

# YINING 伊宁

Yining City, also known as Gulja, is located in the extreme northwest of China, near the border between China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and the nation of Kazakhstan. Xinjiang is a huge region with the same administrative status as a province. Distances are vast and travel arduous. Yining is situated more than 700 km (432 miles) west of Urumqi, the region's capital city. Yining is the seat of the Ili Kazak Prefecture.

Although Yining City is one of the smaller cities profiled in this book, it is also one of the most interesting. There were only about 30,000 people in Yining in the 1920's, but today it is home to about 360,000 people living in 60,000 households. Yining's population is divided among numerous exotic ethnic groups. The Uygurs are the majority nationality in the city, amounting to just over 50% of the population. The Han Chinese comprise about one-third of the city's inhabitants. The real spice of Yining, however, is found among the people in the city from smaller minority groups. These include communities of 25,000 Hui, 13,000 Kazaks, 3,500 Uzbeks, 2,500 Western Xibe, 1,200 Manchus, 1,100 Dongxiang, 500 Russians, 350 Tatars, 350 Kirgiz and 250 Salar. Of the above groups, all except the Han Chinese, Western Xibe, Manchu and Russians are unreached and unevangelized Muslims. The Uygurs, Kazaks, Uzbeks,

**Population:**  
271,288 (1990)  
364,600 (2000)  
489,900 (2010)

**Province:**  
Xinjiang

## Major Ethnic Groups:

Uygur 50.5%  
Han 32.4%  
Hui 8.5%  
Kazak 4.6%

**Christians:**  
2,000 (0.5%)

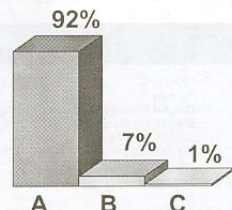
Kirgiz and Salar languages all belong to the Turkic language family. Also located just outside Yining are several small, unofficial groups not acknowledged by the Chinese authorities. These include the Tuerke and the Ongkor.

Because of the diverse ethnic and linguistic mixture in Yining, there is often tension between the different groups. One tourist book remarks, "The Chinese appear uneasy here and warn against staying out after dark, when knives are fast and streets unsafe.... The local Kazaks and Uzbeks can be a rough bunch (regularly drunk in the evenings and occasionally involved in street fights) but very friendly towards foreigners, whom they put in a different category from those in authority." (Buckley, *China: A Travel Survival Kit*, p.1007)

Because of its strategic location, Yining has been ruled by many different forces and armies throughout its history. After the death of Genghis Khan in 1227, the Mongol empire in this area was led by Chaghatai, who made his capital at Almalik, close to Yining. Russian Tsarist troops came across the border and occupied Yining from 1876 to 1881. In 1962, a border dispute between China and the Soviet Union led to clashes along the Ili River Valley. There is an uneasy feeling in Yining today as the Chinese authorities fear the Muslims in the city will seek indepen-



## 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

dence or alliance with their Muslim neighbors.

The divorce rate in Yining is very high, the worst of all the cities in this book. There is also very low employment in the city. Just 43.7% of the total population have a job. Indeed, there seems to be a dreary atmosphere about Yining. Hordes of young men seem to always be playing pool on the streets, or otherwise sitting around and drinking alcohol. Although this feeling of hopelessness does not make Yining a major tourist attraction, it is an extremely needy unreached city full of dying souls.

The Nestorians first brought the Gospel to this part of Central Asia in the seventh century. By the 13th century some scholars believe the Apostolic Church of the East numbered more than 12 million adherents. Christianity soon faded, however, and was replaced by Islam. Today the Muslims in northwest China do not know about their Christian past, and would probably not believe it if they were told.

Today, there are just a few small Han churches in Yining among the entire population. Because of racial prejudice, the Muslims are not usually able to receive the Gospel from a Han. As a result, most Christians in the area consider the Muslims impossible to reach and so do not even try to witness to them.



*The Uzbeks are one of a dozen unreached people groups in and near Yining. These Muslims help give Yining a Central Asian flavor. The Han Chinese comprise only one-third of the city's population.*

## Pray for Yining

- 1 Yining is an extremely strategic city, a gateway to more than a dozen unreached people groups. Pray the Chinese church will love their Muslim neighbors so much that the walls of hatred will fall.
- 2 Pray those believers who have given up on the Muslims will repent and seek God's heart and plans for how to reach them. Pray there will soon be a church among every ethnic group in Yining.
- 3 Ask God to break through and prepare the hearts of the people in Yining to seek Him until they find Him.

## Overview of Yining

Pronunciation : "Yee-ring"  
Old Spelling : I-ning, Gulja (Uygur name)  
Location : Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, northwest China  
Population : 271,288 (1990 census)  
Males : 137,862 (50.82%)  
Females : 133,426 (49.18%)  
Households : 56,976  
Average household : 4.76 people  
Divorced people : 4,271  
% of population : 1.57%  
Centurions (1990) : 2 people aged 100 or more  
Immigrants to City : 4,712 per year  
From same province : 3,559 (75.5%)  
From other provinces : 1,151 (14.5%)

Employed people : 118,496 (43.7% of total population)  
Main Industries : Agriculture 28.4%; Industrial 26.9%; Commerce 13.8%  
Educational : University: 1.7%  
Attainment : High School: 51.5%  
(highest level) : Primary School: 32.6%  
Never attended any level of school: 14.2%  
Population under 15 : 29.5%  
Adult Literacy : 87% (men 90%; women 84%)  
Major Nationalities : Uygur 137,123  
Han 87,900  
Hui 23,107  
Kazak 12,607  
Uzbek 3,447  
Others (28 groups): 7,104  
Christians : 2,000 (0.5%)