



Population in China:
 77,000 (1987)
 100,200 (2000)
 123,400 (2010)
Location: Gansu, Sichuan
Religion: Tibetan Buddhism
Christians: 200

Overview of the Jone Tibetans

Countries: China

Pronunciation: “Joe-nee”

Other Names: Choni, Chona, Chone, Jone, Cone, Zhuoni Tibetan

Population Source:
 77,000 (1987 LAC);
 Out of a total Tibetan population of 4,593,330 (1990 census)

Location: *S Gansu:* In and around Jone and Lintan counties; Also in *N Sichuan*

Status:
 Officially included under Tibetan

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

Dialects: 0

Religion:
 Tibetan Buddhism, Christianity

Christians: 200

Scripture: None

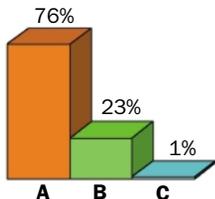
Jesus film: None

Gospel Recordings: None

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code:
 CDA00; TIC01; KHG06

Status of Evangelization



A = Have never heard the gospel
B = Were evangelized but did not become Christians
C = Are adherents to any form of Christianity

Location: Approximately 100,000 speakers of the Jone Tibetan language inhabit Jone County in the southwestern part of Gansu Province. A small number live in the adjacent parts of northern Sichuan. Some publications have incorrectly given their location as the “Yunnan-Tibet border.”¹

Their name was previously spelled *Choni*, and they still appear in many publications by that name. The To River flows through Jone County. One traveler described the location: “Nowhere else [in Gansu] are there such forests, and the scenery is unsurpassed.”²

Identity: Few have heard of the existence of the Jone Tibetans. In 1928 Joseph Rock wrote, “I — in common with some 300 million Chinese and perhaps as many foreigners — was totally unaware of the existence of the Choni [Jone].”³ Little has changed in the 70 years since then. Although they are now officially considered part of the Tibetan nationality, the Jone Tibetans speak their own language and possess their own ethnic and historical identity. The name *Jone* may be of Tibetan origin, meaning *Jo* “pine trees” and *nyi* “two.”

Language: The Jone language is related to Khampa Tibetan. Possible dialects or related languages in the area include Dpari, Rebkong, Wayen, and Horke.⁴

History: Jone was the site of an independent kingdom until 1928, when Chinese General Fengyu Shang stripped the prince of his title and confiscated his land.⁵ A detailed history of

the Jone appeared in a 1928 *National Geographic* article: “The prince represents the twenty-second generation, but is not of direct descent. His ancestors, a Tibetan official family, left their own country and made their way across [Sichuan] and the Min Shan Range... to the Tao River in 1404, conquering and pacifying the tribes and villages on the way. Upon informing the Imperial Court in Peking [Beijing] of their conquest of the territory for the Chinese Empire, they were made hereditary chiefs of Choni and the subjugated tribal lands. At the same time the Emperor, Yung Lo, gave them a seal and the Chinese name Yang.”⁶ Today many of Jone’s inhabitants are still surnamed Yang.⁷

Customs: In the past the Jone prince was selected by rules of succession. If a prince had two sons, the elder succeeded him, and the second became the lama of the monastery. If there was only one son, he

took both positions concurrently.⁸

Religion: Most Jone Tibetans are Tibetan Buddhists. Jone formerly contained a huge monastery, “containing 172 buildings and 3,800 monks at its zenith.”⁹

Christianity: A 1922 mission report stated, “The prince of Choni alone governs 48 clans and we can easily travel among these clans, as the prince is friendly and would protect us.... If we had the workers to employ we would press toward the west from the line we are now occupying.”¹⁰ Today there are about 200 Jone Tibetan believers in Lintan County, to the northwest of Jone County. A church was constructed in 1997 — the first ethnic Tibetan fellowship in Gansu Province. “One woman sold her hair, and another family sold their TV to help build the new church.”¹¹



Paul Hattaway