

Location: Approximately 180,000 members of the Xibe nationality inhabit more than 25 counties within Liaoning Province in northeast China.¹ This figure does not include the 32,900 Western Xibe who live in Xinjiang on the opposite side of the country. They have been profiled separately.

Identity: The Xibe are one of China's official minority groups. Today, the Xibe are actually two distinct people groups living on opposite sides of China. Each group has formed its own language, culture, and customs. For mission purposes, there is no doubt that the two Xibe groups should be viewed as separate ethnolinguistic peoples. The name *Xibe* refers to the people's former custom of wearing an animal-shaped leather hook.²

Language: Spoken Xibe is considered to be colloquial Manchu and is a part of the so-called Tungus branch of the Altaic language family. Today most Xibe in northeast China speak Mandarin Chinese as their mother tongue. According to Xibe folklore, they once had their own written script, but no record of its existence has ever been found. Today the Xibe use a borrowed script — a reformed Manchu orthography.

History: Xibe history dates back to at least AD 400. Some historians believe they are descended from the ancient Xianbei tribe. Indeed, most Xibe today regard the Xianbei as their ancestors. Historical accounts often mention features of blond hair and blue-green

eyes among the Xibe.³ One visitor said, "One can still find some Xibe with these features in... Fuyu County in the northeast."⁴ Between 1690 and 1701, the Qing government moved large numbers of Xibe soldiers and civilians to Beijing, Shengjing, Kaiyuan, Jinzhou, and twenty other cities in Liaoning Province.⁵

Customs: Today most of the Xibe are culturally and linguistically indistinguishable from the Han Chinese. In the past the Xibe were divided into *hala* and *mokon*, common to all nationalities in the northeast. "A *hala* is a clan whose members all have the same surname. A *hala* consists of several *mokon*, localized kin groups... claiming common descent from a progenitor."⁶ Until recently Xibe homes consisted of at least three generations of family members living under the same roof.

Religion: Most Xibe are nonreligious in everyday matters, although elements of ancestor worship and polytheism remain evident. Every March the Xibe offer fish to their ancestors. In July they offer melons. Some of their gods include the Insect king, the Dragon king, the earth spirit, and the smallpox spirit. They pay special homage to *Xilimama*, the god who provides domestic tranquility, and *Haierkan*, the god who protects livestock.



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Christianity: Although overall they remain an unreached people group, in recent years a few Xibe churches have been established north of Shenyang. This is largely through the witness of neighboring Korean believers. There are at least 300,000 Protestants⁷ and 60,000 Catholics⁸ in Liaoning Province today. No Scriptures have ever been translated into the Xibe language, although in recent years Xibe gospel recordings were produced for the first time. Many Xibe now speak Mandarin as their first language and can be adequately evangelized in that language.



Population in China:
139,950 (1990)
180,500 (2000)
232,900 (2010)
Location: Liaoning
Religion: No Religion
Christians: 400

Overview of the Xibe

Countries: China
Pronunciation: "Shee-ba"

Other Names:
Xibo, Sibō, Shibe, Sibin

Population Source:
172,847 (1990 census);⁹
83,629 (1982 census);
33,438 (1964 census);
19,022 (1953 census)

Location: *Liaoning:* Shenyang, Kaiyuan, Yixian, Wafangdian City, Fengcheng, and Fuyu counties

Status:
An official minority of China

Language: Altaic, Tungus, Southern Tungus, Southwest

Literacy: 88%

Dialects: 0

Religion: No Religion, Ancestor Worship, Shamanism, Polytheism

Christians: 400

Scripture: None

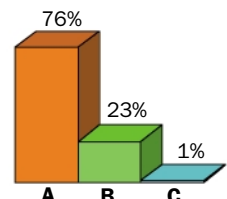
Jesus film: None

Gospel Recordings:
Xibe #04943

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: SJ000

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