

# Mongol, Sichuan



## Population:

27,100 (2000)  
35,000 (2010)  
43,100 (2020)

**Countries:** China  
**Buddhism:** Tibetan  
**Christians:** 5

## Overview of the Sichuan Mongols

**Other Names:** Lugu Lake Mongols, Sichuan Mongolians, Hihin, Hii-khin

### Population Sources:

21,033 in China (1990 census)

**Language:** Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Unclassified

**Dialects:** 0

**Professing Buddhists:** 95%

**Practising Buddhists:** 75%

**Christians:** 0.1%

**Scripture:** none

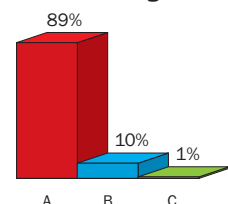
**Jesus film:** none

**Gospel Recordings:** none

**Christian Broadcasting:** none

**ROPAL code:** none

## 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

Approximately 30,000 Mongols live in the southern part of Sichuan Province in south-west China. Although a few Mongol villages are within the borders of Yunnan Province—located on the shores of Lugu Lake among the Mosuo people—most are in Sichuan, spread out along two or three valleys in Yanyuan and Muli counties, north-east of Lugu Lake.

The Sichuan Mongols are officially counted as part of the Mongolian nationality in China. They are a distinct ethno-linguistic group, however, from all other Mongolian peoples.<sup>1</sup> They call themselves Mongols and have their own unique clothing, history and language. All other peoples in the region recognize them as Mengzu (Mongols).

Little research has been done on the language of the Sichuan Mongols. In the seven centuries since their arrival in the area, neighbouring languages have heavily influenced their speech. One visitor described their language as ‘Neither Mongolian, Mandarin, Yi, Mosuo nor Tibetan. I suspect it is a language taken from all or some of these languages.’<sup>2</sup> The Sichuan Mongol prince could only ‘pick out a few words’ of a Mongolian cassette played for him.<sup>3</sup>

Joseph Rock was the first recorded foreigner to visit the Sichuan Mongols in 1924. He described the town of Youngning as ‘the seat of three chiefs whose ancestors were Mongols, elevated to power by Kublai Khan in the 13th century’.<sup>4</sup> Rock adds, ‘When the great Mongol Emperor marched through the territory about Youngning, AD

1253, he left one of his relatives to rule the Hlihin tribesmen.’<sup>5</sup>

Before Communist rule, the Mongol king acted as a warlord over the whole region. ‘When the Communists took over, they deposed him, not killing him so as not to make him a martyr in the people’s eyes.’<sup>6</sup> The Mongol palace was destroyed and the prince was sent to a re-education camp for

several years. The prince, La Ping Chu, is still alive today and respected by his people, although he is not allowed to rule. Many older Mongols still bow their heads in respect when they pass him on the street.

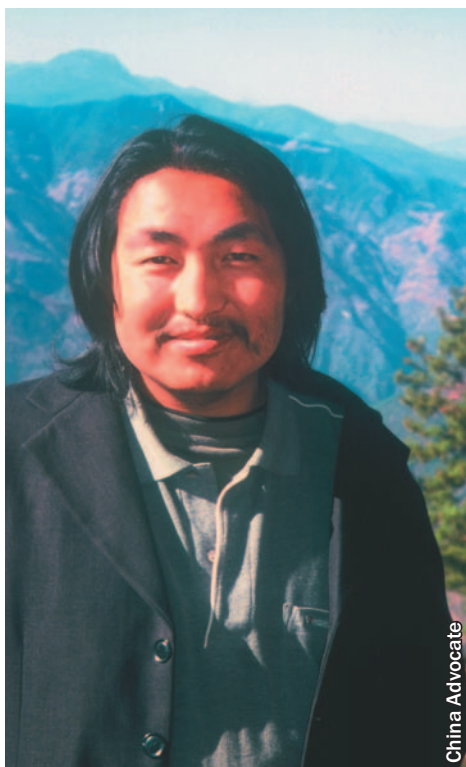
Most Sichuan Mongols are farmers or fishermen, leading quiet lives in their remote villages. They observe Buddhist festivals, ‘hoping someday their kingdom will be restored to them’.<sup>7</sup>

Tibetan

Buddhism is the spiritual stronghold of the Sichuan Mongols. There is a temple in active use just behind the prince’s house. Most temples and altars were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution.

Very few Sichuan Mongols have ever heard the name of Jesus Christ. One person who has heard the gospel is the prince himself, witnessed to by foreign visitors a few years ago. A prayer for healing was offered for the prince, who could not stand up straight because of a stomach ulcer. He was completely healed.<sup>8</sup>

The Sichuan Mongols are surrounded by unreached people groups on every side. There are no Christian communities nearby who could readily reach them.



China Advocate