

Ergong

Recent research has revealed the existence of approximately 60,500 Ergong people living in remote parts of western Sichuan Province in western China.¹ In 1983, Chinese scholar Sun Hongkai listed 35,000 Ergong people in China.² The county with the largest number of Ergong people is Daofu (28,000), followed by Danba (17,000), Luhuo (6,500) and Xinlong within the Ganzi (Garze) Prefecture; while in neighbouring Aba Prefecture the Ergong are dispersed in Jinchuan (also known as Guanyingqiao) (5,000) and Zamtang (Shangzhai) (4,000) counties.³ All of these areas were formerly part of Kham Province in Tibet.

Officially the Ergong have been included as part of the Tibetan nationality in China, even though they speak their own distinct language. The Ergong are also widely known as Hor, or Horpa. The Ergong language, called Daofuh

Hua by the Chinese, is related to Jiarong in western Sichuan.⁴ It is a member of the Qiangic branch of Tibeto-Burman. Linguists have studied Ergong for a surprisingly long time. B H Hodgson first described them in 1853.⁵ The Ergong speak their mother tongue within their own communities but use Chinese or Tibetan when speaking with outsiders.

The cultural centre of the Ergong people is the town of Daofu, a two-day bus journey from Chengdu City, the capital of Sichuan Province. The Ergong live in distinctive white, flat-roofed houses, supported with red timber. Inside their homes are elaborate paintings depicting Buddhist scenes. These

paintings are usually done by a family member and sometimes take many months to complete.

Practically all Ergong adhere to Tibetan Buddhism. A large temple is located in Daofu, 'providing a place for about 200 monks to worship and study each day. Most monks are Ergong, with a few being Zhaba. In the mornings you can watch the monks, young and old, chant and read scriptures in the big temple rooms. You can also walk to the second floor of the temple which houses

some enormous god statues, masks and yak-butter sculptures.'⁶

In 1903, two French Catholic priests settled in Daofu. They built a church, which included ten classrooms and an orphanage. The local government and people welcomed the

missionaries because of the social benefits they brought to the area. 'Seventy percent of the Chinese in town were Christians, [but] only a handful of Tibetans were Christian believers. Some Tibetans accepted some of the Christian beliefs, but still held onto Tibetan Buddhism. In 1949, the [new Communist] government told the Frenchmen to leave the country. There were no new believers after this time. The church was destroyed and changed into a children's dormitory for a school. Later it was rebuilt into a Tibetan Buddhist temple, which it remains to today. . . . Some of the people in town believe there may be a few old Chinese Christians in town, but there is only one known Ergong Christian.'⁷



China Advocate



Population:
60,500 (2000)
74,500 (2010)
91,800 (2020)
Countries: China
Buddhism: Tibetan
Christians: 1

Overview of the Ergong

Other Names: Daofuhua, Bopa, Hor, Horpa, Horu, Hor-ke, Taofu, Pawang, Gesitsa, Bawang Rong-Ke, Hørsök, Western Jiarong

Population Sources:
60,500 in China (2000, *Qiangic Speaking Tibetans*)

Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Tangut-Qiang, Gyarong

Dialects: 3 (Danba, Daofu, Northern Ergong)

Professing Buddhists: 99%

Practising Buddhists: 65%

Christians: 0.1%

Scripture: none

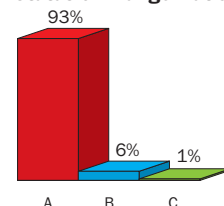
Jesus film: none

Gospel Recordings: none

Christian Broadcasting: none

ROPAL code: ERO

Status of Evangelization



A = Have never heard the gospel
B = Have heard the gospel but have not become Christians
C = Are adherents to some form of Christianity