

# LINXIA 临厦

Situated in a barren, desert-like region of southwestern Gansu Province in northwest China, Linxia City numbered more than 168,000 inhabitants in the 1990 census. This is expected to grow to more than 220,000 by the turn of the century. Although Linxia is on a main highway, its economy has grown at a much slower rate than other parts of China. The small population growth of Linxia is partly caused by a tendency for the city's youth to depart for Lanzhou, Xining, and other large cities in search of work and higher wages.

Linxia was once an important stop on the ancient Silk Road between Lanzhou and Yangguan. Today, Linxia is a three hour bus ride from the provincial capital, Lanzhou. Visitors to Linxia immediately notice that a large section of the population are Hui Muslims. In fact, there are almost an equal number of Hui as there are Han Chinese in the city. For centuries the Hui made Linxia one of their major bases. It was strategically located on the border between China proper and Tibetan regions.

A large Hui mosque is located in the center of town. Old Muslim men with long beards and white caps are found everywhere throughout the city. The marketplace stocks a variety of local goods including carved gourds, daggers, saddlery, carpets, and wrought iron tools.

**Population:**  
168,714 (1990)  
226,700 (2000)  
304,700 (2010)

**Province:**  
Gansu

## Major Ethnic Groups:

**Han** 51.3%  
**Hui** 45.4%  
**Dongxiang** 3.1%  
**Tibetan** 0.1%

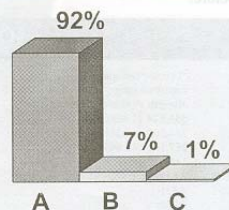
**Christians:**  
100 (0.1%)

In addition to its more than 76,500 Hui inhabitants, Linxia is home to some 5,200 members of the Dongxiang nationality. The Dongxiang are visibly indistinguishable from the Hui in terms of clothing, but they are markedly different in language and history. The Dongxiang speak an archaic variety of Mongolian. They are believed to be the descendants of Mongolian troops who were stationed in the area during the Mongol World Empire of the 13th and 14th centuries. On occasions the Mongols moved whole communities of people from conquered lands in Central Asia, and forced them to work as soldiers and administrators in strategic areas of China. After the demise of the empire, the ancestors of the Dongxiang decided to stay. They married local women, and after several centuries, gradually evolved into a distinct people group, called Dongxiang ('East District') by the Chinese. Even today, visitors to the main Dongxiang town of Suonoba, which is located on a high mountain ridge about one hour's drive from Linxia, are surprised to see some children with green or blue eyes and fair hair, signs of the Central Asian ancestry of this fascinating group.

The Dongxiang are zealous Muslims, considered by the Chinese Church Research Center in Hong Kong to be the most unreached people group in China. Reaching the



## Status of Evangelization (Awareness of Christ and the Gospel)



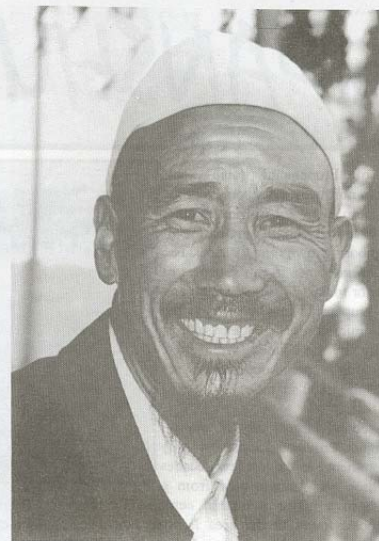
A = have never heard the Gospel or the name of Christ  
B = were evangelized but have not yet become Christians  
C = Adherents to any form of Christianity

Dongxiang is made more difficult because their main center is tightly controlled by the police. The Dongxiang are widely renowned as controllers of the drug trade and prostitution rackets in northwest China. The Dongxiang also have the lowest literacy rate of any of China's 55 official minorities. A mere 12% of Dongxiang adults are able to read Chinese. Overall, Linxia provides the ideal gateway to reach out to the needy Dongxiang, as well as the unreached Hui Muslims in the city.

There has been some Christian presence in Linxia since missionaries with the Christian & Missionary Alliance based there in the early part of the 20th century. The chief aim of the CMA work was to reach out to Tibetans who lived further west in Labrang (now Xiahe). The missionaries, however, were frustrated in their attempts to penetrate Tibetan territory. Surrounded by resistant Tibetan Buddhists and Hui and Dongxiang Muslims, the work gravitated towards the more receptive Han Chinese.

There is a small church in Linxia today, under the authority of the Three Self Patriotic Movement. It is dominated by elderly Han Chinese over the age of 60. The pastor of the church, when recently asked if there were any hopes of reaching the Dongxiang in their area, replied, "It is impossible!" The small number of believers in Linxia seem to have given up all hope of outreach, especially to their Muslim neighbors. As a result, the vast majority of people in Linxia today have never been exposed to the Gospel and have no knowledge of the saving power of Jesus Christ.

This situation is made all the more tragic considering Linxia's strategic location. Within easy reach from Linxia live more than ten distinct unreached people groups, including the Salar, Tu, Bonan, Amdo Tibetans and Wutun.



Approximately half of the population of Linxia are Hui Muslims—descendants of Persian and Arabic traders who migrated to China many centuries ago.

## Pray for Linxia

- 1 Ask God to glorify His Name among the inhabitants of Linxia. Pray he would breathe life, courage and faith into the elderly Han believers who live in the city.
- 2 Pray workers would choose Linxia as a place to reach out to, not only because of the city itself, but also because it is a gateway for ministry to many unreached people groups.
- 3 Pray Christians in Lanzhou and other parts of China would target Linxia for ministry and church planting.

## Overview of Linxia

Pronunciation : "Lin-sheah"  
Old Spelling : Lin-hsia  
Location : Gansu Province, northwest China  
Population : 168,714 (1990 census)  
Males : 85,206 (50.50%)  
Females : 83,508 (49.50%)  
Households : 36,674  
Average household : 4.60 people  
Divorced people : 1,352  
% of population : 0.80%  
Centurions (1990) : 0 people aged 100 or more  
Immigrants to City : 2,162 per year  
From same province : 1,854 (85.7%)  
From other provinces : 308 (14.3%)

Employed people : 85,239 (50.5% of total population)  
Main Industries : Agriculture 49%; Industrial 15.5%; Commerce 12.5%  
Educational : University: 0.6%  
Attainment : High School: 36.5%  
(highest level : Primary School: 30.2%  
attended) : Never attended any level of school: 32.7%  
Population under 15 : 27.4%  
Adult Literacy : 66% (men 79%, women 52%)  
Major Nationalities : Han 86,109  
Hui 76,586  
Dongxiang 5,207  
Tibetan 176  
Bonan 168  
Others (13 groups): 468  
Christians : 100 (0.1%)