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Location: Approximately 27,000 Mongols live in the southern part of Sichuan Province. 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, northeast of Lugu Lake.

Identity: The Sichuan Mongols are officially counted as part of the Mongolian nationality in China. They are a distinct ethnolinguistic group, however, from all other Mongolian peoples.¹ They call themselves *Mongols* and possess their own clothing, history and language. All other peoples in the region recognize them as *Mengzu* (Mongols).

Language: Little research has been done regarding the language of the Sichuan Mongols. In the seven

centuries since their arrival to the area, their speech has been heavily influenced by neighboring peoples. 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.”² The Mongol prince could “pick out a few words” of a Mongolian cassette played for him.³

History: 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.”⁴ Rock adds, “When the great Mongol Emperor marched through the territory about Youngning, 1253 AD, he left one of his relatives to rule the Hlihin tribesmen.”⁵ 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.”⁶ 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.

Customs: Most Sichuan Mongols are farmers or fishermen, leading quiet lives in their remote villages. They observe Buddhist festivals, “hoping some day their kingdom will be restored to them.”⁷

Religion: Tibetan Buddhism — also known as Lamaism — is the 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.

Christianity: 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.⁸ The Sichuan Mongols are surrounded by unreached people groups on every side; therefore, there are no Christian communities nearby who could reach them. Gospel radio

broadcasts in Mandarin have had little effect because few understand Chinese.



Population in China:
 21,033 (1990)
 27,100 (2000)
 35,000 (2010)
Location: Sichuan, Yunnan
Religion: Tibetan Buddhism
Christians: 5

Overview of the Sichuan Mongols

Countries: China
Pronunciation: “Mong-gawls”
Other Names: Lugu Lake Mongols, Mongolians: Sichuan, Hlihin, Hli-khin
Population Source: 21,033 (1990 census); Out of a total Mongol population of 4,806,849 (1990 census)
Location: S *Sichuan:* Yanyuan (13,619) and Muli (7,414) counties; A few live in adjacent areas across the Yunnan border.
Status: Officially included under Mongolian
Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Unclassified
Dialects: 0
Religion: Tibetan Buddhism, Shamanism
Christians: 5
Scripture: None
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: None
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: None

