

# Minyak

A 1983 study listed 15,000 Minyak living in extremely remote regions of western Sichuan Province in China.<sup>1</sup> They inhabit parts of Kangding, Ya'an, Jiulong and Shimian counties in the Garze Tibetan Prefecture. The Minyak live in the shadow of the mighty 7,556-metre (24,783 ft.) Gongga Mountain (*Minya Konka* in Tibetan). The region was first described in 1930 by explorer Joseph Rock: 'A scenic wonder of

the world, this region is 45 days from the nearest railhead. For centuries it may remain a closed land, save to such privileged few as care to crawl like ants through its canyons of tropical heat and up its glaciers and passes in blinding snowstorms, carrying their food with them.'<sup>2</sup>

The Minyak have been described as a 'peaceful, sedentary Tibetan tribe, a most inoffensive, obliging, happy-go-lucky people'.<sup>3</sup> Most of the members of this group call themselves Minyak or Muya, except for those living in Kangding and the Tanggu area of Jiulong County, who call themselves Buoba.

The Minyak language is part of the Qiangic linguistic branch.<sup>4</sup> It has two dialects, Eastern and Western Minyak, which reportedly have significant differences.<sup>5</sup> The Minyak were once part of the now extinct Chiala Tibetan Kingdom in western Sichuan. Ancient *tianlu*, or stone defense towers, still stand in dilapidated condition at strategic locations along the mountain ridges. The Minyak may be descended from survivors of the destruction of Minyak (in

present-day Ningxia) by Genghis Khan in 1227. One source states, 'Their culture is essentially Tibetan, with a few local differences. When a [Minyak] boy wants to get married, he takes a wine bottle with a ceremonial scarf tied around it to the house of the girl's parents. He pours them a cup of wine and they drink the cup if they approve of the marriage. . . . When it comes time for the wedding, the boy takes friends to ride

horses to the girl's home. The boy must pass three tests at the wedding, and everyone dances all night.'<sup>6</sup>

All Minyak adhere to Tibetan Buddhism. They observe Tibetan festivals and make pilgrimages to Buddhist holy sites. When the Minyak die, 'they are buried with prayer flags to help them make it past the demons, which they will encounter soon after death'.<sup>7</sup>

Although there are presently no known Christians among the Minyak, the China Inland Mission did have a station in Tatsienlu (now Kangding), on the edge of Minyak territory. The mission closed when the missionaries were forced to leave China in the early 1950s. When the explorer Joseph Rock first entered the Minyak region he was besieged for medicine—a sure sign that missionaries had been there before him. 'Whenever we came to a village, the peasants would gather about us and with folded hands would beseech me to dispense medicine to sick relatives.'<sup>8</sup> The Minyak today have no awareness of Jesus Christ. They are ignorant of Christianity, living and dying 'without the slightest knowledge of the outside world'.<sup>9</sup>



China Advocate



**Population:**  
20,900 (2000)  
25,750 (2010)  
31,700 (2020)  
**Countries:** China  
**Buddhism:** Tibetan  
**Christians:** none known

## Overview of the Minyak

**Other Names:** Muya, Minya, Munya, Miyao, Muyak, Minya Tibetans, Buoba

**Population Sources:**  
15,000 in China (1983, Sun Hongkai)

**Language:** Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Tangut-Qiang, Qiangic

**Dialects:** 2 (Eastern Minyak, Western Minyak)

**Professing Buddhists:** 100%

**Practising Buddhists:** 65%

**Christians:** 0%

**Scripture:** none

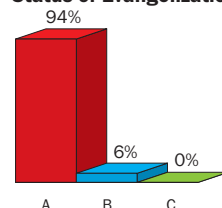
**Jesus film:** none

**Gospel Recordings:** none

**Christian Broadcasting:** none

**ROPAL code:** MVM

## 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