



**Population:**  
 18,060 (2000)  
 23,300 (2010)  
 28,700 (2020)  
**Countries:** China  
**Buddhism:** Tibetan  
**Christians:** none known

## Overview of the Luhua Qiang

**Other Names:** Chiang: Luhua, Chi'ang, Luhua

### Population Sources:

14,000 in China (1998, Liu Guangkun [1990 figure])

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

**Dialects:** 0

**Professing Buddhists:** 90%

**Practising Buddhists:** 30%

**Christians:** 0%

**Scripture:** none

**Jesus film:** none

**Gospel Recordings:** none

**Christian Broadcasting:** none

**ROPAL code:** CNG04

The Chinese linguist Liu Guangkun estimated a 1990 figure of 14,000 speakers of the Luhua Qiang language living in north-west Sichuan Province in western China.<sup>1</sup> The Luhua Qiang language is spoken in the Luhua, Shashiduo, Yangrong, Zegai, Ergulu and Zhuogedu districts of Heishui (Black Water) County in the Aba Prefecture. Heishui County had a total population of 58,000 in the 1990 census, of which 49,600 (85.5%) speak Qiang languages.

Although they belong to the officially-recognized Qiang nationality and speak Qiang, many of the Qiang in Heishui County call themselves Tibetans when speaking in Chinese but *Rma* in their own language.

Luhua Qiang is one of four distinct varieties of Northern Qiang in China. One researcher has noted, 'Although Qiang does not have a large population, their language is divided into many dialects, and they are not intelligible from one to another. Even worse, each village uses a different dialect. It is therefore very difficult to research.'<sup>2</sup>

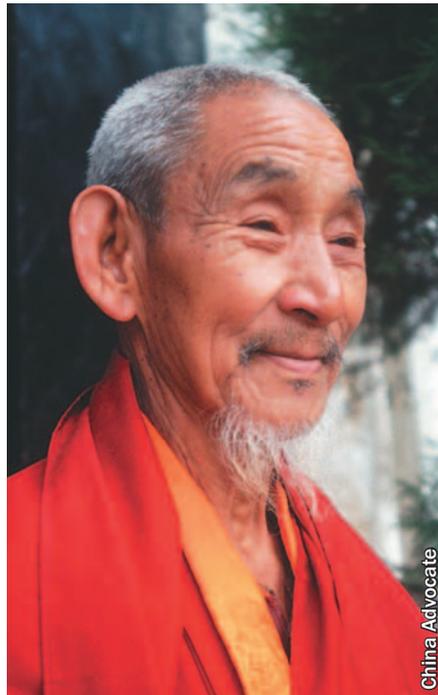
For a long period of time before 1949, the Qiang lived in primitive conditions. A feudal landlord economy dominated production. Many of these poor peasants eventually lost their land due to excessive and unfair taxation. They became hired labourers and wandered from place to place to make a living. Today's Luhua Qiang people grow corn, red peppers, potatoes, cabbages, beans and wheat. They also grow a fruit called *whadjou*. In their mud-brick homes they keep pigs, sheep, goats, chickens and some cattle.

Most Luhua Qiang have converted to Tibetan Buddhism under the influence of their Khampa Tibetan neighbours.

While outwardly they identify themselves as Buddhists, only a minority actively participate in Buddhist rituals. The ancient Qiang animistic religion is also present. White stones are not only representative of Qiang gods but are also a symbol of good fortune. Some Qiang believe that 'bringing a white stone into a house on New Year's Day will bring more property. So, when they visit a neighbour or relative . . . they present a white rock and shout "Property comes!" The host receives it carefully and then welcomes their blessing wholeheartedly by carefully placing it next to the ancestral

tablets or the image of a deity.'<sup>3</sup>

Foreign missionaries who worked in the Qiang region in the late 1800s recounted this fascinating story of a brief encounter with an unknown tribe: 'Years ago a deputation from Ngapa came . . . with a request for pith helmets, guns and Bibles. Their interest in the Gospel, like the order, seemed mixed, but . . . eleven years

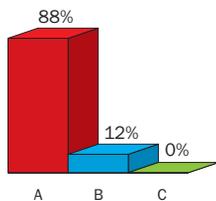


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later, the writer met a Prince from Ngapa who greedily bought up 500 [Scripture] portionettes. "No," [the Prince] said, "they are not for sale. My people are interested in this Gospel."<sup>4</sup>

This interesting story reflects the interest in the gospel that the Qiang people still have today. They are unreached not because they are resistant to the claims of Christ, but rather because few have ever been presented with the gospel in such a way that they could comprehend it and make an intelligent decision to accept or reject the Saviour.

## 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