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Location: Approximately 2,000 members of the Kyakala were reported in 1996. None, however, are able to still speak the Kyakala language.¹ The majority are concentrated to the south of Heihe County in Heilongjiang Province. Heihe is located on the China-Russia border. Due to the recent thawing in relations between the two countries, Chinese tour groups are now able to cross the border from Heihe into the Russian town of Blagovenskensk. “Chinese tourists don’t find much to buy in Russia, but are impressed to see a city where nobody spits and people actually stand in line.”² Smaller numbers of Kyakala live in various cities between the Ussuri and Sungari river basins.

Identity: The Kyakala are the remnant of a people whose assimilation into surrounding nationalities was hastened by the large

populations of their neighbors. The Kyakala were initially consumed into the Manchu nationality, which in turn has largely been swallowed up by the Han Chinese. Assimilation occurs when “members of minority groups have absorbed the characteristics of the dominant group to the exclusion of their own and become indistinguishable from members of the majority.”³

Language: Kyakala, once a vibrant Tungic language, has been extinct since the early 1900s⁴. “After an initial integration into Manchu, the language has been replaced by Mandarin Chinese.”⁵ Today knowledge of written Manchu is reportedly still encountered among some Kyakala scholars.⁶ Little precise information is known about the Kyakala language. The language seems to have died before any linguistic research was done. Finnish

Linguist Juha Janhunen suggests that Kyakala was “a Manchurian variety of Udehe, possibly transitional towards Manchu... historically the ethnonym Kyakala has also been applied to the speakers of Udege.”⁷ The Kyakala remain proud of their ethnic identity and historical roots.

History: The Kyakala area was controlled by the Japanese between 1932 and 1945. Horrific cruelty was inflicted on the inhabitants of Manchuria. “Over 4,000 were exterminated in bestial fashion; some were frozen or infected with bubonic plague, others were injected with syphilis, and many were roasted alive in furnaces.”⁸ Fu Yuguang of the Jilin Institute of Ethnic Studies in Changchun is presently the most competent scholar on the Kyakala.

Customs: Many Kyakala people today earn their living from their involvement in cross-border trade with the Russians, which has increased markedly since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The main items traded are food, clothing, and household goods.

Religion: Once a people dominated by shamanism, the Kyakala show few traces of their former religion today. Most of these people are nonreligious, although many elderly Kyakala retain ancestor worship practices in their homes.

Christianity: There are no known Kyakala Christians. A revival in the 1990s swept through many parts of Heilongjiang Province but did not encompass the Kyakala

area in the northwest of the province. The Kyakala would now best be reached by using the Chinese Scriptures.



Population in China:
 2,000 (1993)
 2,230 (2000)
 2,880 (2010)
Location: Heilongjiang
Religion: No Religion
Christians: None Known

Overview of the Kyakala

- Countries:** China
- Pronunciation:** “Key-ah-kah-lah”
- Other Names:** Udege Kyakala, Kiakala, Kiakla, Qiakala
- Population Source:** 2,000 (1993 J. Janhunen); Out of a total Manchu population of 9,821,180 (1990 census)
- Location:** *N Heilongjiang*: South of Heihe; Also scattered in cities between the Ussuri and Sungari basins
- Status:** Officially included under Manchu
- Language:** Chinese (traditionally Altaic, Tungic)
- Dialects:** 0
- Religion:** No Religion, Ancestor Worship
- Christians:** None known
- Scripture:** None
- Jesus film:** None
- Gospel Recordings:** None
- Christian Broadcasting:** None
- ROPAL code:** None

