspora Studies, 2014).

Enoch Wan and Thanh Trung Le, *Mobilizing Vietnamese Diaspora for the Kingdom* (Portland, OR: Institute of Diaspora Studies, 2014).

Enoch Wan and Ted Rubesh, *Wandering Jews and Scattered Sri Lankans: Viewing Sri Lankans of the Gulf Cooperative Council through the Lens of the Old Testament Jewish Diaspora* (Portland, OR: Institute of Diaspora Studies, 2014).

Enoch Wan and Elton S. L. Law. *The 2011 Triple Disaster in Japan and the Diaspora: Lessons Learned and Ways Forward* (Portland, OR: Institute of Diaspora Studies, 2014).

Enoch Wan and Anthony Francis Casey, *Church Planting among Immigrants in US Urban Centers:*

*The Where, Why, and How of Diaspora Mis*

Yaw Attah Edu-Bekoe and Enoch Wan, *Scattered Africans Keep Coming* (Portland, OR: Institute of Diaspora Studies, 2013).

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"The Practice of Diaspora Missions in Local Congregation: From Beginning to Base" Enoch Wan. Published in [www.GlobalMissiology.org](http://www.GlobalMissiology.org) January 2017

"Serving China's Internal Diaspora: Motive, Means And Methods" Enoch Wan & Joe Dow. Published in [www.GlobalMissiology.org](http://www.GlobalMissiology.org) January 2016

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# The Gospel from an Honor-Shame Perspective: An Evaluation and a Proposal

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## INTRODUCTION

There are at least three primary types of reactions to sin across human cultures: guilt, shame, and fear.<sup>1</sup> These reactions are loosely associated with geographical regions. According to Jayson Georges,

(1) *guilt-innocence cultures are individualistic societies (mostly Western), where people who break the laws are guilty and seek justice or forgiveness to rectify a wrong, (2) shame-honor cultures describes [sic] collectivistic cultures (common in the East), where people are shamed for fulfilling group expectations seek to restore their honor before the community, and (3) fear-power cultures refers [sic] to animistic contexts (typically tribal), where people afraid of evil and harm pursue power over the spirit world through magical rituals.*<sup>2</sup>

In this article, we will focus on one of these cultures – namely, honor-shame cultures – and examine how the gospel can be effectively contextualized within them. Although the Bible is saturated with the theme of honor-shame, it was around the year 2000 that Western cross-cultural workers began to recognize its significance.<sup>3</sup> This is largely because Western theology was shaped by figures such as Augustine of Hippo and Martin Luther, both of whom were deeply burdened by a sense of guilt and sought ways to obtain pardon.<sup>4</sup> In recent years, however, an increasing number of scholars have come to recognize the vital importance of the theme of honor-shame as portrayed in Scripture, as well as its relevance for the proclamation of the gospel in these cultures.

## THE GOSPEL FROM AN HONOR-SHAME PERSPECTIVE

As noted above, those living outside the West are often concerned with, and burdened by, shame or fear and seek liberation from them. A key question, then, is, “In cultures that do not emphasize legal metaphors, how can people make sense of salvation?”<sup>5</sup> In this

section, we will briefly summarize how the gospel can be made more understandable to those living in honor-shame cultures. From an honor-shame perspective, sin is fundamentally a failure to honor God.<sup>6</sup> In other words, “sin treats God as though He were not infinitely valuable.”<sup>7</sup> Rather than honoring God, humans engage in “the construction of false status via religion or social codes,” such as idolatry or the pursuit of distorted honor.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, failing to honor God has two consequences: (1) God “loses face,” as he does not receive the honor that he deserves from humans, and (2) humans themselves end up in a shameful position, as they fail to fulfill their duty to glorify God as their Father.<sup>9</sup> Jesus, on the other hand, perfectly obeyed God and thus glorified him. His complete submission eventually led him to public humiliation on the cross, where he bore the ultimate shame.<sup>10</sup> According to Jackson Wu, the cross of Christ accomplishes two purposes. First, recall that God committed himself to bless all peoples on earth through Abraham’s offspring (Gen. 12:1-3). If he had failed to keep his covenant, he would have shamed himself and lost face. Thus, “the cross protects God from the shame of breaking his covenant promises.”<sup>11</sup> Second, Christ’s shameful death “takes away the objective human shame before God” and “restores God’s honor.”<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, “when God justifies us in Christ, he declares us to be one of his people. We belong to his kingdom-family. This new identity restores honor and removes shame.”<sup>13</sup> Wu calls this “honor substitution,” whereby the honor of Christ – the last Adam, who perfectly obeyed God – is reckoned to us.<sup>14</sup> Finally, from an

face and Ours A soteriology of Honor and Shame/links/5fd7a50592851c13fe8915d0/How-Christ-Saves-Gods-face-and-Ours-A-soteriology-of-Honor-and-Shame.pdf.

6. Referring to Romans 2:23-24, Wu observes that “breaking the Law is one means to dishonoring God.” See Wu, “How Christ Saves God’s Face . . . and Ours,” 378.

7. Wu, “How Christ Saves God’s Face . . . and Ours,” 377.

8. Jason Borges, “‘Dignified’: An Exegetical Soteriology of Divine Honour,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 66, no. 1 (February 2013): 77, <https://honorshame.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Dignified-Soteriology-of-Divine-Honor-SJT.pdf>.

9. Wu, “How Christ Saves God’s Face . . . and Ours,” 377-378.

10. Esther Park, “Reading the Bible with Asian Eyes,” *Asian Missions Advance* 88 (Summer 2025): 20, [https://www.asiamissions.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/AMA88\\_EstherPark.pdf](https://www.asiamissions.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/AMA88_EstherPark.pdf).

11. Wu, “How Christ Saves God’s Face . . . and Ours,” 379.

12. Wu, “How Christ Saves God’s Face . . . and Ours,” 380.

13. Wu, “How Christ Saves God’s Face . . . and Ours,” 380. Georges observes that, in responding to the gospel, “women tend to relish the removal of defilement and shame, whereas men prize the prestige and honor being offered.” See Jayson Georges, “From Shame to Honor: A Theological Reading of Romans for Honor-Shame Contexts,” *Missiology: An International Review* 38, no. 3 (July 2010): 304, <https://honorshame.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/From-Shame-to-Honor-Missiology.pdf>.

14. Wu, “How Christ Saves God’s Face . . . and Ours,” 379-

1. Eugene A. Nida, *Customs and Cultures: Anthropology for Christian Missions* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1975), 150.

2. Jayson Georges, *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame, and Fear Cultures* (Timé Press, 2017), 10-11.

3. Tom Steffen, “A Clothesline Theology for the World: How a Value-Driven Grand Narrative of Scripture Can Frame the Gospel,” in *Honor, Shame, and the Gospel: Reframing Our Message and Ministry*, ed. Christopher Flanders and Werner Mischke (Littleton, CO: William Carey Publishing, 2020), 45.

4. Georges, *The 3D Gospel*, 13.

5. Jackson Wu, “How Christ Saves God’s Face . . . and Ours: A Soteriology of Honor and Shame,” *Missiology: An International Review* 44, no. 4 (2016): 375, [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Brad-Vaughn-4/publication/347038937\\_How\\_Christ\\_Saves\\_God's-face-and-Ours-A-soteriology-of-Honor-and-Shame/links/5fd7a50592851c13fe8915d0/How-Christ-Saves-Gods-face-and-Ours-A-soteriology-of-Honor-and-Shame.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Brad-Vaughn-4/publication/347038937_How_Christ_Saves_God's-face-and-Ours-A-soteriology-of-Honor-and-Shame/links/5fd7a50592851c13fe8915d0/How-Christ-Saves-Gods-face-and-Ours-A-soteriology-of-Honor-and-Shame.pdf).

honor-shame perspective, faith is more than mere belief in certain propositional truths. Rather, “faith is fundamentally about loyalty. To believe in Christ is to give one’s ultimate allegiance to him. In this sense, we understand faith in far more practical terms that direct our present life.”<sup>15</sup>

## ANALYSIS

In this section, we will examine the gospel from an honor-shame perspective within the broader framework of contextualization. First, Stephen Bevans observes that one can undertake the contextualization of theology either from a creation-centered or a redemption-centered perspective:

*If one were to opt for a more creation-centered approach, one would approach the context more positively. In a creation-centered approach, human experience, current events, and culture would be areas of God’s activity and therefore sources of theology. If, on the other hand, one believes in a world that is first and foremost in need of redemption by the Word of God from outside the world, context would be seen more negatively. The Word of God might have to be adapted to differing and changing circumstances, but those circumstances could never be interpreted as Word of God. While context may be taken with utmost seriousness, it will be seen as what God’s Word needs always to challenge.*<sup>16</sup>

The gospel from an honor-shame perspective presupposes that honor-shame cultures manifest themselves in the worship of idols and in the pursuit of distorted honor, and that these aspects need to be challenged and redeemed. Thus, it is an instance of redemption-centered theology. Second, in *Christ and Culture*, H. Richard Niebuhr discusses five responses that Christians can adopt with respect to culture. Of these, the gospel from an honor-shame perspective typifies *Christ the transformer of culture*, for “Christ is seen as the converter of man in his culture and society.”<sup>17</sup> Lastly, according to Rahman Yakubu, a successful contextual theology should satisfy three criteria: relevancy, identity, and dialogue. The questions posed by these criteria are as follows:

**Relevancy:** Is this theology **meaningful, understandable, and liberating** within its specific cultural and social situation? Does it “speak to the heart” of the people?

**Identity:** Is this contextual theology **recognizably and authentically Christian**? Does it maintain continuity with the core of the Christian faith?

**Dialogue:** Was this theology developed through a

**genuine, critical, and mutual conversation** between the biblical tradition and the local culture?<sup>18</sup>

The gospel from an honor-shame perspective meets the criterion of relevancy, in that paying attention to shame and liberation from it is certainly meaningful and understandable to those living in such cultures. How about identity? As noted above, the theme of honor-shame has not been the focus of much of Western theology. However, Anselm of Canterbury developed a theory of atonement called the satisfaction theory, which reflected “the eleventh-century feudal values of personal honor and reparation of dishonor.”<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the gospel from an honor-shame perspective is supported by a rich array of biblical references (see below). Thus, though it may not be readily recognizably Christian, it is authentically so. Finally, the gospel from an honor-shame perspective also meets the criterion of dialogue. Focusing on honor-shame cultures has contributed to the rediscovery of the significance of honor-shame in the Bible. At the same time, Scripture exposes, challenges, and seeks to redeem the worship of idols and the pursuit of distorted honor. Thus, we can conclude that the gospel from an honor-shame perspective is a viable form of contextual theology.

## EVALUATION AND PROPOSAL

We will now evaluate the gospel from an honor-shame perspective. First, Scripture contains ample references to the theme of honor-shame. For comparison, note that “the term guilt and its various derivatives occur 145 times in the Old Testament and 10 times in the New Testament, whereas the term shame and its derivatives occur nearly 300 times in the Old Testament and 45 times in the New Testament.”<sup>20</sup> As human beings created in the image of God, we are to “ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name” (Ps. 96:8). However, “although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened” (Rom. 1:21). Jason Borges observes that “Paul’s climactic hamartiological statement in Romans 3:23 – ‘for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God’ – recounts how humanity has ‘fallen short’ of properly honouring God and so now ‘falls short’ of the dignified existence God intended.”<sup>21</sup> Consequently, humans end up living in shame: “O Lord, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you shall be put to shame; those who turn away from you shall be written in the earth, for they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living water” (Jer. 17:13). Christ

380.

15. Jackson Wu, “Does the ‘Plan of Salvation’ Make Disciples? Why Honor and Shame Are Essential for Christian Ministry,” *Asian Missions Advance* 50 (January 2016): 14, [https://www.asiamissions.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/AMA-50\\_screen.pdf](https://www.asiamissions.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/AMA-50_screen.pdf).

16. Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, rev. and exp. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 22.

17. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1951), 43.

18. Rahman Yakubu, “Hermeneutical Process in Contextualization,” IC645: Contextualization (class lecture, Tyndale Theological Seminary, Badhoevedorp, the Netherlands, September 24, 2025).

19. Georges, *The 3D Gospel*, 51.

20. Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church Is Influencing the Way We Think about and Discuss Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 92.

21. Borges, “Dignified,” 77.

came to earth to set us free from the predicament we brought upon ourselves. He lived a perfectly obedient life before God. Scripture declares that “for as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous” (Rom. 5:19). According to N. T. Wright, “His role was that of obedience, not merely in place of disobedience but in order to undo that disobedience.”<sup>22</sup> Jesus “humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:8). Yet he “endured the cross, despising the shame” (Heb. 12:2), so that “everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame” (Rom. 10:11).<sup>23</sup> Jesus is now “crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death” (Heb. 2:9).<sup>24</sup> He sanctifies those who believe in him; thus, “he is not ashamed to call them brothers” (Heb. 2:11). Now we exclaim, “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1). Eschatologically, God assures us that “on that day you shall not be put to shame because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against me. The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing” (Zeph. 3:11, 17). Note that God’s rejoicing over us suggests his full acceptance of us.

As Wu says, “In honor-shame cultures, one’s relationships and reputation are among the chief concerns in a person’s life. People go to great lengths not to ‘lose face.’”<sup>25</sup> Supported by ample references to honor-shame from Scripture, the gospel from an honor-shame perspective will certainly speak to those living in such cultures regarding the removal of shame and the invitation to be part of God’s honorable family. One of the weaknesses of this contextual theology, however, concerns the crucifixion of Christ. As noted above, Scripture declares that “everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame” (Rom. 10:11). The immediate context makes it clear that belief in Jesus entails confessing that Jesus is Lord and believing that God raised him from the dead (Rom. 10:9). The resurrection of Christ presupposes his crucifixion. But why did he have to die? Recall that, according to Wu, the cross of Christ accomplishes two purposes: (1) protecting God from the shame of breaking his covenant and (2) taking away our shame before God and restoring his honor. However, it is not clear why the crucifixion was necessary for God

to fulfill his covenant promises. As for the second purpose, since Wu does not elaborate on how the crucifixion takes away our shame before God and restores his honor, we have no clear understanding of its indispensability, either. For this, we can turn to Timothy Tennent’s insight:

*In a normal honor and shame context, if a person of greater honor is shamed by someone of a significantly lower status, the offended party has the right to unleash public punishment on those who have offended their honor. . . . This response often involved shedding the blood of the offender. The punishment must take place publicly, or at least become widely known by the larger group. Only then can the honor of the one who was offended be restored.*<sup>26</sup>

Following this, we can say that the crucifixion of Christ, which involved the shedding of his blood, served as a public act of punishment by the offended God (cf. Ezek. 39:21). Although it was we humans who failed to honor God and thus brought shame upon him, Jesus went to the cross to bear the punishment on our behalf. In that sense, it is reminiscent of penal substitutionary atonement.<sup>27</sup>

This explanation probably made sense to the original, first-century audience, who lived in the honor-shame culture. However, does it speak to the hearts of those who live in such a culture in the twenty-first century? In Japan, at least, the offended party does not usually administer public punishment to those who have insulted their honor by shedding their blood (it may indeed happen among the yakuza, but it is a criminal act). Is there another way to make sense of the fact that our shame is removed via the crucifixion of Christ? I propose that Jesus’ hanging on the cross signifies his solidarity with us in our shame. Jesus bore the ultimate shame on the cross. As Scripture says, “He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not” (Isa. 53:3). Gorges and Baker observe:

*The Gospel writers recognize and highlight the shame factor of Jesus’ death by listing the many affronts dishonoring Jesus in the crucifixion process: spitting on him, striking him in the face and head, stripping him, ridiculing him, insulting him and derisively mocking him. Then worst of all, they hung Jesus’ mangled, naked body near the city gates on the busy Passover weekend for all to behold. Jesus even suffered the humiliation of his closest friends’ abandoning him. Set within Roman conventions, Jesus’ crucifixion is a tale of shame and humiliation, the ultimate form of*

22. N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 1991), 38.

23. Georges observes that “this citation of Isaiah 28:16, also cited earlier in Romans 9:33, is perhaps the greatest of all theological truths for those from honor-shame cultures.” See Georges, “From Shame to Honor,” 302.

24. Note in passing that the resurrected Christ was most likely clothed (otherwise the Gospel writers would have mentioned it). This provides a subtle implication that Jesus’ honor was restored after the resurrection. According to Tennent, “Another important feature of shame and honor, which can be traced back to the account of the fall in Genesis, is the association of nakedness with shame and the corresponding association of clothing with honor.” See Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 85.

25. Wu, “Does the ‘Plan of Salvation’ Make Disciples?,” 14.

26. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 94.

27. Note in passing that “for Anselm Christ’s death is not an act of punishment. Above all there is no indication at all that in the death of Jesus God is exercising on Jesus the punishment that sinners deserve, or that God is punishing Jesus in place of punishing sinners.” See J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011), 236.



labeling a person as an outcast.<sup>28</sup>

When we come to realize that we have failed to meet not only the expectations of others but also those of the glorious God, we feel the burden of shame. In such times, how comforting it is to know that Jesus understands what it is like to be burdened by shame! As a high priest, he can sympathize with our weaknesses (Heb. 4:15). He himself went through the utmost shame so that we would feel that our own shame is nothing by comparison. I know of a former youth pastor who shaved his head because one of the teens in his youth group was going through chemotherapy and losing hair. His act of love vividly showed the teen that he was not alone in his shame. In a much more amazing and dramatic way, Jesus lets us know that we are not alone in our shame by experiencing the abject shame himself.<sup>29</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In this article, we have investigated how the gospel can be contextualized in honor-shame cultures. Those living in such cultures can readily relate to the gospel from an honor-shame perspective (criterion of relevancy). It also has a rich array of biblical references (criterion of identity). Focusing on honor-shame cultures has contributed to the rediscovery of the significance of honor-shame in the Bible. At the same time, Scripture exposes, challenges, and seeks to redeem the worship of idols and the pursuit of distorted honor (criterion of dialogue). Thus, the gospel from an honor-shame perspective is a viable contextual theology. One drawback is the question of how to make sense of the crucifixion of Christ. I have proposed that his crucifixion demonstrates solidarity with us in our shame. It is comforting to know that Jesus can sympathize with our shame because he himself went through excruciating shame for our sake. I thus suggest the following points to focus on when sharing the gospel with those living in honor-shame cultures:

If we are honest, we all experience shame and are burdened by it.

We try to hide our shame or cover it up through achievements (i.e., distorted honor).

But, deep down, we still feel the sting of shame.

God loves us deeply and does not want us to live in shame.

Therefore, he came to earth in the person of Jesus and endured utter shame on the cross on our behalf, showing us that we are not alone in our shame. He fully sympathizes with our shame.

Jesus was raised from the dead, thereby defeating

<sup>28</sup> Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 108.

<sup>29</sup> On top of Jesus' solidarity with us in our shame, Tennent correctly observes that "at the very hour of Jesus' public shame on the cross, he was actually in the process of shaming his enemies, disarming the powers and authorities and making 'a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross' (Col. 2:15)." See Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 88.

shame. He is now exalted in glory and honor.

Through faith in Jesus, our identity is transformed. We are no longer people marked by shame, but sons and daughters of God.

This is not meant to be exhaustive, nor does it cover the entirety of the gospel. Furthermore, as Tom Steffen points out, most cultures have at least two preferred value systems among the four (i.e., guilt-innocence, fear-power, shame-honor, and pollution-purity).<sup>30</sup> That is, even in so-called honor-shame cultures, there is typically another value system that is meaningful to those living in such cultures. In sharing the gospel, then, it is important to make use of at least two contextual theologies that speak to the recipients' hearts (e.g., the gospel from an honor-shame perspective and that from an innocence-guilt perspective), so that they can understand that God graciously desires to offer both honor and forgiveness to them.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Steffen adds a fourth value system. See Steffen, "A Clothesline Theology for the World," 45-46.

<sup>31</sup> Steffen observes that "the texts of Bible authors flow smoothly from one value system to another. Overlap is common." See Steffen, "A Clothesline Theology for the World," 47.

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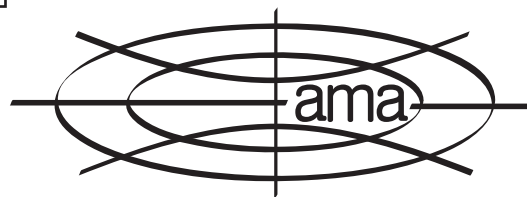
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## HISTORY

In 1971, Dr. David J. Cho made several trips to various Asian countries, discussing the possibility of calling an All-Asia Missions Consultation. This proposal was warmly received and the Consultation was held in Seoul, South Korea in August, 1973. As a result of the Consultation, the Asia Missions Association was formed in August 1975. It consisted of 14 Asian nations: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Brunei, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam.

The Asia Missions Association has hosted a Triennial All Asian Missionary Conference in different countries in Asia since its All-Asia Mission Consultation in Seoul. Each conference ended with resolutions and action plans that have contributed to the unification of Asian Churches and Mission Agencies for the advancement of the Gospel. The year 2023 marked the 50th anniversary of the AMA and 14th AMA Triennial Convention was held in Jakarta, Indonesia. The next convention will be held in Seoul, Korea, in 2023.

## CONVENTIONS

- All-Asia Missions Consultation in Seoul, Korea, 1973
- The 1st Convention in Seoul, Korea: Inauguration of Asia Missions Association, 1975
- The 2nd Convention in Singapore, 1978 – *"Strengthen and Lengthen" (Isaiah 54:2)*
- The 3rd Convention in Seoul, Korea, 1982 – *"Isaiah 62:10"*
- The 4th Convention in Pasadena, USA, 1986 – *"Peace Council of World Christians"*
- The 5th Convention in Utsunomiya, Japan, 1991 – *"World Christian for World Mission"*
- The 6th Convention in Kobe, Japan, 1997 – *"Mission to the World for Glory to God and Peace on Earth"*
- The 7th Convention in Jakarta, Indonesia, 2000 – *"Missionary Vision for the Third Millennium"*
- The 8th Convention in Moscow, Russia, 2003 – *"New Global Partnership for World Mission"*
- The 9th Convention in Ephesus, Turkey, 2006 – *"Mission, The Apostolic Way"*
- The 10th Convention in Jakarta, Indonesia, 2010 – *"Asian Churches in Global Mission"*
- The 11th Convention in Incheon, Korea, 2013 – *"Discipleship in the 21st Century Mission" (Luke 9:23)*
- The 12th Convention in Manila, Philippines, 2016 – *"Globalization and Mission"*
- The 13th Convention in Chiang Mai, Thailand, 2019 – *"Migration and Mission"*
- The 14th Convention in Jakarta, Indonesia, 2023 – *"Missions in the Post Pandemic Era: Challenges and Opportunities in the New Normal World"*

# The Legacy of Colonialism on Understanding Cross-Cultural Mission

*Ryan Shaw*

Today the negative effects of historic colonialism are still impacting the global Church, specifically related to (1) the Gospel and (2) how cross-cultural mission is understood.

Historically, while colonialism tended to be an oppressive system whereby a dominant country subjugated another people for their own gain, the mission movement sought to operate separately from colonialism. Yet, because missionaries often came from colonial power nations, the two were seen, and unfortunately often experienced, as dynamically connected.

This often made it difficult for the Gospel to be grasped, understood and applied into the daily lives of the people being reached. The message of Christ and His Kingdom felt irrelevant to the lives and issues local people were facing. We still face this problem in many unreached and unengaged cultural contexts today.

The most successful missionaries of the colonial era learned the importance of separating the Gospel truth from all Western cultural traits and pitfalls, allowing Jesus and His words to stand on their own, amidst the God-given culture of the target people. They encouraged new believers to express their new faith in uniquely cultural ways relevant to them.

They taught that while Jesus Christ and His unchanging Truth transcends culture, God always uses forms of local believers to express that truth. They expected new followers of Jesus, from the deep reservoir of their own cultural and even religious past, to interpret Christ in a culturally relevant way that enriched the total expression of the universal Christ.

Fast forward 100 or so years. Many of the countries missionaries originally went during the colonial era now have large populations of disciples of Christ (across Asia, Africa and Latin America). The Gospel itself has become “indigenized” or “naturalized” in many of these places.

This was achieved through the hard work of faithful and courageous indigenous local ministry leaders over the years who expressed and taught faith in Christ in uniquely African, Asian and Latino cultural ways. These ways allowed the Gospel to begin to be perceived as something indigenous, grown from within, rather than understood as originating from the outside. These expressions of devoted life in Christ and understanding Scripture are a gift to the global body of Christ.

As local culture and expression rightly influence faith, interpretation of Scripture, spiritual disciplines, understanding spiritual power as well as styles of dressing, worship, prayer, hospitality and other general expressions of spirituality, this has created true,

dynamic faith. While we still have a great deal further to go, the global Church has come a long way in seeing the Gospel take indigenous root and natural expression in many cultures.

Now let’s move from the historic progression of the Gospel itself to the foundational mandate of Jesus to His global Church regarding cross-cultural mission. How far have we progressed concerning an “indigenized” and “naturalized” understanding of cross-cultural mission in global south churches? Again, let’s consider history.

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Again, fast forward 100 or so years. Researchers tell us the center of gravity of global Christianity has dramatically shifted so that now approximately two-thirds (69%) of all believers globally are in the global south (Asia, Africa and Latin America). We rejoice at the encouraging implications of this as the Holy Spirit awakens this giant for cross-cultural mission.

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During the colonial era, the mission movement globally was dominated by westerners, which was appropriate at that time due to the parts of the world where the Gospel was and wasn’t. They brought with them the concepts of “full-time missionaries,” planting churches with full-time paid pastors, buildings being necessary, and many other outside trappings, in contrast with Jesus and the early church’s zero budget model of disciple multiplication through simple, culturally relevant churches. Additionally, they often brought a sense of cultural superiority instead of celebrating who God had culturally made the target people to be. Paul’s own example was exactly the opposite of this (1 Cor. 7:17-24; 9:19-23; Acts 19:8-10; 20:33-35).

Again, fast forward 100 or so years. Researchers tell us the center of gravity of global Christianity has dramatically shifted so that now approximately two-thirds (69%) of all believers globally are in the global south (Asia, Africa and Latin America).<sup>1</sup> We rejoice at the encouraging implications of this as the Holy Spirit

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1. World Christianity in 2025 – Center For the Study of Global Christianity, Gina A. Zurlo, Todd M. Johnson and Peter F. Crossing



awakens this giant for cross-cultural mission.

Yet, while the epicenter of the global Church has shifted to the global south, the rate at which the global south is scattering message bearers is not commensurate with its population. The western Church is currently scattering .31% of the Church into cross-cultural mission while the global south Church is scattering .01% into cross-cultural mission.<sup>2</sup>

Due to these statistics, we must ask, “Has the concept of cross-cultural mission been ‘indigenized’ or ‘naturalized,’ finding localized cultural expression, from within the global south Church?” Doing so requires a “rethinking” of the historic western example and traditional models of cross-cultural mission and a necessary reframing through a Biblical and Spirit-led cross-cultural mission approach.

So, let’s grasp the current predicament. As cited, historically cross-cultural mission from the West took place to the point where over time the Gospel took indigenous root and is today, in many places, functioning as a relevant, cultural expression of faith, free from western constraints. Yet for the most part, an understanding of cross-cultural mission, in much of the global south Church today, is still seen as a western responsibility, not yet “naturalized” or “enculturated” from within the global south Church.

It is tragically common for committed believers in global south nations to have significant misunderstandings about cross-cultural mission. Some of these include – “global mission is for white people,” “Africans and Asians are receivers of ‘missionaries’ and cannot be senders”; or “cross-cultural mission is for churches in affluent, wealthy nations who serve people in poor countries” (making the emphasis of mission humanitarian instead of Gospel centered). We often hear global south pastors say with tears in their eyes, “We love the Great Commission, but we are a poor church. How can we do cross-cultural mission?”

Why is this still the case? Each of these misunderstandings betrays an outlook steeped in a western model of cross-cultural mission. When Africans, Asians and Latinos are mobilized for mission today, it is often through the lens of this historic, traditional model. Instead, it seems necessary to come alongside African, Asian and Latino churches to deeply wrestle with Biblical and Spirit-led models of cross-cultural mission and integrate these into their own mission mobilization. The mobilization fruit will then be explosive and lasting.

Did Jesus only give wealthy, affluent churches with big budgets the Great Commission mandate (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:19-23)? Of course not. He gave it to poor, Jewish fishermen who proceeded to “turn the world upside down” (Acts 17:6) through multiplying and reproducing disciples and simple churches everywhere they went, with very little money involved (Acts 8:4).

What then is the answer to our current predicament? Just like the Gospel is meant to be rooted in a

local cultural expression, blossoming from within, interpreted through the lens of cultural and religious past, that same people’s understanding of cross-cultural mission is also meant to be so.

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**Did Jesus only give wealthy, affluent churches with big budgets the Great Commission mandate ? Of course not. He gave it to poor, Jewish fishermen who proceeded to “turn the world upside down” through multiplying and reproducing disciples and simple churches everywhere they went, with very little money involved.**

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Holistic mission mobilization serves this process immensely. Encouraging local churches and entire denominations in global south nations to put ongoing, consistent mobilization principles, tools and strategies within the life of their fellowships. This process enables their people to be envisioned with cross-cultural mission corporately over the long-term while obeying the Biblical and Spirit-led models of doing so, not merely reproducing the traditional, western-influenced models.

Let’s partner with the Spirit in pursuing holistic mobilization today toward the “indigenizing” and “naturalizing” of cross-cultural mission vision within every national Church. Let’s work to overcome the misunderstandings and false outlooks about cross-cultural mission by mobilizing the global south Church to lay down traditional, western models and instead take up and integrate Biblical, Spirit-led models of cross-cultural mission.

\*This article was originally published by GMMI in its online Mobilization Matters Bulletin at [www.globalmmi.net/blog](http://www.globalmmi.net/blog). The content has been republished with permission. All rights to the original article remain with the author and GMMI.



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2. State of Christianity In The World – [www.vision.org.au](http://www.vision.org.au)

# Africa-Led Cross-Cultural Missions: Challenges and Triumphs

Akinyemi Oluwafemi Alawode

## ABSTRACT

Once a mission field for European missionaries, Africa is gradually becoming a global mission force. Africa is a unique continent in the world, and it has a long history of missionary endeavours, starting from the early second century to the 18th and 19th centuries. Christians in Africa have realized their roles in the propagation of the gospel and in reaching their ethnic groups and others. The history of the Nigerian Church started with the advent of Portuguese traders. Still, in the later years, the working of Western missionaries with the Africans yielded a tangible impact on the land. Through many years of labor by African Christian leaders in reaching the unreached people groups, they are now recognized and placed in leadership positions of many global mission agencies; wherein, some leading mission agencies originated from Africa. Through historical and descriptive research methods, some challenges of cross-cultural missions in Africa include training, funding, human resources, and insecurity. In the face of all the challenges, cross-cultural missions in Africa have experienced many triumphs, such as progressive contextualization, engagement in business, social actions, and power encounter strategies. Even though Africans need to do a lot to finish the unfinished task, they are still celebrated for the tangible progress recorded over the years.

## INTRODUCTION

The Christian missions in Africa are of great interest to the world because the African countries termed “the dark nations” are rapidly growing in church planting and cross-cultural missions. According to the statistical data obtained from the World Meter website, Africa is the second largest continent, occupying 20% of the total land surface. It is divided into five sub-sections: East Africa, North Africa, Central Africa, Southern Africa and West Africa. There are no less than 3,000 distinct ethnic groups in Africa alone, and approximately 2,000 various languages are spoken, and each of the languages has different dialects. Presently, there are 54 countries in Africa. One notable uniqueness of Africa is that it contains the longest river in the world, i.e. River Nile.<sup>1</sup> The Sahara in Africa is the world’s largest hot desert and one of the most challenging places on earth, and likewise, the African elephant is the world’s largest land animal.<sup>2</sup>

There is also uniqueness in the arrival of the Christian faith in Africa, as explained by Fatokun,<sup>3</sup> who states that Christianity primarily arrived in North Africa in the first or early second century AD. The Christian societies in North Africa were among the earliest in the globe. Legend has it that John Mark, one of the four evangelists, brought the Christian faith from Jerusalem to Alexandria on the Egyptian coast in 60 AD. Once in North Africa, the Christian faith spread slowly West from Alexandria and East to Ethiopia. With the Christian missions came education, literacy and hope for the disadvantaged. However, the spread of Christianity paved the way for commercial speculators and, in its original rigid European form, denied people pride in their culture and ceremonies. Still, Africans were able to rise to the call for cross-cultural missions. In light of such background, this paper used historical and descriptive methods to focus on the contemporary issues in African Mission, the various missionary activities in Africa using Nigeria as a case study and explains some challenges and triumphs of cross-cultural missions in Nigeria before strategically concluding.

## CONTEMPORARY ISSUES OF CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONS IN AFRICA

The Church is the primary center for sending missionaries cross-culturally. The first missionary commission in the Bible is in Acts 13. It describes the first Body of Christ to commission cross-cultural foreign missionaries in the New Testament.

13 <sup>1</sup> Now in the Church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod, the tetrarch) and Saul. <sup>2</sup> While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” <sup>3</sup> So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. Acts 13:1-3 (NIV)

Surprisingly, the Church in Jerusalem was not the epicenter of this new movement. It is, therefore, biblically appropriate and possible for African churches, with all its challenges, to have the opportunity to evangelize the nations of the world.<sup>4</sup> The Lord instructed the leaders to set apart Barnabas

(*Loxodonta africana*).” Geo Consult Wildlife (pty) Ltd, 2010, 7.

3. Samson Fatokun, “Christianity in Africa: a historical appraisal.” *Verbum Et Ecclesia* Vol. 26. No. 2. 2005, 358.

4. Yaw Perbi and Sam Ngugi, 2022, *Africa to the Rest: From Mission Field to Mission Force* (Again). Xulon Press, Maitland, 2022, 101.

1. Fielding, L., Najman, Y., Millar, I., Butterworth, P., Garzanti, E., Vezzoli, G., Barfod, D., and Kneller, B: The initiation and evolution of the River Nile, “Earth and Planetary Science Letters”. Volume 489, 2018, 3.

2. Deon Furstenburg, “Focus on the African Elephant

and Paul for the work He had called them. Jesus issued the Great Commission, and a church planted among Gentiles far away profoundly influenced the world. Indeed, whereas Peter was still in Jerusalem<sup>5</sup> defending his manifestation in the home of Cornelius, the Holy Spirit was already raising leaders in Antioch. Antioch has significantly impacted the world more than the Church in Jerusalem. The primary reason was that the Church in Antioch had leaders willing to obey God's voice. It shows that Christian leaders are crucial in what God can do through the Church. They have a strong influence on the members of the Church. To a large extent, African Christian leaders are awakening to the task of cross-cultural missions.

Africa has the resources of people making great exploits related to cross-cultural missions. Africa has churches filled with prayer and worship. The passionate worship and vibrant prayer experiences in Africa are unique as they involve lots of shouting, dancing, and singing.<sup>6</sup> Africans have celebrated this form of prayer and worship worldwide. Likewise, African Christians influence the world by engaging and leading through mission agencies.

There are African homegrown mission agencies, such as CAPRO (Calvary Ministries) and the Evangelical Mission Association (EMS) of ECWA. Also, historically, there are Western mission agencies where Africans now provide leadership. Examples include Open Door Missions, Inc. (It assists church pastors in funding projects that will bring about the fulfilment of the Great Commission), SIL (It is a global, faith-based non-profit that works with local societies around the world to develop language solutions that expand possibilities for a better life. Its core contribution areas are Bible translation, literacy, education, development, linguistic research and language tools), Navigators (It was founded in 1933; its ministry is to share the gospel of Jesus and help the people grow in their relationship with him through "Life-to-life" discipleship, creating spiritual generations of believers) and SIM (It was established in 1893 by three founders; Walter, Rowland, and Kent). Presently, all the mentioned mission agencies have African International Directors.

The roles provided by mission agencies include the provision of the pathways, infrastructure, and expertise to send missionaries from local churches anywhere into mission fields everywhere. Therefore, they must have good governance, practice fiscal transparency, a wise theology of risk, and a track record of caring for God's most valuable African resource and people.<sup>7</sup> It is a great privilege for Africans to spearhead such a task.

5. Kayode Owojori, (ed). "Contemporary Issues in African Mission, Compendium: Contemporary Issues in African Missions." Papers in Honour of Rev. Dr. Reuben Ezemadu. African Christian Centre for Leadership Advancement and International Missions. Ibadan, 2020. 166.

6. Perbi and Ngugi. 28.

7. Eddie Arthur, "Mission Agencies in the 21st Century: A Research Report for Agency Leadership and Boards." Wycliffe Bible. Toronto. 2018, 3.

Accordingly, there are some shifts in the African-led cross-cultural mission workers, churches, and agencies. The perspective on its role in global missions is also changing. Africans now see themselves as agents of change that can affect the world with the gospel. Also, it was also observed that Africans can go where others may not be able to go. For instance, Westerners cannot be missionaries in North Africa or China as in the past, but a Nigerian in either context will never be considered a missionary; therefore, they will have access to preach the gospel. Likewise, financially, Africa's poverty mentality is changing. Africans now see that they can do cross-cultural missions without Western assistance.<sup>8</sup>

Over the years, there has been continuous progress in reaching the unreached people groups in Africa. In Nigeria, there are still a noticeable number of unreached people groups even though Christianity has been in the country for over a century. According to Peter Lee and James Sung-Hwan Park,<sup>9</sup> a people group can be described as the largest group within which the good news can spread as a church-planting movement without coming across barriers of acceptance or understanding. A people group becomes unreached when there is no indigenous society of believing Christians with suitable resources and numbers to evangelize the people group. They can also be described as a people group with less than 2% evangelical and less than 5% Christian adherents. Understanding the unreached people group helps to develop effective strategies for evangelism.

In Africa, the number of unreached people groups is 972 (25.9%) out of 3,749. These unreached people number about 426.1 million out of Africa's population of 1.5 trillion.<sup>10</sup> Among the worst of such unreached people in | Africa are the Tuareg, the Fulbe, the Hausa, and the Cushitic. In Nigeria, the number of unreached people groups is 52 out of 542. The unreached people number about 69.8 million out of Nigeria's population of 228.4 million. The more popular unreached people groups in Nigeria are Kanuri, Hausa and the Fulani. The missionary activities in Africa demonstrated these various paradigm shifts and progress in African cross-cultural missions.

## MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA: THE NIGERIAN CASE STUDY

This section does not attempt to trace the history of Christian missions in Nigeria or Africa. Instead, it highlights the attempts Nigerian Christians and churches have made so far, either on their initiative or in cooperation with Christians from other countries, to evangelize Nigeria and their attempts to extend the gospel into other lands. For brevity, the writer limits

8. Owojori (ed), 168.

9. Peter Lee and James Sung-Hwan, "Beyond People Group Thinking: A Critical reevaluation of Unreached People Group". *Missiology An International Review*, Vol. 6, No. 1. 2018, 3.

10. Joshua Project, "Continent: Africa, <https://joshuaproject.net/continents/AFR>." 2025.



the discussion to the period before the emergence of the charismatic indigenous mission movements of the 70s and beyond.

Nigeria's earliest contact with Christianity was through Portuguese Christians, who exploited the contact established by Portuguese traders with the Oba of Benin for missionary purposes. The Oba was said to have been baptized as a Christian in 1491. However, this early attempt was unsuccessful because the material influence of the Portuguese relationship with the Oba seems to have overshadowed the spiritual witness of the missionaries.<sup>11</sup> It is clear because when the Portuguese traders left in 1520, the missions were terminated without any visible result from their efforts.

Ezemadu explained that between 1839 and 1842, several hundreds of formerly enslaved people began to return to their people in the southwestern parts of Nigeria. Some of these returning ex-slaves had become Christians while they were in the foreign land. Those who settled in Abeokuta wrote to Britain requesting help to come over and minister to their spiritual needs, drawing the attention of the Christians in Britain to the opportunity to preach the gospel in the areas, and the "Abeokuta" call was heeded. The Methodist Mission sent their missionary in Ghana (then Gold Coast). Thomas B. Freeman responds to the request from the returnee Christians at Abeokuta. He arrived at Badagry on September 2, 1842. Also, Thomas B. Freeman brought with him a missionary couple William de Graft and his wife. They continued the mission work he started, which resulted in the beginning of the first Church in Nigeria and influenced the first Baptist missionary thrust into Nigeria. Baptist missionaries started to arrive in Nigeria including Thomas Jefferson Bowen who landed at Badagry in August 1850.<sup>12</sup>

Ezemadu added that the contributions of Samuel Ajayi Crowther, a liberated Yoruba slave boy who eventually became the first Bishop of modern Christian times, to spreading the gospel in Nigeria are already a celebrated fact. His ministry among his people at Abeokuta led to his mother's conversion and the expansion of the Church at Abeokuta, which was said to have had a worshipping congregation of 500 by 1849. He participated in three expeditions up the Niger and later opened up the Niger mission. He contributed significantly to preparing the Yoruba and English dictionaries, grammar, and Yoruba versions of the Bible. It shows that an indigene played a pioneering role in spreading the gospel right from the cradle of Christianity in Nigeria.

According to Ogunewu, John Christopher Taylor

11. Babatunde Ogunlana, "The Nigerian Baptist Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: A Critical Reflection," The Centenary Lecture At First Baptist Church, Ahmadu Bello Way/Taiwo Road, Kaduna, 2018, 7

12. Ezemadu Reuben. (2020). Current issues in African Mission, Compendium: Contemporary Issues in African Missions, Papers in Honour of Rev. Dr. Reuben Ezemadu. Kayode Owojori (editor), African Christian Centre for Leadership Advancement and International Missions. Ibadan, 2020, 169-171.

was another Nigerian pioneer missionary from the Ibo tribe who worked both in Bathurst (now Banjul) in the Gambia and later pioneered the CMS work in Onitsha and its environs. His ministry started at Onitsha on August 2, 1857, when he preached to a church membership of more than 500 people in the open air.<sup>13</sup> When a decision was taken to open up a Christian mission to Oyo in 1856, Daniel Olubi, a young Christian at Abeokuta who was already assisting the missionaries in the work of the ministry, was considered the best material to use. He was diligent and opened a church of 100 members at Ogunpa, Ibadan, on January 1, 1869.

The Nigerian Christians were also involved in Nigeria's early Baptist missionary work. Moses Ladejo Stone was one of the earliest Baptist converts involved in the Missions as evangelist and interpreter. The leadership of the young Church fell upon him during the American crisis, which hindered the coming of more white missionaries until 1875. Stone's early ministry included building the Baptist church in Lagos and pastoring the Baptist congregation in Ogbomoso for seven years.<sup>14</sup>

The assemblies of God missionaries from the U.S.A. came to Nigeria in 1930 at the request of a group of Nigerian Christians who were already experiencing a revival and needed assistance training for the ministry. A similar factor brought the Apostolic Church Missionaries from Britain to Nigeria in 1939 following a request from members of the Precious Stone Praying Band formed during the revival, which broke out among some Yoruba Christians of the Anglican Church, leading particularly from the powerful evangelistic and healing ministry of Babalola.<sup>15</sup>

The cross-cultural missions in Africa have led to various exploits ranging from millions of souls won to Christ and planting multiple churches in Africa and beyond the shores of Africa. However, some challenges and triumphs have been recorded over the years, a few of which will be explained.

## CHALLENGES AND TRIUMPHS OF CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONS IN AFRICA/NIGERIA

### Challenges

Challenges of reaching the unreached people in Nigeria include religious violence and perceptions. As stated by Nwachukwu, in northern Nigeria, especially the North East, Boko Haram has held sway over the land and people, and religious violence is the order of the day. Similar situations persist in several other countries of North Africa like Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, where Christian missions are not only

13. Ogunewu Michael, 2015, "Travails and Triumphs of Aladura Christianity in Nigeria 1920 to 2010". The Amen Missions Inc. Ikeja. 2015, 17.

14. Ogunewu, 2015, 5.

15. Ogunewu, 63.

unwelcomed but violently resisted.<sup>16</sup>

As beautifully observed by Ogunewu, inadequate workforce and funds are challenging. There is a state of emergency in the work of missions to the unreached workforce because many missionaries work in areas relatively reached by the gospel. The same goes for the area of African mission funding because many still believe that only wealthy nations are to be involved in cross-cultural missions. It cannot be over-emphasized that reaching the unreached cannot progress without adequate funding.<sup>17</sup>

Another challenge on cross-cultural missions is that in the 21st-century missions, there is this idea among missionaries where the mission work is likened to commercial businesses that it must break even and yield profit within an expected time frame.<sup>18</sup> A mission to the unreached is not so, as sometimes it could take decades for the impact to manifest. Africa's cross-cultural missions also face the challenge of inadequate training and training opportunities. It is agreed that unreached people may not be reached, except the condemnatory attitude and social arrogance of missionaries towards the cultures of remote people change substantially.

## Triumphs

There are some noticeable triumphs of cross-cultural missions in Africa. The first is the increased contextualization of the gospel. According to Adenike Adeodun, storytelling has played a tangible role in reaching the unreached in Africa. Most unreached people groups in Africa, like the Hausa and Fulani, are oral learners. The people learn through oral methods such as stories, songs, proverbs, sayings, drama, dances, and riddles, and missionaries with storytelling skills are harvesting impressive successes in conversions to Christianity amongst the Hausa and the Fulani.<sup>19</sup>

There have been some tangible triumphs through social ministries, such as community development and medical missions. Most of the unreached people in Africa lack social amenities and infrastructure. Missionaries enter the land and give free medicare, clothing, food materials, and other gifts, and with the Bible on their other hand, the Christian missionaries are well received<sup>20</sup> in many African communities.

16. Nwachukwu, Emma. (2020). "Challenges and Successes of Taking the Gospel to The Unreached Tribes and People of Nigeria and Africa" Compendium: Contemporary Issues in African Missions, Papers in Honour of Rev. Dr. Reuben Ezemadu. Kayode Owojori (editor), *African Christian Centre for Leadership Advancement and International Missions*. Ibadan, 2020, 172-176.

17. Ogunewu, "Travails and Triumphs of Aladura Christianity in Nigeria 1920 to 2010," 66.

18. Ibid 66.

19. Adenike Adeodun, "The Role of Storytelling in Preserving African Traditions: How storytelling preserves Africa's cultural heritage and adapts in modern times," <https://spectator.africa/2025/01/15/the-role-of-storytelling-in-preserving-african-traditions>, 2025, 2.

20. Mipo E. Dadang, "A Century and Twenty-Five Years of Missionary Activities In Nigeria: A Historical-Missiological Appraisal Of Serving In Mission (SiM)", ECWA Theological Seminary Jos,

Today, Christianity has taken root in many lands like Ibwia through social action.

Africans believe strongly in the spiritual world. Therefore, missionaries' manifestation and demonstration of spiritual power and authority have yielded enormous soul-winning results.<sup>21</sup> Bartianor in Ghana was known as the headquarters of witchcraft in West Africa. When Missions Aid International entered the land in 2004, God manifested His presence through miracles and deliverance power. Not only did power change hands, but the chief priest of the Papla witchcraft deity surrendered his life to Jesus. Similar experiences are happening in many other fields amongst the unreached in Africa.

Many missionaries in the unreached people groups regions use their professions as leverage for missions. Business as Mission is the strategy by which several missionaries have penetrated and lived among unreached people groups doing business while using the opportunity to preach the gospel and win souls among them.<sup>22</sup> It is a strategy that provides both access and resources for the missionaries.

## CONCLUSION

This paper explains the contemporary issues in African missions by referencing the current situations of African missions' endeavours by Africans. It further elaborates on the missionary activities in Africa by making the case of Nigeria a focus on how it started with the Portuguese traders and, later, by the 19th-century missionaries and now primarily by Africans. Missions in Africa have faced some challenges, such as funding, human resources, and training opportunities, among others; however, they have also experienced some levels of triumph through contextualization, storytelling, power encounters, social actions, and business as mission strategies. There is a great hope that the African missions will have a long-lasting impact in many nations of the world.

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Nigeria, 2017, 4.

21. Stephen Jester, 2017, "The Spirit's Role in Mission: Narrative Pentecostal Theology in West Africa, *International Journal of Pentecostal Missiology* Vol. 5, 2017, 7.

22. John Nganga, *Christian Professionals: Leading in the Marketplace*. Taruma Consultants Ltd. Nairobi, 2018, 48.



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# The Power of the Tongue (Spoken Words)

*Lulu Tira*

"JESUS loves me." These are the words, my seminary schoolmate who was experiencing depression, herself for over fifty times, as prescribed by her psychologist every time she went for therapy. Why such prescription? Because there is power when we speak. There is power of the tongue.

Proverbs 18:21 says; "Life and death are in the power of the tongue." We either speak life or death to the one who hears it whether to ourselves or to others. Words of Life are words that build, pleasant to the one who hears it; while words of death are words that destroy. It makes one sick. The tongue has power to delight and to inspire. It has also the power to instruct and direct towards the right or the wrong path. The tongue likewise has the power to destroy. Every negative and harsh words become a curse in the spiritual world. It can cause a tiny spark that can create a whole forest fire. When this happens the good destiny planned by God for us is obstructed and not fulfilled. Saying something is declaring words that either help us to advance or hinder our advancement and become stagnant and powerless.

Job 22:28 says; "Decree a thing and it will be done and the light shall shine upon your ways." Your decisions will be carried out and light will shine on your ways."

I practice this principle daily and experience what I speak. Illustration: Instead of speaking about how I feel, for example, feeling sick, I will not say, "I feel I am getting sick" but instead, I will declare "I am healthy today, I am not sick. God wants me to be healthy,"

We humans live in two realms, the physical and the spiritual realms. If you are in pain, you feel more pain, when you speak out your pain. Because you are telling your brain that you are in pain and so it transmit to the whole body, therefore, that will respond in pain. But if you speak life by speaking "Thank you Lord for subduing the pain, for increasing my endurance, I am healed through the stripes of Jesus. In Jesus name I rebuke this arthritis." Then the pain will be eased and endured.

By this, you are not only speaking to yourself (but speaking to the spiritual realm); when speaking life or God's Words, God and His kingdom helpers like the angels will move to cooperate with you but if you speak negatively you are speaking to the kingdom of Satan and his principalities to do what is being spoken. We should not allow the enemy to use us to curse ourselves and others by allowing him to use our tongue.

That is why even King David have to speak to his

soul to praise the Lord. Thanking and praising the Lord brings you to the throne of God where the celestial spirits move in God's will. We need faith to speak positively.

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We humans live in two realms, the physical and the spiritual realms. If you are in pain, you feel more pain, when you speak out your pain. Because you are telling your brain that you are in pain and so it transmit to the whole body, therefore, that will respond in pain. But if you speak life by speaking "Thank you Lord for subduing the pain, for increasing my endurance, I am healed through the stripes of Jesus. In Jesus name I rebuke this arthritis." Then the pain will be eased and endured.

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I have not only studied these principles but experienced it every day of my life. Instead of speaking negative words I am learning to speak and declare Gods words in my life and to others; I speak blessing instead of curse. One time a friend asked me, How are you Lulu? I answered, "Oh here I am getting old "and she rebuked me with love. She told me, "It's being known that we all get old but confess Gods words with regards to getting old which says; "My youth is renewed like eagle's." (Isaiah 40:31) John 12:49 says: "For I have not spoken of myself but the Father who sent me, He gave me a commandment what I should and what should I speak ". Whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto me, I speak."

In Mark 4:39, over a raging storm, Jesus arose and rebuked the wind and said unto the sea, "Peace be still. "And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. When we we're doing a lot of traveling especially flying and we passed through air pockets and turbulence I would speak to the problem saying "Peace be still" and thank God we were relieved, We are assured to have this kind of results because the Father had given us Words to speak.

Our words when spoken must come from the word



of God. That is why it is important to study the word of God. One can know the Bible by personally studying the Word of God or join Bible study weekly, so you will know what to say.

Ephesians 5:29 "Do not let unwholesome talk come out of your mouths but only what is helpful for building others (and yourself) up according to their needs that it may benefit those who listen." We should not ridicule, speak lies and harsh words, mock, deny truth, confuse or speak ill words in anyway, words that do not edify and minister to others. We should not gossip, complain, criticize or use worthless words for by we will be judged for every idle words we speak. We should speak positive words like words of encouragement, praise and love that build others and even ourselves.

James 3:1-12 and Proverbs 18:20-21 focuses on the immense power and destructive potential of words which can build or tear down, bring life or death and reflect the spiritual state of the speaker's heart. Do not speak negative feelings, rather have an antidote for it like for a seemingly bad day you say; "I declare this is the day that the Lord had made. I will rejoice and be glad in it. When you do not know what to do- "I declare I have the mind of Christ. The Holy Spirit will direct me." When you have a problem- say "Be still my soul and know that He is God. He is sovereign "

Three decades ago my father in law said to my young son that he will be a pastor. Today he is pastoring a church. Seven years ago, somebody told

me, You will write a book. Two years after, my book was published. Those words became a blessing that empower me to follow Gods plan in my life. Speak out blessings, say you are blessed, you are loved etc. Speak God's promises. Speak good dreams in line with Gods will. In conclusion, the tongue has power. Be careful of what you say. If you want to be blessed speak life to yourself, to your spouse, children to your government to others etc. Speaking love motivates actions.. Do not speak death to yourself and to others especially in speaking to God. Give Him the due reverence, praise and thanksgiving!



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## asian missions advance

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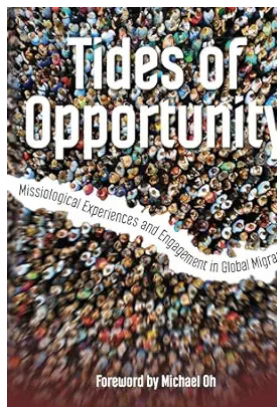
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## BOOK REVIEW

### **Tides of Opportunity: Missiological Experiences and Engagement in Global Migration**

*Donna Castillo-Tan*



Sadiri Joy Tira, Damples Dulcero-Baclagon,  
Lorajoy Tira-Dimangondayao  
William Carey Publishing, 2024. pp. 201.

Human migration, or the movement of people from one place to another, is a complex human experience that can no longer be ignored or seen simply as changing locations. It calls for a deeper understanding. This phenomenon is dynamic in nature and global in scope. Crossing cultures and merging cultures are now so common that we often don't even realize they're happening. Human migration has certainly turned the tides of modern civilization. People are no longer staying put; they are almost constantly crossing cultural borders, oceans, mountains, and landmasses. The world is now more interconnected than ever, with this human movement compared to "a sizable wave [that] could reach as many as one billion people by 2050" (Oh, xi).

This book explores the growing and evolving phenomenon of human migration and its impact on cultures, cities, people, values, and behaviors, whether on a global or local scale. It especially examines migrant communities that settle abroad, forming social groups known as diaspora communities. As social migration continues to increase, existing diaspora communities multiply, while new ones emerge. Central to this book is the important role of diaspora missions in today's evolving migrant landscape, because it is no longer just about the global migrant experience but also about local spaces, as "diaspora missions encompasses both local and global aspects" (Wang, 181), which can influence each other. An important challenge is how to mobilize migrant churches and diasporic churches to make an impact on their fellow diaspora members and the local communities they are part of (Tan, p. 112).

This book is divided into two parts. The first part, "Understanding the Realities of Tides of Opportunity

in Global Migration," explains the different contexts and experiences of diaspora communities and multicultural sectors in major North American cities, along with the cultural encounters among diverse groups of people in these cities. The chapters include the role of urban gateway cities (Carr), diaspora communities and their experiences (Carr, Ybarrola & Harvey), multiculturalism (Ybarrola & Harvey), pluralism (Harvey & Tira), hybridity, and intergenerational conflicts (Zaretsky & Clapp).

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**This book explores the growing and evolving phenomenon of human migration and its impact on cultures, cities, people, values, and behaviors, whether on a global or local scale.**

**It especially examines migrant communities that settle abroad, forming social groups known as diaspora communities.**

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The second part of the book, "Responding and Engaging the Tides of Opportunity in Global Migration," explores how to take action on the opportunities we face as the Body of Christ both locally and globally. It discusses how we can effectively engage with the increasing movement of people across cultures. It begins with Tan's five models of diaspora communities, highlighting the complexities of these communities, which are essential to understanding and shaping our mission strategies to reach these migrant groups or mobilize them for mission work themselves. Cook emphasizes the impact of migration on rural ministries. While not as prevalent as migration to urban areas, it is still a growing tide of opportunity (p. 118), underscoring the need for more academic studies and literature in this area, which is described as "the rarest among scholarly work" (p. 117). The book then presents chapters with case studies showcasing ministries and mission strategies in action, such as hospitality and gospel outreach among refugees in Canada (Kraft), "contextualized, Christ-centered ministry" to survivors of sex trafficking (Geer, p. 149), and efforts to assist victims of labor exploitation and trafficking (Carson). In the final chapters, we learn about the missional transnationals who can be mobilized to intentionally bring the gospel back across borders to their homeland (Tira, p. 173). The book concludes with the

story of Dr. Thomas Wang, who “seized the opportunities” (p. 183) of his time, and whose cross-cultural and cross-border ministries impacted communities, movements, and individuals in the years that followed.

This book is an essential resource as we navigate “new kinds of social spaces” (Rouse in Tan, p. 113) and borders, fulfilling the Great Commission and demonstrating the Great Commandment of our Lord Jesus. Our “world has become glocal, so must our mission . . . people [are] on the move in all directions, blurring the boundaries between local and global” (Wang, p. 181). The option to go is no longer limited to buses, boats, or planes to reach the nations. Sometimes, all it takes is taking a few steps outside our homes, and the nations are already within reach. However, we must recognize that these migrants and diaspora communities are not homogeneous; they are diverse in many ways. This small book is packed with valuable insights and challenges from contributors of various cultures, mission and ministry experiences, and educational backgrounds.

An important takeaway is that we can no longer be just wave-watchers enjoying the scenery, cheering from the other side of the fence, or criticizing from the shadows. We can no longer be ethnocentric, concerned only with our own communities, but must now be willing to embrace both ourselves and others outside. The reality today is that our neighborhoods may be multicultural without us even realizing it. We must get on board and take advantage of the opportunities that the migration movement offers. We also need to engage with migrants and diaspora communities, training and mobilizing them to connect with those they are empowered to reach.



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It is with great joy that we announce the upcoming **15TH TRIENNIAL CONVENTION OF THE ASIA MISSIONS ASSOCIATION (AMA)**,  
to be held at Onnuri Church, Incheon, Korea, from September 14~18, 2026.

The theme of the Convention is “*Gospel and the Future of Humanity.*”

This timely theme invites mission leaders, scholars, and church leaders to discern how the Gospel speaks to a rapidly transforming world shaped by Artificial Intelligence and technological innovation, and to seek together new strategies for the future of global mission in this emerging era.

The Asia Missions Association (AMA) was founded out of a vision to unite Asian churches for the advancement of the Gospel.

In 1971, Dr. David J. Cho initiated a series of consultations across Asia that led to the historic All-Asia Missions Consultation in Seoul, 1973, and the formal establishment of the AMA in 1975, representing fourteen nations. Since then, the AMA has hosted Triennial Conventions across Asia, fostering unity among churches and mission agencies through shared resolutions and cooperative action.

The 14th Convention, held in Jakarta, Indonesia, in 2023, celebrated the 50th anniversary of the AMA – a milestone marking five decades of collaboration in advancing the Gospel across Asia.

Now, as we look toward the 15th Triennial Convention in Seoul in 2026,  
we stand at a pivotal moment in history –  
a time to reaffirm our calling, renew our strategies,  
and reimagine the future of mission together.

We warmly invite you to join this historic event, to celebrate God’s faithfulness,  
and to participate in shaping the Gospel and the Future of Humanity.

We pray and hope that you will be able to come and join us for this significant gathering.

**VISIT <https://ama2026.asiamissions.net/>**

# ASIA MISSIONS ASSOCIATION



## GOSPEL & FUTURE OF HUMANITY

The 15<sup>th</sup> Triennial Convention



2026, Incheon

September 14-18, 2026  
Onnuri Church, Incheon

[www.ama2026.asiamissions.net](http://www.ama2026.asiamissions.net)



## ASIA MISSIONS ASSOCIATION

The 15<sup>th</sup> AMA Triennial Convention | September 14-18, 2026, Incheon, South Korea  
Website: [www.asiamissions.net](http://www.asiamissions.net) | Email: [ama2026convention@gmail.com](mailto:ama2026convention@gmail.com)

### The Theme of the 15<sup>th</sup> AMA Convention

#### ***“The Gospel and the Future of Humanity”***

In the 21st century, we are entering a great period of transition in which existing values and social orders are being reorganized amid unprecedented changes such as those brought on by artificial intelligence, digital civilization, transnational economic systems, and the climate crisis. These changes are not merely a part of a temporal trend but part of a great wave that may fundamentally reconstruct the future of humanity.

At such a time, the Asian Church—which stands at the center of the world in terms of population economy, politics, and religion—must once again reflect on the essence of the Gospel and raise serious missiological questions regarding how the Gospel can present hope and answers to humanity within our rapidly changing society. The Gospel does not remain merely at the level of individual salvation but is the power of God that heals, restores, and transforms every area of human life. Therefore, based on the wholeness of the Gospel, the Asian Church must reestablish gospel-centered missiological theology and strategies suitable for the coming age.

The 15th Asia Missions Association Convention, under the theme “The Gospel and the Future of Humanity,” seeks to explore together the missiological alternatives for the rapidly changing society of Asia. In particular, this convention will discuss the missional calling of the Asian Church for the future centered on the following seven core areas.

#### **a. AI and the Future of Asian Missions**

What changes will the development of AI and advanced technology bring to the Asian Church’s mission paradigm? And what creative and innovative mission models and strategies can the Asian Church imagine in this era?

#### **b. Diaspora and the Future of Asian Missions**

What missional potential do diaspora communities—such as refugees, migrant workers, and other immigrants—spreading across Asia possess? And through them, what new horizon of mission can the Asian Church envision?

#### **c. Religious Pluralism and the Future of Asian Missions**

What changes and challenges will the multi-religious society of future Asia (Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Shamanism) face? And in such a society, how can the Church maturely and wisely proclaim the Gospel beyond exclusivism and syncretism?

#### **d. Justice and the Future of Asian Missions**

In the face of social justice issues emerging in Asia—such as the gap between rich and poor, inequality of resources, stateless persons and refugees, oppression and human rights violations of minorities and the socially marginalized—how can the Church raise a gospel-centered voice and practice the righteousness of God?

#### **e. Healing and the Future of Asian Missions**

To Asians living amid deep wounds such as depression, anxiety, and trauma caused by pandemics, wars, disasters, and social violence, how can the Church fulfill the mission of holistic healing and restoration?

#### **f. The Created World and the Future of Asian Missions**

In an era of intensifying climate crisis and environmental destruction, what is the gospel-centered response to God’s created world? And how can the Asian Church practice sustainable creation care and proclaim the vision of restoration?

#### **g. The Next Generation and the Future of Asian Missions**

What are the ways to continuously pass on the Gospel to Generation Z and Alpha—the digital-native generations—and furthermore, to mobilize them for missions and nurture them as mission leaders?