

INTERCEDE

MAY/JUNE 2000

BEHIND CHINA'S

A thousand years ago, they descended upon China's heartland from the north...these horse-riding Mongolian conquerors of the world.

They were the mighty Khan's men. They came to rule but for a brief time. They have remained for a millennium.

Today they are among the region's poorest and least educated peoples. The Dongxiang, as they are known, eke out a survival existence as potato farmers in the dry, barren hills of southern Gansu Province.

Hardly any of their youth make it to college. A few of the more desperate ones have fled the farm to seek a life of dubious fortune in Lanzhou, the provincial capital.

Drive up into the brown hills south of Lanzhou and the curvy road takes you past terraced fields, dotted with small villages clinging to the mountaintops.

In each village the earthen homes snuggle around a green-colored mosque, its minaret standing out like a church steeple in a Bavarian village scene.

A rare, motorized farm vehicle breaks the silence of these windswept hills.

A lone woman, her head shrouded in a traditional covering, struggles up the steep incline, pulling a water cart to the thirsty village above.

An old man stares down from his mountain home, viewing a world hardly changed from that taken in by those mighty

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THE GREAT WALL

Speaking on Behalf of Muslims

...the drawing attention to China in this issue of Intercede—a very worthy focus for our intercessor:

Ron Peck, Director
Center for
Ministry to Muslims



We are drawing attention to China in this issue of *Intercede*—a very worthy focus for our intercessor:

A few months ago, I had the opportunity to visit the Chinese mainland for the first time. I have visited some 30 countries of the world and think of myself as an experienced traveler. But going into China was an experience I will never forget.

I have a number of Chinese friends, some of whom I have known for 40 years. They are wonderful and kind. Thus, when I visited China, I was expecting Chinese people to be friendly and hospitable. I was not disappointed.

There are several impressive facts about China that many Westerners overlook.

—It is the most populous nation on earth with over one billion people.

—It is slightly larger than the United States geographically.

—Its culture is one of the oldest and most impressive continuous cultures in the world.

Many people in the West think of China as being a non-religious nation. Thus, they are often quite surprised to learn that China has a major component of Muslim people. It is estimated that the Muslim community of China has more than 35 million people. There are some areas in northwest China where Muslims make up the majority of the population.

While traveling in some of the cities in the northwestern provinces, I was able to visit some mosques and observe active groups of the Muslim faithful at prayer. These Muslim communities of believers have been actively practicing their faith for many centuries.

Another little known fact regarding China relates to the growth of the Christian community over the last 70 years. Though the estimates vary, those who are most knowledgeable and experienced believe there are 70 million Christians in China today. The vast majority of these believers are what we call Pentecostal or charismatic. They are simple followers of Jesus who have been deeply influenced by the ministry of the Holy Spirit in their lives. They are captivated by the love of Jesus Christ.

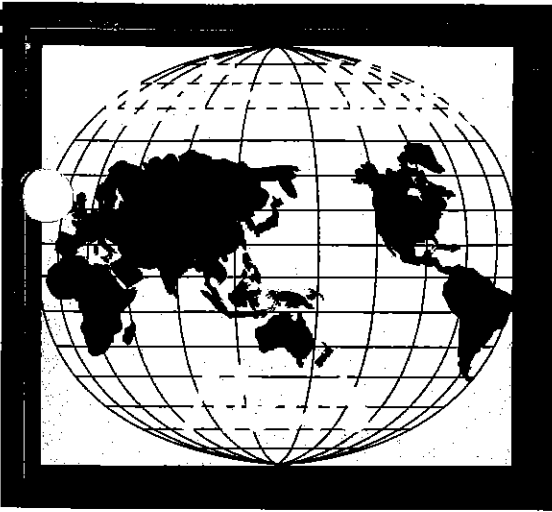
It is estimated that the Muslim community in China has more than 35 million people

When we stop to consider that there is such a large number of Christians in China, it speaks of awesome potential. If God could focus the love of Jesus for lonely, hurting people through this body of Christian believers in everyday practical ways, how many people could be helped and blessed?

In every society that exists in China there are lonely, hurting and neglected people whose hearts are yearning for love. I am convinced there are Muslims in China who can and should be touched by the loving and caring friendship of a Christian neighbor.

Let us focus our faith and intercession at this time on God raising up a large army of Chinese Christians who will devote their lives to reaching Chinese Muslims with the gospel of Christ.





Qatar

"The way is clear for establishing the first Christian church in Qatar" was announced in an exclusive "Gulf Times" report last December in the capital city of Doha.

Qatar's Minister of Foreign Affairs had sent news of the permission to the Roman Catholic Bishop of Abu Dhabi. An estimated 60,000 Catholics live in Qatar, a small peninsula jutting off the east coast of Saudi Arabia into the Persian Gulf.

A plot of land is expected to be allotted for use as a Christian church compound in Doha. The property would be divided by common agreement among the various Christian communities, to construct individual church facilities.

Qatar has prohibited the public practice of any religion except the strict Wahhabi interpretation of Islam. However, the government has for several years quietly allowed the Christian communities of Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and other Protestant denominations to meet informally for private church worship services, hinged on prior notification to local authorities.

—*Compass Direct*

Bulgaria

In December, the Education Ministry announced that Bulgarian schools will begin offering classes on Islam this year in areas where there is a strong Muslim minority. Since 1997, classes on the Bible have been available to pupils whose parents wish them to have such instruction.

—*International Development Brief*

United States

On January 16, an Iranian/U.S. soccer game was played at the Rose Bowl

before a crowd that included approximately 40,000 Iranians. Twenty-five workers came from Egyptian, Hispanic, Korean, Chinese, Iranian, and American churches in California and in Northern Virginia to join in the outreach. It was an international effort to reach these Iranians for Christ.

During the planned outreach, tracts, New Testaments and *Jesus* films, all in the Farsi language, were distributed. The workers were stationed right next to the place where thousands of Iranians stopped to celebrate with a giant Iranian flag held flat over their heads, dancing, drums, singing, and talking, so there was plenty of time to engage in conversation and pass out the materials.

On the whole, the Iranians were happy to receive Christian literature in their own language.

—*E-mail report*

Nigeria

In Zamfara state, 20 detained Christians were scheduled to be tried under "*sharia*" (Islamic law) after the new legal system took effect on January 27.

In Gusau, the capital city of Zamfara, some Christian families have moved out of the state. Others have chosen to stay and face the uncertain consequences of being a Christian in an Islamic state.

Most commercial banks have also decided to pull out, since under an Islamic system banks are not allowed to charge interest and they are expected to share profits with the state for the propagation of Islam. Saudi Arabia and Sudan have already sent economic experts to Zamfara to prepare the way for establishing Islamic banks.

Leaders worry that Christian families adversely affected economically may give in to pressures to convert to Islam to survive.

Religious leaders in Nigeria have launched a peace initiative to end the spate of ethnic and religious clashes in which hundreds of people have been killed in recent months. Members of the Nigeria Inter-

Religious Council say they hope to act as intermediaries in resolving ethnic, religious and regional conflicts.

—*IDB/Compass Direct*

Turkey

Fourteen weeks after Izmir security police sealed the doors of a Turkish Protestant church and arrested 40 of its members, the Izmir Fellowship of Jesus Christ resumed legal meetings for public worship last December, despite an administrative court case still pending on the church's zoning legalities.

Once the church reopened, its relations with officialdom began to improve dramatically.

Their request for a citywide Christmas Celebration on December 26 was rubberstamped immediately, with a deputy governor and the local director of cultural affairs among the 1,300 attendees. In a rare gesture, the governor of Izmir telegraphed the church his Christmas congratulations.

Earlier that week, President Suleyman Demirel made Turkish history as the first head of state to issue formal Christmas greetings to the Christian communities of Turkey. His Christmas message was heard over national television and radio and reprinted in almost every newspaper.

—*Compass Direct*

Philippines

President Joseph Estrada has rejected any calls for a separate Islamic state in the Philippines, saying the country's territory must be kept intact. Manila is battling the 15,000-member Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which is demanding a separate Islamic state in Mindanao. Both sides started formal peace talks last December aimed at forging a political settlement of the MILF's 21-year rebellion. Fighting, however, has continued.

—*International Development Brief*



warriors of old.

What has changed is that these people converted to Islam within two hundred years of riding into China. The Muslim missionary's tomb still lies on a quiet hill in Dongxiang County, a testimony to the faith that has endured for 800 years while dynasties and republics have come and gone.

As a protected minority group, the people are free today to worship among themselves. The *imams* call the Faithful to prayer five times a day and especially on Fridays, just as in any other Muslim community around the world.

There is no Bible translated into the Dongxiang language, a Mongolian tongue.

There are no churches, no Christians, certainly no Christian workers. The gospel is mute in these hills.

It is estimated that over 100 million people have never heard the gospel in Western China...and stand little chance of hearing it in the next 25 years. Thirty-seven million of these unreached people are Muslim.

Travel on south of Dongxiang County and you come to the city of Linxia, known as China's little "Mecca" and home to several Muslim people groups, including the Dongxiang.

Twenty-seven mosques line this

small city's narrow alleys and main streets.

Calls to prayer go out from each mosque's minaret at the appointed hours, filling the quiet city with a chorus of haunting chants much as has been heard for more than a thousand years.



Islam came to China within two generations of Muhammad, the seeds of his message scattered swiftly by merchants and missionaries alike. Today the government officially counts 11 distinct Muslim minority people groups in China.

Some may be described as cross-border groups, such as the Uygurs, the Kazakhs, the Kirghiz, the Tajiks and Uzbeks, with relatives in Russia and the Central Asian Republics.

Others the government counts are found only in China.

Among these indigenous groups, all can be found in or near Linxia.

The Salar, like many of the cross-border groups, have an Altic-Turk language. The Bonan, like the Dongxiang, speak a Mongolian language.

By far the most numerous of the Muslims in the region, as well as in China, are the Hui. In many ways diverse, they are the sum of all Chinese Muslims not already categorized... Han Chinese who converted to Islam hun-

dreds of years ago, who have intermarried—some with other Muslim peoples—and who faithfully follow at least some of the main teachings of the Qur'an.

As a result, mutton is a staple in the diet while pork, so common in China, is strictly forbidden.

The Hui, found all over China, is a group of people caught in the middle between the dominant Han and other Muslim minorities. Their



main claim to ethnic distinctiveness is their religion. Thus they have a unique motivation to cling to the "Pure and True" faith, as it is known among themselves.

Stop and talk with a village elder in Dongxiang County, his face weathered and wreathed in a warm smile and his head covered in a traditional white cap. He knows only his own dialect. He can neither read nor write. He is poor.

However he is a gracious man and welcomes you to tea. You are his guest and he




from the minaret down the street.

He knows little of his Mongolian roots, of his world-conquering ancestors. But he is from a long line of Muslim worshippers — and

of this he is proud.

Jesus? He has never heard that name. Chances are the Words of Jesus will not come to his village in his lifetime.

"Will you have some more tea?" he asks. 

is eager to invite you into his home.

His knowledge of the Qur'an is limited with his scattered education, a result of a difficult past. But he is faithful to prayer...bowing towards Mecca at each call



OVERCOMING A MILLENNIUM OF HATE

Mina was born into a religious Jewish family in Israel. Her parents never allowed the name of Jesus to be spoken in her home, and she was taught that Arabs want to hurt Jews and cannot be trusted.

In her early 20s, Mina spent a year traveling in South Africa. Near the end of her journey she surrendered her life to Jesus Christ. Upon returning home to Haifa, she was led to join Carmel Assembly, where she grew in the Lord.

Eight years later she took a job marketing cosmetics door to door, including many Arab homes. To her surprise, many Arabs welcomed her and she even made new friends. But not with Muslims who were militant about their faith. The mutual distrust and clashing of spirits made her very uncomfortable.

One day, while in prayer, she told the Lord, "I hate the Muslims, and I don't want to go see them again."

The Lord made it clear to her that she should love everyone.

"If you want me to love everyone," she replied, "I pray that you will do that by the power of the Holy Spirit, because I cannot do this myself."

A year later, the Lord led her to attend the Israel College of the Bible in Jerusalem. One day while she was touring the Old City an amazing thing happened. She overheard a Muslim merchant arguing with another man. She went up to him and asked why he was yelling.

He replied, "Because he didn't want to buy from me!"

She asked again and the merchant

glared at her in speechless anger. She saw in his eyes all the cultural and religious hatred that tears apart their homeland.

He spun around and stormed away shouting; "We will get your country one day!"

Mina's Israeli side recoiled in fear, but to her great amazement she was filled with compassion and the love of the Lord for the angry merchant.

Catching up with him she said, "I don't hate you. Why did you speak to me like that? You really hurt me."


When the merchant saw the kindness in her eyes, his anger faded. "I am so sorry I hurt you. My name is Ibrahim."

She introduced herself and offered to come visit him some day.

On that day, the Lord had answered her prayer for love. His love had cut through generations of pent-up hatred and mistrust. Ibrahim's eyes were opened to the light of Christ's love shining through the eyes of an Israeli woman. And Mina's heart had been filled with godly love for Arabs, including Muslims.

Through that encounter Mina also saw the answer to the troubles infesting her homeland—the great power of God's love.

As Mina herself says, "The only way Arabs and Jews can be united is through belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. We can only pray that more and more Muslims and Jews will come to know Him."

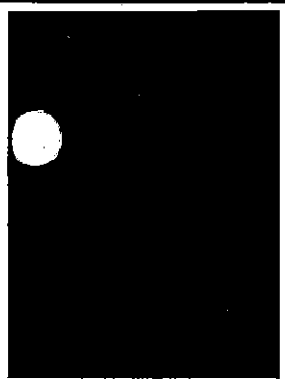
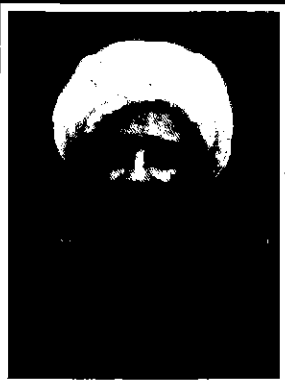
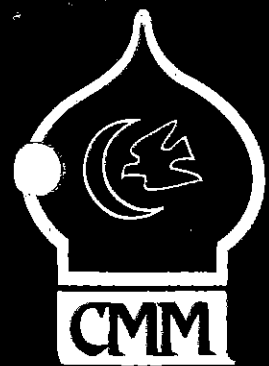
Excerpted with permission from the Shalom-Salam booklet written by Luis Bush and published by the AD2000 & Beyond Movement. 

ONE DAY, WHILE
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MINA TOLD
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I urge, then, first of all
that requests, prayers,
intercession and
thanksgiving be
made for everyone.
—(1 Timothy 2:1, NIV)



Friday, May 5, 2000. Please pray

...throughout this month for the ongoing Institute of Islamic Studies at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in Baguio, Philippines. Pray for the safety and encouragement of each professor and student.

...for the new telephone counseling centers which will be able to better serve SAT-7 television viewers in a variety of countries.

...for God to bless Christians who continue to meet secretly in the Comoro Islands, despite laws restricting such gatherings.

...that God will open doors for ministry among the Muslim people groups in China, namely the Dongxiang, Bonan, Hui, Uygur, Kazakh, Kirghiz, Tajik and Uzbek.

Friday, May 12, 2000. Please pray

...that Muslim-background believers will be strengthened in their faith and be able to stand strong against the forces of evil and persecution which they face daily.

...for the president of Indonesia, Abdurrahman Wahid, who was brought into office last year. He leads the world's largest Islamic body. Pray that he will be able to deal with the violence between Christians and Muslims.

...for more opportunities to minister in the Maldives. Ask God to open additional channels for the distribution of Maldivian Gospel portions.

...that Chinese Christians will be burdened to reach out to evangelize the Muslim people groups within their own borders.

Friday, May 19, 2000. Please pray

...for God to give wisdom to President Olusegun Obasanjo as he seeks to bring reconciliation between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. Muslims are determined to institute sharia law throughout northern Nigeria.

...that God will break the iron fist of Hafiz al-Asad, the Syrian dictator.

...for the outreach of gospel radio broadcasters. A Turkish family in Europe came to Christ while listening to a gospel program. They were concerned how they could break the news to their parents in Turkey, but the parents had also received Christ through listening to a broadcast.

...that the thousands who are coming to the Lord by watching the "Jesus" film in Muslim villages will become mature in Christ and bring many others to faith.

...for the CMM team member who is teaching an Islamic bloc session in Israel for the next two weeks.

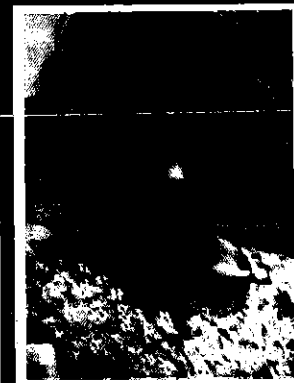
Friday, May 26, 2000. Please pray

...that God will raise up more workers for church planting in Saudi Arabia to replace Filipino Christians who were deported last year for sharing their faith.

...for the FEBA broadcasts which are reaching into Malawi, Tanzania and Mozambique. Pray that many Muslims will hear the gospel and respond.

...for Christian relief workers who are trying to alleviate suffering in Afghanistan, with its harsh economic, social and political climate.

...for women being oppressed by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, that they will find love and acceptance from their heavenly Father.



I urge, then, first of all that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone.

(1 Timothy 2:1, NIV)

Intercede For Fellowships



Praying for Muslims
Around the World

Friday, June 2, 2000. Please pray

...for Christians who make up 10 percent of Indonesia's population. Many are struggling economically in the midst of great persecution, especially in Ambon and East Timor.
...for the 800,000 Turks in Bulgaria. About 77 percent are Muslims, 22 percent are non-religious and 1 percent are Christian. Pray for workers to hear God's voice and reach out to them in love.
...that God will place a hedge of protection around Egyptian Christians. Many have been attacked and their homes destroyed by Muslim extremists, especially in Upper Egypt.
...for the CMM team member who is helping in the KAIROS missionary training program in Brazil next week, that he will challenge the candidates concerning ministering to Muslims.

Friday, June 9, 2000. Please pray

...for the Tahima people group of Yemen who eke out a living as fishermen, farmers and traders in a strip of desert. Ask God to call out workers to invest their lives among the Tahima.
...for British Christians to seize the growing number of opportunities to witness to Turkish, Kurdish and Bangladeshi Muslims who have come to their doorstep. London alone has 200,000 Turkish speakers.
...for political stability in Guinea, West Africa, and for the penetration of the gospel among the main people groups: the Fulas, Maninkas and Susu. The 600,000 refugees, living in neighboring countries as a result of unrest, also need the gospel.

Friday, June 16, 2000. Please pray

...for the continued faithfulness of Chinese pastors and believers. More Christians are in prison or under detention than in any other country in the world.
...that seven recently baptized Kazak believers will learn to pray and understand God's plan for their families and ministries.
...that the Lord will raise up workers to plant churches among the Muslims in Spain. Europe's largest mosque is in Madrid, and the number of Islamic associations and centers is increasing.

Friday, June 23, 2000. Please pray

...that the Dutch Church will become involved in reaching out to the Muslim Berbers who are now living in the Netherlands as the second and third generation to be born there. Praise God for Latin American missionaries who are proclaiming the good news among the Berbers.
...that the 5 million North African or Black African Muslims in France, Belgium, Switzerland and Holland will hear the gospel and take it back to their families in Europe and North Africa.
...that the leaders in the communities where Kurds reside as displaced persons will come to Christ and lead many others to know Him too.

Friday, June 30, 2000. Please pray

...that Omar Hassan al-Turabi, Muslim leader in Sudan, will come to a saving knowledge of Jesus. He could be the key to bringing an end to the abduction and mistreatment of Christian children.
...that the intimidation tactics being used on Christians in the Muslim Republics in the C.I.S. will be used to strengthen the churches and not shut them down.
... for Christians in Ethiopia who have suffered through famine, wars and 17 years of Marxist rule ending in 1991. Famine is predicted for 2000.
...that the Church of Sweden will minister to the 250,000 Muslim immigrants living in Sweden. May many become committed disciples of Christ.