



**Population in China:**  
 14,502 (1990)  
 17,470 (2000)  
 21,050 (2010)  
**Location:** Xinjiang  
**Religion:** Islam  
**Christians:** 50

## Overview of the Uzbek

**Countries:** Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Pakistan, China

**Pronunciation:** "Wooz-beck"

**Other Names:** Wuzibieke, Ozbek, Ouzbek, Usbeki, Usbaki

**Population Source:**  
 14,502 (1990 census);  
 12,453 (1982 census);<sup>1</sup>  
 14,200,000 in Uzbekistan;  
 1,500,000 in Afghanistan (1993);  
 1,198,000 in Tajikistan (1993);  
 550,000 in Kyrgyzstan (1993);  
 332,000 in Kazakhstan<sup>2</sup>

**Location:**  
*N & W Xinjiang:* Ili Prefecture;  
 Others live in Qoqek, Kashgar, Urumqi, Yarkant, and Kargilik.

**Status:**  
 An official minority of China  
**Language:**  
 Altaic, Turkic, Eastern Turkic

**Literacy:** 79%

**Dialects:** 0

**Religion:** Sunni Islam

**Christians:** 50

**Scripture:** New Testament 1989;  
 Portions 1891

**Jesus film:** Available

**Gospel Recordings:**  
 Uzbek: Northern #04510

**Christian Broadcasting:**  
 Available (FEBC, TWR)

**ROPAL code:** UZB00



Dwayne Graybill

**Location:** The 18 million Uzbeks are one of the great peoples of Central Asia. Of this number, 14 million proudly live in their own homeland, Uzbekistan. China has a relatively small number of Uzbeks. Only 14,500 were counted in the 1990 census. Most live in the city of Yining in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Small numbers are also found in the large cities of Qoqek, Kashgar, Urumqi, Yarkant, and Kargilik.<sup>3</sup>

**Identity:** The Uzbek are one of China's 55 official minority groups. Their numbers have varied greatly over the course of recent decades. In 1953 there were more than 13,600 Uzbeks in China. By the 1964 census, however, their numbers had dwindled to only 7,700; many Uzbeks chose to flee to the Soviet Union to escape from Mao Zedong's extreme policies.

**Language:** All Uzbeks in China are bilingual in Uygur. Their speech includes loanwords from Uygur, Arabic, Persian, Russian, and Chinese,<sup>4</sup> which is similar to the standard spoken in Uzbekistan, though the Uzbek language in Afghanistan and Turkey is different.<sup>5</sup>

**History:** Uzbek history in China dates back to the time of the Mongol hordes who dominated Central Asia and China in the

thirteenth century. The Uzbek in China are descended from traders who traveled along the Silk Road. Others arrived in the 1750s after the Chinese armies defeated the Jungars. The name *Uzbek* probably came from Ozbeg Khan, a Mongol ruler of the Golden Horde who spread Islam throughout many parts of the Empire in the fourteenth century. Those who remained in the area under Ozbeg Khan's rule became known as *Uzbeks*. Previously, they were called *Kazaks*.<sup>6</sup>

**Customs:** The Uzbek's Islamic faith permeates every area of their daily lives. Funerals are major events in Uzbek society. The dead person's children

stay in mourning for a full seven days. Forty, 70, and 100 days after a death, Muslim priests are called to chant portions of the Qur'an inside the home of the grieving family.

**Religion:** For centuries the Muslim clergy have been responsible for the religious and secular education of Uzbek children. When the Chinese announced that all children in China were required to attend a state school, the Uzbek were outraged and refused to send their children to be educated by an atheistic regime. The Uzbek are committed Muslims, perhaps more so than any of the other Muslim peoples in Xinjiang.

**Christianity:** There are an estimated 50 Uzbek Christians in China today — significant considering the strength of Islam among the Uzbek.<sup>7</sup> Most Uzbek, however, are completely unaware of the gospel. The Uzbek in China are a difficult group to penetrate for Christ because of their small numbers and close-knit communities. A breakthrough has started to occur in Uzbekistan, however. More than 46 churches have been planted in recent years.<sup>8</sup> In 1996, 40 Uzbek believers volunteered to become church planters in the countries of Central Asia.<sup>9</sup>

