

Aksu 阿克苏

Aksu, also spelt Akesu, is a city located in the remote northwestern corner of China. It's half-million inhabitants live near the Kazakhstan border in the western part of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. The larger Aksu Prefecture contains just over two million people. "Aksu" is a Uygur word meaning "clear water."

In the past Aksu was thousands of miles away from Chinese influence, but massive immigration by Han Chinese over the past 50 years has resulted in the local Uygurs now being outnumbered in their own city. According to the 1990 census, Aksu contained 197,294 Han Chinese compared to 180,112 Uygurs. Four thousand Hui Muslims also call Aksu home, and interestingly, 420 members of the Tujia minority group live in Aksu, even though their homeland is in faraway southern China. The population of Aksu is growing rapidly. At the current rate the city will have more than 700,000 residents in the year 2010.

Aksu has a long history thanks to its location along the Silk Road. For more than two thousand years travelers and merchants have passed through the Aksu oasis as they made their way around the northern rim of the Taklimakan Desert. 'Taklimakan' is a Uygur word meaning "Many go

Population:
 383,038 (1990)
 519,915 (2000)
 705,700 (2010)

Province:
 Xinjiang

Major Ethnic Groups:
 Han 51.9%
 Uygur 47.0%
 Hui 1.0%
 Tujia 0.1%

Christians:
 4,000 (0.8%)

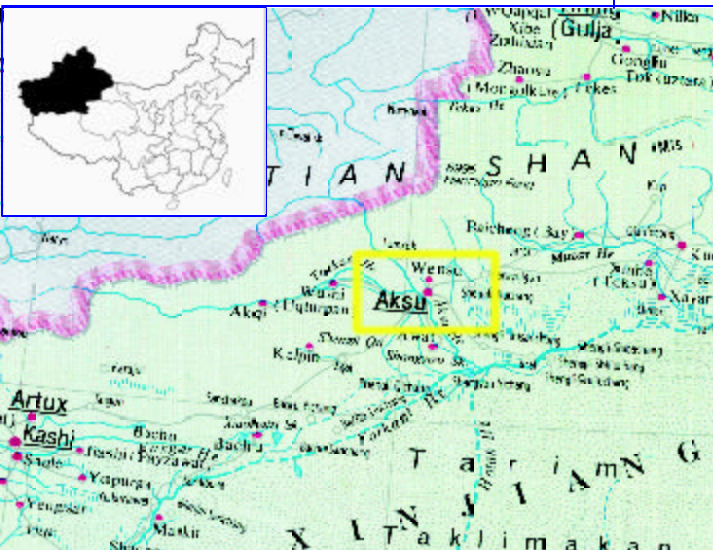
in but few come out." Its brutal storms and shifting sands have proved the downfall of numerous travelers throughout the centuries. Just to the north of Aksu City are the breathtaking Tianshan (Heavenly Mountains), which contain more than one thousand glaciers. The Tianshan is one of the highest mountain ranges in the world. Tomur Peak, to the north of Aksu, reaches a height of 7,435 meters (24,387 feet) above sea level. Melted snow from the Tianshan supplies the people of Aksu with plenty of water.

Today Aksu boasts abundant natural resources such as oil, gas and coal.

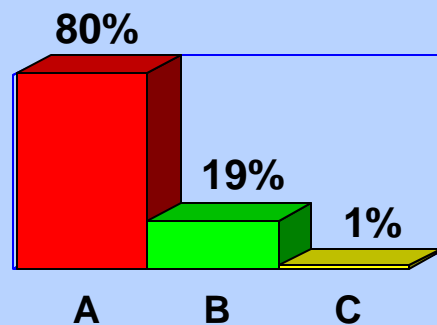
Local products include apples, fragrant pears, thin-shell walnuts, black rice, bony cotton, wool, and leather. Animals found in the Aksu region include wild camels, yak, red deer, black stork, gazelle, and the extremely rare snow leopard.

Although the area these days is dominated by Islam, it was once a hotbed of Buddhism. The Qiuci murals and the Kizil and Kumtura Thousand Buddha Caves near Aksu were dug out during the Liangjin period (3rd century AD). They recall a time when Buddhism flourished along the Silk Road.

In the past few decades the more militant Muslims in Xinjiang have staged many protests against Chinese rule. Bombings of government buildings and



Status of Evangelization
 (Awareness of Christ and the Gospel)



A = have never heard the Gospel or the Name of Christ
 B = were evangelized but have not yet become Christians
 C = Adherants to any form of Christianity



riots rarely make the newspapers of the outside world, but these uprisings have been put down by massive Chinese force. The Beijing authorities have used the September 11 terrorist attacks in America as a pretense for another large scale crackdown against Muslims in Xinjiang claiming they have evidence of Muslim connections with Osama Bin Laden's Al-Qaeda network in Afghanistan.

When Marco Polo entered Xinjiang in the 13th century he passed by today's Aksu. Polo noted, "There are in the country many Nestorian Christians, who have churches of their own." In 1892 the Swedish Missionary Society sent workers to western Xinjiang. Several churches were established, with about 500 Muslim converts. In 1933 Abdullah Khan expelled the missionaries and put to death many of the Uygur, Kazak and Kirgiz Christians in a mass execution. Khan explained, "It is my duty, according to our law, to put you to death, because by your preaching you destroyed the faith of some of us."

Today there are an estimated 4,000 Han Chinese Christians living in Aksu City, but they have little witness to the Muslim community. Prejudices and hatred between the Han and the Muslims have created large walls for the Gospel to overcome.

Pray for Aksu

- 1** Pray the Chinese Christians will break down the cultural barriers between themselves and Muslims in Aksu.
- 2** Ask God to send revival to Aksu, resulting in the salvation of many.
- 3** Pray western Xinjiang will again be an area where the true God is praised.

Overview of Aksu (based on 1990 census)

Pronunciation	: "Ahk-eh-soo"	Employed People	: 185,142 (48.3% of total population)
Old Spelling	: Aqsu, Akosu	Main Industries	: Agriculture 57.4%, Industrial 14.6%
Location	: Western Xinjiang Region, NW China	Education	: University: 5.1%
Population	: 383,038 (1990 census)	(highest level attended):	: High School: 38.4%
Males	: 202,121 (52.77%)		: Primary school: 38.0%
Females	: 180,917 (47.23%)		: Never attended any school: 18.5%
Households	: 93,913	Population under 15:	: 109,314 (28.5%)
Average Household	: 4.1 people	Adult Illiteracy	: 18.7% (men 15.3%; women 22.6%)
Divorced People	: 9,156	Major Nationalities	: Han 197,294
% divorced of Population:	: 2.39		: Uygur 180,112
Centurions (1990)	: 14 people aged 100 or more		: Hui 3,992
Immigrants to City	: 32,860		: Tujia 420
From same province:	: 12,852 (39.1%)		: Others 1,220 (27 groups)
From other provinces:	: 20,007 (60.9%)	Christians (2003)	: 4,000 (0.8%)