



# The Dongxiang of China

The Dongxiang people are the fourth largest of China's ten Muslim peoples. Dongxiang literally means "eastern villages," hinting that the Dongxiang came from further west. In fact it is thought that they originally came from the Sarta people of Central Asia. Between the 12th and 13th century, Genghis Khan invaded Central Asia and captured the Muslim Sarta people - a term that once referred to Muslim traders in Central Asia. He brought them back to China and many intermarried with Mongol soldiers. The largest concentrations of the Dongxiang still live in the rugged and dry mountains of Gansu province, while others are found in Qinghai, Ningxia and Xinjiang provinces in north-western China.

Due to their seclusion in the remote area of north-west China for several centuries, the Dongxiang people formed their own unwritten language which is related to the Mongol language. Though they do not have a system of writing, they have rich oral traditions including

legends, folk songs, riddles and proverbs. Many of them also understand spoken Mandarin. However, government statistics show that the Dongxiang are among the poorest and least literate of China's 55 ethnic minorities. Many of them have only had slightly over one year of schooling.

The Dongxiang mainly engage in agriculture. Livestock rearing, especially sheep, plays an important role in their economic life. Their major products include potatoes, wheat, maize, hemp, rapeseed and other industrial crops. There are possibly 200 Christians among the Dongxiang, however most of them are not organized in house groups or churches.

See an *International Herald Tribune* article by Jim Yardley: [www.ihf.com/articles/2006/03/07/news/china.php](http://www.ihf.com/articles/2006/03/07/news/china.php)

## Islam explained

*Iblis and Shaytan - These are the Qur'anic names for the fallen angel, the devil (Satan).*



### Dongxiang Statistics

- Population: estimate 514,000 (Year 2000 census)
- Religion: Sunni Muslim

## PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Ask God to send Chinese Christians to live and proclaim the Gospel among the Dongxiang people. May there be opportunities to help them with medical, educational, social and agricultural projects.
- ▶ Pray that God will open the hearts of the Dongxiang in order that they may enter His kingdom.
- ▶ Pray for solid discipleship of the few Dongxiang believers, that they may produce fruit in their communities.