

Caravans brought peoples, goods, ideas and religions through Central Asia along the Silk Road. Fabulous cities emerged. Nomadic tribes spilled from the steppes to invade dying civilizations.

This history shaping cauldron boils in the heart of the modern Turkic World. Over 145 million Turkic speakers living between Skopje, Macedonia and Urumchi, China share this region as their ancient homeland. The Turkic world, however, is not unified. When Russia and China conquered Central Asia at the end of the eighteenth century, they pursued a “divide and conquer” policy, creating distinct identities and rivalries.

Eurasian grasslands have long nurtured fierce warriors. Riding shaggy ponies, they overran cities and civilizations from Persia to China. Some of the nomads settled as farmers and traders and built cities with high cultures. In time, they were invaded by new hordes.

The earliest waves lasted from the eighth to third century BC. These were the Scythian and Saka tribes described by Greek historians. Then came the Huns, who terrorized civilizations from the third century BC to the sixth century AD. Against them China built its Great Wall. The Huns reached their zenith under Attila who marched on the gates of Rome.

From the sixth to the twelfth century Turkic cavalries won decisive victories until they ran a vast domain called the Turkic Khaganate. The Seljuk and Oghuz Turks ruled from Turkey to India. They took Jerusalem, fought Crusaders and stormed the walls of Byzantium.

In the Tarim Basin’s oases of today’s northwestern China, the Uyghurs founded a sedentary empire that controlled Silk Road trade between Persia and China for many centuries.

From the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries the Mongols with the Tatars established the largest empire the world has known. Founded by the infamous Genghis Khan and expanded by his sons and grandsons, the Mongol hordes ruled vast tracts of Russia, China, Persia, and Asia from the Black Sea to the Yellow River.



Turkic Peoples from Central Asia (Tajik speak Dari and are descended from ancient Persians.)

A Turk from Samarkand, Timur the Great, better known as Tamerlane, was the last of the great Central Asian conquerors. Born in 1336 AD, he aspired to become a Mongol Khan. Instead, he destroyed the Mongol Empire, drove the Ottoman Turks deeper into Europe, and wiped Nestorian Christianity from Central Asia. In his wake, he left pyramids of skulls in the ashes of the cities he burned.

Central Asian peoples share a past that once dominated world history. Central Asia is still strategic between East and West, where capitalism confronts communism, dictators dodge democracy, and Islam faces Christianity. The treasures of Central Asia, including vast petroleum reserves, still beckon traders, armies, and religions.

God is working in Central Asia. Faith in Jesus is reemerging where Nestorian Christianity once thrived. Most Central Asian nations had only a handful of believers in 1990. Today they have thousands. Over 43,000 active Turkic believers are reported in more than 350 fellowships compared with about 1,600 total believers less than ten years ago. Never before has there been so much response among Turkic peoples.

In 1992, one man was studying at college. A friend invited him to a church meeting. On the third visit he gave his life to the Lord. It was a difficult time in his life. His oldest daughter was paralyzed as a child and could not walk. His wife had tuberculosis. He had to work nights. He cried out to God for help. After he prayed for the eldest daughter she was healed.

God led him to begin a fellowship among his people and plant churches in other villages. Without any idea of how to start a church or how to train leaders, he began to visit villages, preaching the gospel and praying for the people. He saw people set free from demons and healed. Upon leaving a village he would appoint a leader to watch over the group of new believers. In just twelve years, churches have been started in some 40 villages across national boundaries and among several different people groups.

In Central Asia a gateway of opportunity has opened. Dramatic changes are sweeping through again as communism moves out and market economies move in. Fledgling governments are restructuring everything from education to constitutions. Not for one thousand years has there been so much freedom to share the gospel in this region.

This freedom may not last. The same factors opening the gateway may close it. Nationalistic fervor mixed with Muslim fundamentalism could close the door if Christianity gets branded as a foreign faith. However, if reached and transformed, Central Asian peoples could take the Gospel to the rest of the Muslim world.

Growth of Active Turkic Believers

People Name	1998 population	believers in 1990	believers in 1999	annual growth rate
Azerbaijani	32,228,000	5	2,300	97.6%
Gagauz	514,000	1,000	10,000	29.2%
Kazakh	11,621,000	20	7,350	92.8%
Kyrgyz	3,239,000	20	1,515	61.7%
Tatar	8,324,000	25	2,440	66.4%
Turkish	50,708,000	560	16,880	46.0%
Turkmen	5,356,000	5	300	57.6%
Uyghur	8,530,000	10	450	53.6%
Uzbek	21,322,000	5	1,000	64.2%

Resource Contact Information

Resource	Contact Info
<i>Online Scriptures:</i> (Azerbaijani, Kyrgyz, Uighur)	www.ethnicharvest.org/bibles
<i>Gospel Radio Broadcasting:</i> World by 2000 (comprehensive lists) Far East Broadcasting Company (FEBC) HCJB World Radio TransWorld Radio (TWR)	1-719-548-7490 < www.wb2000.org > 1-562-947-4651 < www.febc.org > 1-719-590-9800 < www.hcjb.org > 1-800-456-7897 < www.gospelnet.com/twr >
<i>Audio Tapes in Central Asian Languages:</i> Audio Scriptures International Global Recordings Network	1-760-745-8105 < www.gospelcom.net/asi > 1-213-250-0207 < http://members.aol.com/glorenet/ >
<i>JESUS and other videos:</i> JESUS Film Project Multi-Language.Com	1-800-560-8713 < www.jesusfilm.org > 1-717-738-0582 < www.multilanguage.com >
<i>Scriptures in Central Asian Languages:</i> International Bible Society American Bible Society Scripture Gift Mission	1-800-524-1588 < www.gospelcom.net/ibs > 1-800-322-4253 < www.americanbible.org > 1-877-873-2746 < www.gospelcom.net/asgm >
<i>Christian Books and Tracts:</i> Multi-Language Media Four Spiritual Laws (Kazakh) Fellowship Tract League (Uzbek, Tajik, Kazakh)	1-717-738-0582 < www.multilanguage.com > < www.greatcom.org/laws/languages.html > < www.biblebelievers.com/FTL1.html >
<i>Pen-Pal Ministry:</i> Turkish World Outreach	1-970-434-1942 < www.missionsalive.org/two >
<i>Video Profiles on Central Asia:</i> (Kazak, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen, Uzbek)	1-303-730-4170 < www.CalebProject.org/peoplev.htm >
Online Ministry Resource Directory	www.missionresources.com

Ministry Contact Information

Ministry	Agency	Contact Info
Service and Support	Open Doors Engineering Ministry International Every Home for Christ	1-949-752-6600 < www.sufferingchurch.org > 1-719-633-2078 < www.emiusa.org > 1-800-423-5054 < www.ehc.org >
Mobilization & Networking	Turkish World Outreach International Turkey Network	1-970-434-1942 < www.missionsalive.org/two > < www.itnet.org >
Monitoring Religious Persecution	Voice of the Martyrs Jubilee Campaign	1-918-337-8015 < www.persecution.com > 1-703-503-0791 < www.jubileecampaign.org >
Relief & Development Ministry	World Vision	1-888-511-6598 < www.worldvision.org >
"Tentmaking" Job Placement	InterServe Mission to Unreached Peoples	1-610-352-0581 < www.interserve.org > 1-888-847-6950 < www.mup.org >
Ministry to Expatriates	World Evangelical Fellowship Assoc. of Christian Schools Int'l	1-630-668-0440 < www.worldevangelical.org > 1-719-528-0906 < www.acsi.org >
Evangelism & Church Planting	Frontiers Pioneers Mission to Unreached Peoples Strategic Frontiers of YWAM Christar	1-800 GO-2-THEM < www.frontiers.org > 1-800-755-7284 < www.pioneers.org > 1-888-847-6950 < www.mup.org > 1-719-527-9594 < www.sfcos.org > 1-800-755-7955 < www.christar.org >

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