

Population in China:

1,650 (1991)
2,000 (2000)
2,480 (2010)

Location: Tibet

Religion: Islam

Christians: None Known

Overview of the Keji

Countries: China

Pronunciation: “Kerr-jee”

Other Names:

Tibetan Muslims, Kejis, Ka Che

Population Source:

1,650 (1991 *Global Prayer Digest*);
1,000 in Lhasa
(1998 *ARAMCO World*)

Out of a total Hui population of
8,602,978 (1990 census)

Location: *Tibet:* Lhasa, Xigaze,
and other cities

Status:

Officially included under Hui

Language: Sino-Tibetan,
Tibeto-Burman, Bodic, Bodish,
Tibetan, Central Tibetan

Dialects: 0

Religion: Islam

Christians: None known

Scripture: None

Jesus film: None

Gospel Recordings: None

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: None



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Location: Approximately 2,000 Keji, or Tibetan Muslims, live scattered throughout various cities in Tibet. One thousand of them live in the capital city of Lhasa,¹ where they worship in the small *Chota Masjid* mosque. Hundreds of tourists — both five-star and backpackers — can be found in Lhasa on any given day. Upon arrival in Lhasa, many people are disappointed in their high expectations of the “city of the gods,” although it has improved a little since Lowell Thomas’ unflattering 1949 report: “Nothing is known of modern plumbing. Refuse piles up on all corners... once a year these offal heaps are transferred to the fields to stimulate crops. The odors are not entirely pleasant. The nobles hold scented handkerchiefs to their noses as they ride along.... Dead animals are tossed in refuse piles to be fought over and devoured by the city’s scavengers — thousands of mangy dogs and ravens.”²

Identity: The Keji have been included in the Hui nationality in China simply because they are Muslims. The proud Keji, however, speak Tibetan and are ethnically distinct. Few people are aware of the existence of the Keji in Tibet. One writer notes, “Even the *Chinese Encyclopedia on Nationalities* makes no mention of their existence.”³

Language: The Keji speak the Tibetan language of whatever community they live in. They had their own language from Kashmir in the past, but this has been lost.

History: There are two groups of Muslims in Tibet. The larger group are the Hui: Chinese-speaking Muslims who are descended from Arab and Persian traders. The Hui are believed to have migrated into Tibet some time before 1766.⁴ The second group are the Keji. “The Kejis have their ancestral roots in Kashmir, India, from which their ancestors migrated in the 1600s. They came to Tibet as traders and still earn a comfortable living that way.”⁵ The Keji in Lhasa were noticed by the 5th Dalai Lama (1617–1682). “The Dalai Lama spotted a [Keji] man at prayer every day... worshipping according to the precepts of his religion... on the hill because no mosque existed in the area. Impressed with his faith, the Dalai Lama sent a Bowman to a site near

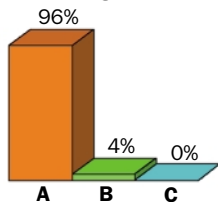
the hill and had him shoot arrows in each of the four cardinal directions. A house was built at the place from which the arrows were shot, and the land around it, extending as far in each direction as the arrows had flown, was deeded to the Muslim community. The place came to be called The House of Far-Reaching Arrows, and became the site of Lhasa’s first mosque and cemetery.”⁶

Customs: The Keji have their own Islamic restaurants, tea shops, and mosque in Lhasa. Keji women in some locations wear a distinctive blue dress.

Religion: All Keji are Sunni Muslims. Islam in Tibet dates back to when the ruler of Kabul, a vassal of the Tibetan king, converted from Buddhism to Islam between AD 812 and 814. “As a token of his sincerity, he presented... a gold statue of the Buddha, which was melted down to make coins.”⁷

Christianity: There has never been a known Christian among the Keji in Tibet. Because all missionaries who go to Tibet focus on the needs of the Tibetans, the Keji have yet to hear the gospel for the first time in their long history there.

Status of Evangelization



A = Have never heard the gospel
B = Were evangelized but did not become Christians
C = Are adherents to any form of Christianity