



**Population in China:**  
 30,000 (1987)  
 39,800 (2000)  
 49,800 (2010)  
**Location:** Qinghai  
**Religion:** Tibetan Buddhism  
**Christians:** None Known

## Overview of the Mongour

**Countries:** China

**Pronunciation:** "Mong-gore"

**Other Names:** Mongour, Mongor, Mnguor, Mongou, Minhe Tu

**Population Source:**  
 30,000 (1987 LAC);  
 Out of a total Tu population of 191,624 (1990 census)

**Location:** *E Qinghai:* Minhe County

**Status:**  
 Officially included under Tu

**Language:** Altaic, Mongolian, Eastern Mongolian, Mongour

**Dialects:** 0

**Religion:** Tibetan Buddhism, Shamanism, Daoism

**Christians:** None known

**Scripture:** None

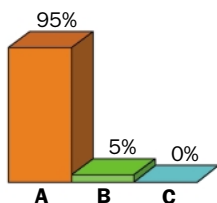
**Jesus film:** None

**Gospel Recordings:**  
 Tu, Minhe #04946

**Christian Broadcasting:** None

**ROPAL code:** MJG02

### 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:** Thirty thousand speakers of the Mongour language were reported in a 1987 study.<sup>1</sup> They primarily inhabit Minhe County in the eastern part of Qinghai Province. Minhe, formerly known as *Shangchuankou*, lies on the Huang Shui River. Minhe is situated east of the provincial capital Xining, a considerable distance from Huzhu County where the majority of the Tu people live.

**Identity:** Although the Mongour have been officially included as part of the Tu nationality, they speak a very different language and possess a separate identity from the Tu in other locations. As one researcher explains, "The Tu call themselves Mongol, except those living in Minhe, who form a minority, where the word is pronounced *Mongour*. This term has mistakenly been used by some Western scholars as the general name for all Tu."<sup>2</sup>

**Language:** The speakers of Mongour cannot communicate with other Tu in their own language and must revert to Chinese to be understood. "Differences [between Tu and Mongour] are mainly phonological, but there are also lexical and grammatical differences."<sup>3</sup> While Tu has many loanwords from Tibetan, Mongour contains numerous loanwords from Chinese. Mongour is considered "the most divergent Mongolian language of all."<sup>4</sup>

**History:** When the ancestors of today's Tu and Mongour people first came to Qinghai, the area was occupied by Tibetans, Uyghurs, and a group called

the Shato. By the late 1300s, the Tu had divided into 16 clans. Eight clans were called *Tu* (White Mongol), five *Shato*, one *Black Mongol*, one *Turkish* (Uyghur), and one Chinese.<sup>5</sup>

**Customs:** The Mongour have several unique marriage customs. One is called "marriage to the pole" by which a girl stays with her family and takes in lovers. Any children born to her take her family's name. Another is the "marriage to the girdle" where a Mongour girl sleeps with a guest, who upon departure leaves his girdle behind. In case the girl becomes pregnant, she would be "married to the girdle."<sup>6</sup> During child delivery, the mother and baby stay confined to a room for one month. Men are barred from entry; only the closest female relatives are allowed to enter.

**Religion:** Two types of shamans are active among

the Mongour. "White shamans" are used to heal sickness, while "black shamans" bring vengeance on enemies. Another highly regarded religious figure is the *kurtain*. This is a person who allows himself to be possessed by an evil Daoist spirit.

**Christianity:** By the 1920s Catholic missionaries were active in the Mongour region, but no church remains today. Although most Mongour can read, there are no Scriptures available in their language. Missionary Frank Laubach issued a warning to the Church in the 1930s: "Millions in China will soon be reading. Are we going to give them reading matter? Will they be flooded with the message of Christ or with atheism? Will they read love or hate? This is the most stupendous, most arresting, most ominous fact, perhaps on this planet."<sup>7</sup>



Revival Christian Church