

Khampa, Southern

Much confusion surrounds the classification and population of the Southern Khampa, whom some researchers refer to as *Atuence* people. *Atuence* is the old name for the Tibetan town of Deqen in northern Yunnan Province. *Operation China* profiled this group as *Tibetan, Deqen*, but I refer to them as the Southern Khampa here in order to remain consistent with the naming of other Tibetan language groups in this book. Some sources list more

Buddhists, this group also has the largest number of professing Christians among any Tibetan group in the world. Three villages with a combined population of 600 people, located on the Tibetan side of the border, are Catholic.⁷ Another 700 Tibetans meet in a large Catholic church in Yanjing.⁸ The area was first evangelized by workers with the Paris Foreign Missionary Society, who constructed the church building in 1864.⁹ The mission lovingly reached out to people

all over the Tibetan world. In 1905, Tibetan lamas killed all of the French missionaries and the head of Father Dubernard was hung on the monastery



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than 500,000 *Atuence* speakers, but our research indicates that there are only around 95,000,¹ in addition to nine villages of Southern Khampa in the northernmost tip of Myanmar.² Formerly part of Tibet, the town of Deqen was annexed by the Chinese in 1703 and has since been a part of Yunnan Province.³ Tibetans had migrated south into the region many centuries earlier. The extreme north of Yunnan is an isolated, mountainous region with abundant rain and snowfall. Hot springs located throughout the region help the people alleviate their winter struggles.⁴

The language and many of the customs of the Southern Khampa are distinct from those of other Tibetan peoples.⁵ One Chinese scholar was 'surprised to find that the life and customs of the people of the Deqen Prefecture differ from those of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. Besides traditional Tibetan customs, they have developed quite a few of their own.'⁶

Although most Southern Khampa are

gate.¹⁰ The Chinese authorities responded by demolishing several Tibetan temples in the region. Around the same time, emissaries of the Dalai Lama were dispatched to a Christian village near Yanjing to order the people to renounce Christianity. They shot several Christian families in a field that is known as the 'Field of Blood' to this day. Instead of intimidating the believers, this cruel act solidified their faith and helped them to renounce Buddhism. The village has remained Christian ever since.

By 1922 there were reported to be 1,610 Tibetan Catholic converts in the area.¹¹ The Pentecostal Missionary Union commenced work in Deqen in 1912 but gained few converts. In recent years Lisu evangelists have been sent to the Deqen Tibetans and have disciplesd some Tibetans in the ways of Christ. According to a Tibetan Catholic priest, Lu Rendi, there are 6,500 Tibetan Catholics in south-east Tibet and at least a further 3,000 in neighbouring areas of Yunnan Province.¹²



Population:
96,800 (2000)
119,200 (2010)
146,900 (2020)
Countries: China, Myanmar
Buddhism: Tibetan
Christians: 7,500

Overview of the Southern Khampa

Other Names: Deqen Tibetan, Tibetan: Deqen, Atuentse, Atuence, Anshuenkun, Nyarong, Mekong Tibetan, Nganshuenkuan, Deqin Tibetan, Te'ch'i in Tibetan, Kangba, Khamba

Population Sources:

95,750 in China (2000, P Hattaway)
1,000 in Myanmar in 9 villages (2000, P Hattaway)

Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Himalayish, Tibeto-Kanauri, Tibetic, Tibetan, Northern

Dialects: 4 (Derong, Deqen, Gyalthang, Phyangphreng)

Professing Buddhists: 90%

Practising Buddhists: 75%

Christians: 7.7%

Scripture: Tibetan Bible 1948; New Testament 1885; Portions 1862

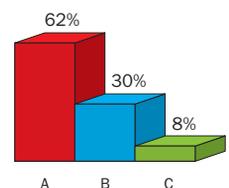
Jesus film: none

Gospel Recordings: Zang: Degin

Christian Broadcasting: none

ROPAL code: KHG02

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