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**Location:** The Ongkor are the smallest group profiled in this book, with just 20 people reported in a 1993 study.<sup>1</sup> Yet those 20 individuals view themselves as a separate ethnic community, speak (or spoke until recently) their own unique language, and hold to a rich history. As recently as the 1945 Xinjiang census, the Ongkor numbered 2,506 people.<sup>2</sup> Since that time they have intermarried with other groups, especially with the Western Daur and Western Xibe. They have rapidly lost their language and identity, so that today a mere 20 individuals could still be considered ethnically distinct. While many would discount the Ongkor as not worthy of mention, it should be remembered that in Vietnam the government has given official minority status to the 32 members of the O-Du tribe. The Ongkor inhabit

one village near Yining in Xinjiang's Ili Prefecture.

**Identity:** The few remaining Ongkor have been included as part of the Ewenki nationality in China.<sup>3</sup> The Ongkor do not use the name *Ewenki* but sometimes refer to themselves as the *Xinjiang Solon*.

**Language:** In 1990 the Ongkor language was on the verge of extinction. Just one 79-year-old man could still speak the language fluently. "In addition to the last fluent speaker, a few individuals know some isolated phrases or words. There is widespread multilingualism in Daur, Kazak, Uygur, Chinese and other languages."<sup>4</sup> No Ongkor children are being taught the language, so it will soon become extinct.<sup>5</sup>

**History:** The Ongkor are the remnant from a tumultuous

time in history. Their ancestors were a diaspora group of Solon Ewenki who were sent to Xinjiang from Manchuria in 1763. Other troops who made the year-long march across China included the ancestors of today's Western Xibe and Western Daur minorities. The reigning Manchu Dynasty ordered them to bring the hostile western front of China under control. After the collapse of Manchu rule, the soldiers and their families decided to stay in Xinjiang.

**Customs:** The Ongkor have few distinct customs left. They have adopted the lifestyles of their Western Daur and Han Chinese neighbors. The Ongkor emphasize courtesy in accordance with seniority. "When someone meets an older person, he offers tobacco to him, bends his knees, stands aside and bows to show his greeting. Even when he is on a horse, he should dismount to greet first."<sup>6</sup>

**Religion:** Although the other Ewenki groups in China have shamans and worship a wide range of gods and idols, the Ongkor have lost these practices. They could best be described as animists, believing all natural forces have a soul. Most Ongkor under the age of 40 are atheists who have no religious beliefs.

**Christianity:** Throughout their history, from the time they were a numerous people to their current state on the verge of extinction, the Ongkor people have never been touched by Christianity. There has never been a known Ongkor church. The western Xinjiang

region — a stronghold of Islam — is one of the least evangelized places in the world.



**Population in China:**  
 20 (1993)  
 24 (2000)  
 31 (2010)  
**Location:** Xinjiang  
**Religion:** Animism  
**Christians:** None Known

## Overview of the Ongkor

- Countries:** China
- Pronunciation:** "Ong-kohr"
- Other Names:** Xinjiang Ewenki, Ongkor Solon, Onkor Solon, Sinkiang Solon, Turkestan Solon
- Population Source:** Less than 20 (1993 J. Jahunen); 2,506 (1945 Xinjiang census); Out of a total Ewenki population of 26,315 (1990 census)
- Location:** NW Xinjiang: Yining County in the Ili Kazak Prefecture
- Status:** Officially included under Ewenki
- Language:** Altaic, Tungus, Northern Tungus, Ewenki
- Dialects:** 0
- Religion:** Animism, Polytheism, No Religion
- Christians:** None known
- Scripture:** None
- Jesus film:** None
- Gospel Recordings:** None
- Christian Broadcasting:** None
- ROPAL code:** None

