



**Population in China:**  
 35,000 (1983)  
 48,800 (2000)  
 60,100 (2010)  
**Location:** Sichuan  
**Religion:** Tibetan Buddhism  
**Christians:** None Known

## Overview of the Ergong

**Countries:** China

**Pronunciation:** "Erh-gong"

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

**Population Source:**  
 35,000 (1983 Sun Hongkai);  
 Out of a total Tibetan population of 4,593,330 (1990 census)

**Location:** *W Sichuan:* Danba, Daofu, Luhuo, and Xinlong counties in the Garze Prefecture; And Jinchuan County of Aba Prefecture in NW Sichuan

**Status:**  
 Officially included under Tibetan

**Language:** Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Qiangic, Jiarong, Ergong

**Dialects (3):** Danba, Daofu, Northern Ergong

**Religion:**  
 Tibetan Buddhism, Shamanism

**Christians:** None known

**Scripture:** None

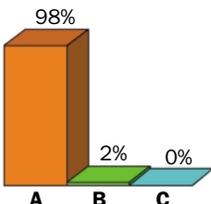
**Jesus film:** None

**Gospel Recordings:** None

**Christian Broadcasting:** None

**ROPAL code:**  
 ER000 (Ergong); HRP00 (Horpa)

### Status of Evangelization



**A** = Have never heard the gospel  
**B** = Were evangelized but did not become Christians  
**C** = Are adherents to any form of Christianity

**Location:** Chinese scholar Sun Hongkai in 1983 listed 35,000 Ergong people living in the western part of Sichuan Province.<sup>1</sup> The Ergong inhabit what is now Danba, Daofu, Luhuo, and Xinlong counties of the Garze Prefecture in western Sichuan. They also live in the Guanyinqiao District of Jinchuan County in the Aba Prefecture. All of these areas were formerly part of Kham Province in Tibet. The region where the Ergong live is one of the most remote in the world. Many communities are only accessible by foot. Many of the people in the area, including the Ergong, are nomadic or seminomadic.



Mette Krogh

**Identity:**  
 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*.

**Language:** The Ergong language, called *Daofuh Hua* by the Chinese, is related to Jiarong in western Sichuan.<sup>2</sup> It is a member of the Qiangic branch of Tibeto-Burman. Ergong, or Horpa, and has been studied by linguists for a surprisingly long time. They were first described by B. H. Hodgson in 1874.<sup>3</sup> One scholar notes that the various Qiangic languages, including Ergong, "are of unusual interest, both synchronically and diachronically. They are characterized by initial consonant clusters comparable in complexity to those of Written Tibetan.... Some languages of the group are tonal, while others are not, providing an ideal terrain for the investigation of the mechanisms of tonogenesis."<sup>4</sup> The Ergong speak their mother tongue within their own communities but use Chinese or Tibetan with outsiders.

**History:** The great Qiang race was once more populous than today. As they moved into more remote regions along the Tibetan frontier, most Qiang were converted to Tibetan Buddhism and were gradually assimilated to Tibetan culture and customs. Today, minority groups such as the Ergong are an example of those Qiang groups who are still in the transitory stage of assimilation. The Ergong are culturally Tibetan but retain their Qiangic language.

**Customs:** The customs of the Ergong are similar to Tibetan customs, although massive stone watchtowers

called *tianlu* prove their affiliation with the Qiang people. Harsh Sichuan winters give way in May to sunny days when grass and wildflowers bloom throughout the region.

**Religion:** All Ergong adhere to the Tibetan Buddhist religion. They consider it a priority to visit at least one holy Tibetan site during the course of their lifetime.

**Christianity:** The Ergong are a completely untouched people group. Few Christians have heard of the Ergong and fewer still have tried to reach them. James O. Fraser, a British missionary who worked among the Lisu in the early part of the twentieth century, often exhorted believers in the Western world to intercede on behalf of the lost in China. Fraser said, "Many of us cannot reach the mission-fields on our feet, but we can reach them on our knees. Solid, lasting missionary work is accomplished by prayer, whether offered in China, India, or the United States."<sup>5</sup>