

# Amdo, Hbrogpa



**Population:**

583,700 (2000)  
719,200 (2010)  
886,000 (2020)

**Countries:** China

**Buddhism:** Tibetan

**Christians:** 100

**Overview of the Hbrogpa Amdo**

**Other Names:** Brogpa, Made, Anduo, Ngambo

**Population Sources:** 538,500 in China (1987, *Language Atlas of China*)

**Language:** Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Bodic, Bodish, Tibetan, Northern Tibetan

**Dialects:** 15

**Professing Buddhists:** 99%

**Practising Buddhists:** 95%

**Christians:** 0.1%

**Scripture:** Tibetan Bible 1948; New Testament 1885; Portions 1862

**Jesus film:** available

**Gospel Recordings:** Amdo; Zang, Anduo

**Christian Broadcasting:** none

**ROPAL code:** ADX01

Hbrogpa Amdo is one of four main languages spoken by the Amdo Tibetans in western China. *Hbrogpa*, which means 'nomad' or 'herder' in Tibetan, is the largest of the Amdo languages. Linguistically, Amdo is very different from other languages within the Tibetan group. Within Amdo there are four mutually unintelligible languages, of which Hbrogpa is the most widely spoken.<sup>1</sup> Various linguistic sources mention 15 dialects within Hbrogpa.<sup>2</sup> Most Amdo are semi-nomadic herders of sheep, yaks and goats.

Approximately 600,000 Amdo speak the Hbrogpa language. They live in a vast, sparsely populated area of eastern Qinghai Province, as far north as the Qinghai-Gansu border. Significant numbers also live in south-west Gansu Province and in adjacent parts of northern Sichuan. The Hbrogpa region ranges

from Qinghai Lake in the north – which at 4,000 square kilometres (1,560 sq. mi.) is the largest lake in China – to the town of Songpan in Sichuan in the south.<sup>3</sup> The Amdo region was incorporated into the Chinese empire in the early 1700s. Horrendous clashes with the Chinese have resulted in massive loss of Amdo Tibetan life. The Dalai Lama listed 49,049 deaths from battles within the Amdo regions before 1983, in addition to 121,982 deaths from starvation.<sup>4</sup>

The overwhelming religious majority of the Hbrogpa Amdo people practise Tibetan Buddhism. Recent years have also witnessed a revival of the ancient pre-Buddhist Bon

religion, which is a combination of black magic, demon worship and shamanism.<sup>5</sup> Several Christian organizations worked in the Amdo area prior to 1949. Cecil Pohill of the China Inland Mission established a mission station in Xining in 1888. Later he 'opened up Songpan as a center for Tibetan work'.<sup>6</sup> In 1922 it was reported, 'The confidence of the people has to a great extent been achieved, and not a few have an intelligent knowledge of the way of salvation.'<sup>7</sup>



Nancy Sturrock

According to a 1986 report, 'A few Christian households in Gansu Province gathered to worship during a Chinese New Year's celebration. Their neighbors, seeking to wipe out Christianity, told them to disperse. The Christians were unwilling to stop their meeting and were severely beaten by the crowd. The next

morning the persecutors found their sheep, cows and horses were dying. Their family members also began to die one by one. Realizing that the wrath of God had fallen upon them, they pleaded with those who believed in Jesus to pray. The Lord heard the believers' prayers, and the sick and dying were healed. As a result, over a hundred Amdo Tibetans turned to the Lord!<sup>8</sup>

Today there are at least five small churches among the Amdo Tibetans.<sup>9</sup> Approximately 200 Tibetan believers attend a church in Lintan County in southern Gansu, but they are Jone Tibetans, not Amdo.<sup>10</sup>

