

Qiang, Mawo



Population:

15,480 (2000)
19,950 (2010)
24,500 (2020)

Countries: China

Buddhism: Tibetan

Christians: none known

Overview of the Mawo Qiang

Other Names: Chiang; Mawo; Mawo

Population Sources:

12,000 in China (1998, Liu Guangkun [1990 figure])

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

Dialects: 0

Professing Buddhists: 95%

Practising Buddhists: 30%

Christians: 0%

Scripture: none

Jesus film: none

Gospel Recordings: none

Christian Broadcasting: none

ROPAL code: none

In 1990 there were 12,000 speakers of the Mawo Qiang language reported in China. They live wholly within the borders of Heishui County (in the districts of Mawo, Zhawo, Shuangliusuo, Xi'er, Hongyan and E'en) in north-western Sichuan Province.¹

The Mawo Qiang are one sub-group of the official Qiang nationality in China, which numbers approximately 240,000 people. Out of this total, however, only about 85,000 are Buddhists and the rest practise traditional animism mixed with Chinese religions. The Mawo Qiang are one of the northern Qiang language groups who are Tibetan Buddhists

due to their close proximity to the Tibetan people for many centuries. Some Qiang claim to be descended from sheep, hence the character for their name. (The upper radical of the Chinese character for Qiang defines 'sheep', the lower one 'son'.)

Mawo Qiang is one of four varieties of Northern Qiang spoken in Sichuan Province. It takes its name from Mawo District, which was the location chosen by scholars to study this language. Many Mawo Qiang are bilingual in Tibetan or multilingual in both Tibetan and the Sichuan dialect of Mandarin Chinese.

In the past, entire Qiang communities were wiped out because of plagues and disease. In recent years the government has given mass treatment for black fever and hookworm to the Qiang, which has greatly reduced the danger of these epidemics breaking out.

Qiang men and women typically wear homespun linen gowns with sheepskin vests called *guagua*. They wear their vests with the fur turned inward during cool weather and turned outward during rainy weather. Qiang women wear embroidered



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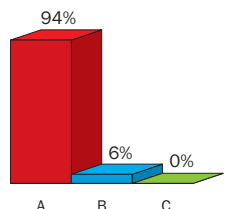
shoes called Yun Yun shoes. An old legend says that, long ago, a Han girl named Yun Yun enjoyed close friendship with her Qiang sisters and taught them spinning, weaving and embroidery. One day Yun Yun and her Qiang sisters went up a mountain to cut firewood and got caught in a storm; Yun Yun slipped

and fell into a deep valley, leaving behind only her embroidered shoes. In memory of Yun Yun the Qiang girls wear shoes patterned after hers and call them Yun Yun shoes. Unmarried girls often send their painstakingly embroidered shoes as gifts to the man they love. When they marry, they place several pairs in their dowry.²

One of the festivals celebrated by the Qiang is called *Zhuanshan* ('Mountain Circling'). In the past, villagers led an ox and carried food and wine up a mountain to sacrifice to the mountain gods. Monkeys, wild boars and rats, all made of paper, were set on fire to symbolize the destruction of the pests that devoured the Qiang's grain.

The Mawo Qiang are possibly the most unevangelized of the Qiang groups in China. Their language is very different from that of the Southern Qiang language groups, which contain most of the known Qiang believers.

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