Hdzanggur

Approximately 5,000 people comprise the Hdzanggur ethnic group in China. This little-known people inhabit a remote part of south-east Qinghai Province, primarily in the Ger Zhung Valley around the Radja (also spelt Ragya) Monastery, north-east of Dawu on the banks of the Yellow River. This area lies within Machen County in the Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Hdzanggur territory starts at the banks of the Yellow River and extends for several days' journey by foot to the west. The Yellow River, which originates in the Kunlun mountains further to the west, is the sixth longest river in the world. By the time it empties into the Yellow Sea it has travelled 4,667 kilometres (2,900 mi.).

Julian Hawken

The Hdzanggur are one of the many sub-groups of Golog Tibetans. They have a reputation for being robbers and murderers. They are heavily armed and practically independent from Chinese rule. One of the first outsiders to visit the Hdzanggur was Joseph Rock in 1929. He wrote, 'I crossed over . . . to see what these almost unknown and wild people were like. Though very suspicious of us, they showed the greatest curiosity about our appearance and clothing. . . . They formed a circle about me, feeling my clothes. My pockets in particular amused them. . . . They followed me about, shaking their heads in bewilderment.'[1]

For centuries the Hdzanggur have been cut off from contact with the rest of the world. To this day, they are without telephones, electricity and a postal system. There are few roads in their region, and they practice crude forms of medicine, little changed for centuries: 'I did manage to photograph one wild fellow. . . . His abdomen was covered with straight scars, made when he had held burning rags against his body to cure his stomach ache. These scars were so evenly placed that they looked like tattoo marks. Others had scars on wrists and hands, marks of fiery ordeals to cure rheumatism.'[2] For longer than anyone can remember, the Hdzanggur have employed a unique method for crossing the Yellow River. It has not changed at all since Rock reported in 1929: 'Here a ferry of inflated goatskins supporting a raft of poles was in operation. These skins soon went flat. After each trip the Tibetans had to blow up each skin — excellent exercise for the lungs. As many as 12 people would ride on one of these flimsy rafts.'[3]

The Hdzanggur are fervent Tibetan Buddhists. They also worship a selection of fierce mountain deities, which they have incorporated into their Buddhist world-view. The Radja Monastery is the most influential in the area. Several Westerners are presently studying Tibetan Buddhism at this remote place. The Chinese authorities have strongly persecuted the Buddhist leaders of Radja over the years. Some have been imprisoned and tortured.[4] The local Communist officials have launched a 'love your country, love your religion' campaign in Radja Monastery. In 2003 it was reported, 'Every year, some thirty Chinese officials come to the monastery and stay for a month. During it the monks are made to study anti-Dalai Lama literature and write anti-Dalai Lama write-ups.'[5]

The gospel of Jesus Christ has never penetrated this geographically, politically and spiritually isolated part of the world. There has never been a known Hdzanggur believer.

Population:
4,370 (2000)
5,380 (2010)
5,880 (2020)
Countries: China
Buddhism: Tibetan
Christians: none known

Overview of the Hdzanggur

Other Names:

Population Sources:

4,370 in China (2000, P Hattaway)

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

Dialects: 0

Professing Buddhists: 100%

Practicing Buddhists: 70%

Christians: 0%

Scripture: none

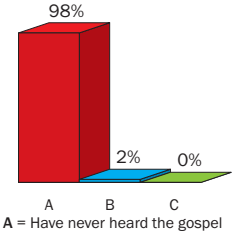
***Jesus* film:** none

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