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Location: More than 21,000 Muslim Mongols live in the West Banner of the Alxa League, in the western part of Inner Mongolia. The Alxa League is surrounded on three sides by the Badain Jaran, Tengger, and Ulan Buh deserts.¹ The population of the entire Alxa League is only 150,000.² The League covers an area of 270,000 square kilometers (105,300 sq. mi.), 60% of which is desert. The main Alxa town is Bayan Hot, which means “city of wealth” in Mongolian.³

Identity: The Alxa Mongols are a distinct people group. They are the only group within the Mongolian nationality in China to profess Islam as their religion. As one mission agency notes, “They do indeed qualify as a people group, because, like caste,

the difference is great enough to prevent intermarriage or even inter-friendship.”⁴ A Chinese writer adds, “The customs of the Mongolians in this area, like the terrain, are quite different from that of the eastern part of Inner Mongolia.”⁵ The Chinese call Alxa, “The Mongolia west of the Yellow River bend”⁶ — a reference to both geographic and cultural differences.

Language: The Alxa Mongols use the *todo* “clear” script, also used by the Oirat and Torgut in Xinjiang. A Mongolian from farther east commented on the songs of the Alxa Mongols: “The melodies sounded booming and featured a broad range of notes.”⁷ The town of Bayan Hot is a linguistic mix, being home to members of 15 other nationalities.⁸

History: Alxa was the center of nomadic peoples such as the Hun, Wuhuan, and Qiang during the Qin and Han dynasties (221 BC – AD 220). One scholar states that the Alxa Mongols and the Dongxiang of Gansu were originally part of the Jagatai khanate, “who flourished during the Yuan period.... They were converted to Islam but were thereafter discriminated against by other Mongols who presumably resisted conversion.... They were compelled to move eastward.... When they reached Zhenfan they split into two routes. One group crossed the Helan mountains and went to Hetao where their descendants are today’s Muslim Mongols of the Alashan [Alxa] West Banner.”⁹

Customs: The Alxa Mongols rely on camels for survival. There are an estimated 200,000 camels in the region — one-sixth of the world’s two-humped Bactrian camels.¹⁰ Camel milk is not only used as drink but “is also fermented and made into an alcoholic beverage, cheese, butter and yogurt.”¹¹ Due to a horrific infant mortality rate in the past, the Alxa Mongols do not celebrate a child’s birth until it is three years old.¹²

Religion: The Alxa Mongols remain fervent followers of Islam to this day. Their faith constitutes their historical and ethnic identity as a people group.

Christianity: There are no known Christians among the Alxa Mongols. Few have ever heard the gospel. Because

of their social and religious isolation, they will probably be one of the most difficult people groups to penetrate in all of China.



Population in China:
 20,000 (1997)
 21,700 (2000)
 28,000 (2010)
Location: Inner Mongolia
Religion: Islam
Christians: None Known

Overview of the Alxa Mongols

Countries: China
Pronunciation: “Al-sha-Mong-gols”
Other Names: Muslim Mongols
Population Source: 20,000 (1997 AMO); Out of a total Mongol population of 4,806,849 (1990 census)
Location: *W Inner Mongolia:* Alxa West Banner (County) of the Alxa League (Prefecture)
Status: Officially included under Mongolian
Language: Altaic, Mongolian, Eastern Mongolian
Dialects: 0
Religion: Islam
Christians: None known
Scripture: None
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: Alashanmeng
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: None

