



“Correct Me If I’m Wrong”

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Community of Mission Information Workers

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Most evangelical mission information work, while certainly not neglecting the historical backgrounds of current contexts, focuses on present conditions with an eye to inform mission strategy that will have Kingdom impact. Realizing this present-future focus turns our eyes to the necessity of historical research as well. Such research seeks to discern how God has worked in the past, shedding light on how he works today and tomorrow. Information work about previous generations also informs us who walk the earth today about those who have gone before who are part of the

wider body of Christ, whose members stretch across generations as well as across cultural contexts. Articles here focus on Africa and China, but historical research - like mission information work on contemporary contexts - has a worldwide scope. Enjoy!

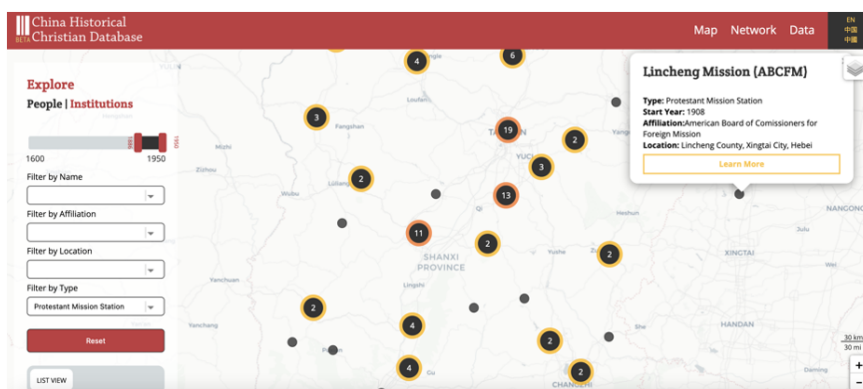
Please let us know if you find this themed issue helpful and what additional themes you might like developed. <info@globalcmiw.org>

CHINA HISTORICAL CHRISTIAN DATABASE

by Daryl R. Ireland, Alex Mayfield, and Eugenio Menegon

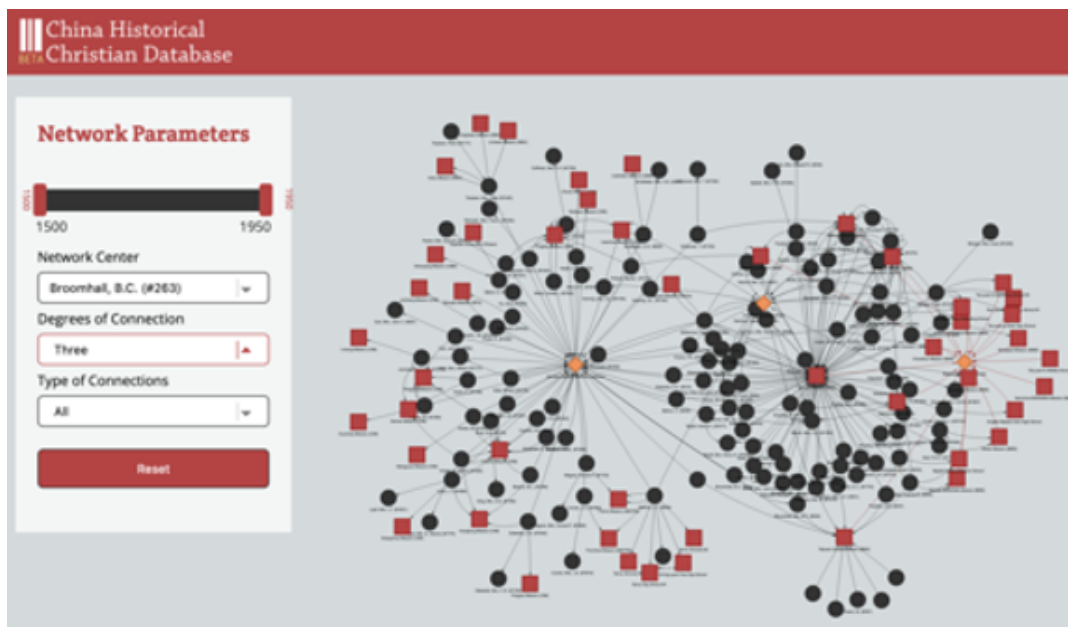
The Center for Global Christianity and Mission at Boston University has launched a project that is using the power of computing to record where every Christian church, school, hospital, publishing house, and the like, were located in China between 1550 and 1950. The database also documents who were connected to those buildings, both foreign and Chinese. The results promise to change the way we think about Christianity and Asia, as this project can be used as a first pilot to be expanded later to Korea, Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines and the rest of Asia.

For the first time, people will be able to use the Internet to see where Christians were located. That means, for example, that someone can easily study the spread of literacy among Chinese girls. Mission schools were the first to accept female students, and the [China Historical Christian Database](https://chcdatabase.com/) (CHCD - <https://chcdatabase.com/>) makes it easy to plot those schools on a digital map. You will be able to see where those girls’ schools were located, and when they first appeared. Watching the multiplication of those elementary schools in the 19th and 20th centuries is like watching China undergo a revolution. One can pinpoint exactly where and when women took a new place in Chinese society.



The CHCD beta version, which is a proof-of-concept project based on one province, can isolate particular types of institutions over a selected period of time. This graphic is a close up of Protestant Mission Stations that appeared in Shanxi Province between 1886 and 1950. By clicking on a dot, a user can learn more about that station, including who worked there and when.

Similarly, the database makes it possible to study social networks. Who knew whom? It is an underreported fact, for instance, that the Communist leader Mao Zedong learned to do mass mobilization when he worked for the YMCA. When the database is complete, it will be able to create a visualization of Mao's social network in the 1910s, so users can see which missionaries and Chinese Christians trained him to revitalize rural China. This database has the power to change the way we think about the roots of China's revolution.



The social network of Dr. B.C. Broomhall provides a picture of who he worked with and how closely. Users can use such maps to study how his medical innovations spread and became standardized in the early 20th century.

The possibilities for new research are almost endless. The links between Korean and Chinese Christianity, for example, are many and the database can visualize which Korean and Chinese actors were moving across the borders in Jesus' name.

One team in Oxford is asking to use the CHCD to study religious responses to climate change: how did Christians react to natural disasters? Did they move toward them or away from them? Others are curious about the introduction of biomedicine. How and through whom did new medical practices and technologies circulate in modern China? The academic and practical mission questions multiply for scholars and practitioners alike.

This ambitious bi-lingual project (it functions in English and Chinese) has international appeal. In 2020, 266 scholars from 28 countries participated in a workshop on the CHCD. Many are now working out agreements with the Center for Global Christianity and Mission to add their own research to the database.

In anticipation of the first iteration of data becoming available in early 2022, learn more about the CHCD and how you and your church, agency, and networks can participate by visiting the CHCD website at <https://chcdatabase.com/>.

***Cultivating Christian Community Historically:
The Dictionary of African Christian Biography***
by Michèle Sigg PhD, Executive Director DACB



Christian community includes multi-generational connections. The Dictionary of African Christian Biography (hereafter DACB) is one attempt to cultivate community through historical research. The DACB is an international digital project that brings together the African writers and collaborators at Boston University to preserve the memory of the African Christians who helped to spread the gospel in Africa. Created in 1995, the primary goal of the DACB has been to fill in the missing pieces of the history of missions in Africa. It was originally designed as a website for maximum accessibility at no cost to users in Africa and around the world.

The project collects the biographies of noteworthy African Christian men and women across the continent, from all denominations and countries, since the early Christian era. The focus on biography emphasizes the importance of people as central agents in the historical development of Christianity in Africa. Africans searching for their ancestors sometimes stumble across the DACB website, like Mr. Nosakare Smart, from West Africa, who contacted me looking for information on his great grandfather. This is one example of how the DACB connects past and present generations of African Christians. The use of biography helps to fill in the gaps in the history of African Christianity, one historical figure at a time. In other words, where traditional historical records are too rare to paint a general picture or to construct a chronology, biographies help to piece together a partial story of the Christian activity that took place in a certain region.

Biography is particularly well adapted to the African context where storytelling is highly valued. As a historical tool, biography gives voice to those who have not, thus far, had much of a voice in the writing of their own history. It helps to keep the central focus of the historical narrative on the people who shaped the history. It also allows the African agents to speak more powerfully through their life stories and the ideas they incarnated.

The DACB was designed as an online, non-proprietary resource (<http://dacb.org/>). There are no subscription fees, no sign ups, and no access portal. We do not collect names and contact information in exchange for the use of the site. Only if viewers wish to receive the quarterly Journal of African Christian Biography do they submit their name and email address. Furthermore, users can freely download materials from the site to print and distribute locally. The only requirement is that they cite the DACB website as their source. In this way, DACB materials can be used for teaching in schools or churches.

The DACB website was designed with African users in mind following the concept of minimal computing to maintain a light use of bandwidth and to accommodate nonwestern network vulnerabilities. We prioritize adaptive technology for mobile phone access to maximize accessibility on smartphones. Upwards of 60% of the browsers used to visit our site are mobile phones. The website files can be distributed via USB drive for access in limited or non-Internet zones. Our flat file system means that we can create a standalone website and search engine that do not require a connection to the Internet. Our priority is that access to the stories of the African mothers and fathers of Christianity be as extensive as possible on the African continent.

The DACB serves both the academy and the African and global church. The overall hope is that, through our work, the historical Christianity community will be strengthened for generations to come.

**An External Review of the Dictionary of
African Christian Biography**
by Dr. Peter Brierley



The *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* (DACB) is not to be confused with the *Dictionary of African Biography* (DAB) published in 2012 by Oxford University Press in 6 volumes. The DACB is a biographical dictionary which focuses on the lives of African Christians and foreign Christian missionaries to Africa; it is an online source first published in 1998, and now supplemented with an online quarterly journal. It may be found at <http://dacb.org>.

The DACB is “an electronic, open-access resource that uses biography to document the 2000 year history of Christianity in Africa. This international, collaborative project is a response to the lack of historical information on the African figures who shaped this history. Biographical figures include men and women, clergy and lay people, Africans and expatriates from the full spectrum of communities that self-identify as Christian, from the beginning of the Christian era to the present, across the entire continent.” (<https://dacb.org/about/>)

Many of the biographies for this book are written specifically for it, and may be freely reprinted with attribution for use in churches and educational institutions. So, for example, you can read about Bishop Agrippinus who in the third century called a synod of 70 bishops to deal with the problem of heretical baptism which was “re-baptizing persons separated merely by sectarian polity,” or Roland Allen who died in 1947, the author of the very influential book *Missionary Methods* which helped to change drastically the entire colonial and paternalistic system of mission governance.

Or one can go towards the other end of the alphabet and read about, for example, Minnie Watson, the first woman missionary of the East Africa Scottish Mission (EASM), who pioneered education work among the Kikuyu people in Kenya. She established a system of Christian schooling that became the primary model for education. A further example is of the Roman Catholic Charles Troyes who died in 1985 but who also worked among the Kikuyus in Kenya and was the principal of one of the technical schools built by the Consolata Missionaries.

This is a source of information primarily about *people*, from the earliest years of Christian witness in Africa up to the most recent, of both genders, of different denominations (usually split as Catholic, Independent, Orthodox and Protestant), in all 51 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa as well as the 7 countries in North Africa, of different standing, and of whatever profession (artists, medics, martyrs, missionaries, musicians, theologians, translators and 15 others).

It is very comprehensive, available in English, French, Portuguese and Kiswahili, totally professional, and well structured as a website. Personally I wish there were pictures where available, but otherwise an excellent resource. I imagine an article about Archbishop Tutu (1931-2021) will now appear in due season. Anyone may contribute an article but there are strict editorial principles which have to be followed. It is highly recommended if you want to know who did what in Africa.

Statistically, it gives very little data. For those wanting that detail one should look at *Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa*, which focusses on *countries* not people but gives data for each by denomination (same as above, plus Anglicans, but for just 1970 and 2020), with essays on each one.

Dr Peter Brierley

Brierley Consultancy <https://www.brierleyconsultancy.com/>

Special Profile: Willie Botha

1) [CMIW] **Please tell us about yourself and your family.**

[WB] I am married to Elize who is teaching and fulfilling the role of Vice Principle at The Way Christian School in South Africa. She has been teaching at this school for over twenty years. We have two daughters, one is working as a speech therapist and the other one is an occupational therapist. We enjoy a very precious relationship with both of them and their husbands and we thank the Lord for their ministries at work and through their marriages.



I was trained as a mechanical technician but, after qualifying, I realised that the Lord had other plans for me. I went to Bible school to prepare for ministry in missions. I also did a little bit of post-graduate study in Missions. We worked in Malawi for about 3 years, serving on a Jesus Film team with Life Ministry, after which we returned to work with INSERV (Institute for Strategic Services) from South Africa.

As a family we enjoy challenging each other in different ways, and the children help us to keep exercising and to take part in new things which challenge our comfort zones. We enjoy working in the garden, growing our vegetable garden, building things for the house, and hiking. As parents we are very blessed to have such a close relationship with our children and to see them develop and minister to people in special ways every day where they are moving and impacting people's lives.

2) [CMIW] **What is your current ministry?**

[WB] The Vision of INSERVE is "Serving the Church through mission research" and our Mission is "Mission empowerment through mission research support to the church in advancing the Kingdom of Christ amongst the least reached."

We do this through research Projects, research training, mapping projects, and mapping training, as well as consultations on information and partnership and network development. See <https://inserv.org.za/>.

The challenge we are facing at INSERV is that our small team is currently composed of only myself and one lady helping with administration. The administration of INSERV is taking a lot of time, which does not allow adequate time for information work, which is our goal. This is a significant prayer request for myself and the ministry: that the Lord will provide the INSERVE Board with wisdom and plans such that we can rebuild a team to be more effective in the calling we have to serve the church through information. The challenges of raising support and being in ministry are not getting easier, and the challenge for most people is figuring out how to do this ministry while providing for our own daily needs.

We are also involved with MANI (Movement for African National Initiatives-<https://maniafrica.com/>), where we work to develop research capacity in countries in the continent to have their own databases regarding the unreached. In this regard we work closely with Joshua project, contributing towards the correcting and updating of data for Africa. Locally we are currently working on a project mapping the M*sl1m places in the country, setting down a baseline in order to track the growth and development of that religion in South Africa, and hopefully also in Southern Africa. We pray this information will help to strategically mobilize the church towards effective outreach, not

only to the unreached in South Africa, but also in each country, province, and local community in the Southern African region.

3) [CMIW] **What are the contributions you have made to world missions that have brought you the greatest satisfaction?**

[WB] I am not sure how to evaluate my contribution. In the global context, I desire to get the data about Africa corrected as much as possible by the people of Africa. I believe that as Africans we need to take responsibility for our own information, as we know it best. That requires us to rethink the way we look at ourselves with regard to the global information available about our people groups, our countries, our churches and our communities. Sometimes, as information workers, we get excited by insights and revelation when we look at information and discover something new. I really enjoy it when local people start to appreciate and see their communities in a new light, discovering new possibilities and seeing God at work. I especially appreciate when this happens because they were given information which they processed through a new lens, and the Holy Spirit opened the minds of people to change strategies to work closer with God.

4) [CMIW] **What dreams do you have for your next ten years of ministry?**

[WB] I would love to see a vibrant and connected network of researchers/information workers that are using information to make a difference in local communities by developing sustainable, unique, ministry strategies for every community under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

5) [CMIW] **Is there some way you'd be willing to help the CMIW community?**

[WB] I've loved the heart and fellowship within this community through the interactions I've had until now. I would love to contribute whatever experience and insights I can from what I have, although I am learning so much through the knowledge of others and their experiences on a constant basis.

Information from the Word

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 of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. (Acts 17:26-27).

God has chosen to use the historical development of the nations for His purposes. He has determined their chronological and geographical limits. How have historical narratives impacted your pursuit of God? May they cause us to reach out and find Him today.

Final Details:

- With the help of God this bulletin is now produced quarterly in English, Portuguese and Spanish.
- The Editorial Team is composed of Chris Maynard, Duane Frasier, Larry Kraft, Nelson Jennings, Rodrigo Tinoco and Stephanie Kraft.
- Please send any comments, suggestions or ideas to us at info@globalcmiw.org.
- Back issues can be found at globalcmiw.org.