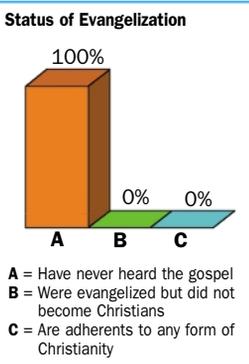




**Population in China:**  
 35,000 (1998)  
 37,000 (2000)  
 47,700 (2010)  
**Location:** Qinghai  
**Religion:** Tibetan Buddhism  
**Christians:** None Known

## Overview of the Sogwo Arig

- Countries:** China
- Pronunciation:** "Sog-wo-Ah-rig"
- Other Names:** Sogwo Arik, Arig Tibetan, Alike, A-li-k'oa, Tatze
- Population Source:**  
 35,000 (1998 AMO);  
 Out of a total Mongol population of 4,806,849 (1990 census)
- Location:** SE Qinghai: Tongde and He'nan counties in Hainan Prefecture
- Status:** Officially included under Mongolian
- Language:** Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Bodic, Bodish, Tibetan, Northern Tibetan
- Dialects:** 0
- Religion:** Tibetan Buddhism, Shamanism, Bon
- Christians:** None known
- Scripture:** None
- Jesus film:** None
- Gospel Recordings:** None
- Christian Broadcasting:** None
- ROPAL code:** None



**Location:** Approximately 37,000 members of the Sogwo Arig tribe live in Tsanggar Gonpa, a district within Tongde County in the Hainan Golog Prefecture; and in parts of neighboring He'nan County.<sup>1</sup> Tongde lies to the east of the Yellow River in Qinghai Province. The Qinghai Plateau — at a minimum elevation of 3,500 meters (11,500 ft.) above sea level — is snowbound nine months of the year, and turns into a muddy bog the other three months. The area is home to the *Darakar Tredzong* (White Monkey Fortress), considered one of the three most sacred sites in all of the Amdo Tibetan areas.

**Identity:** The Sogwo Arig are a Mongolian tribe living in the midst of countless small Tibetan clans in one of the most remote locations in the world. Over the course of many centuries, the Sogwo Arig language and culture have gradually assimilated to the Tibetan. Still today, however, Tibetans in the area know the Sogwo Arig are of Mongol ancestry and view them as a separate people.<sup>2</sup>

**Language:** The Sogwo Arig language has become practically extinct during the course of the twentieth century. Today the Sogwo Arig speak the Amdo Hbrogpa Tibetan language, but they still retain various words in their vocabulary that show their Mongolian ancestry.

**History:** The Sogwo Arig claim to have been the Mongol rulers of Hunan Province. This fact was discovered by a surprised French explorer in 1906, when the Sogwo Arig prince

signed a letter with the title of "King of Hunan." Vicomte d'Ollone explains, "When the Mongols were expelled from China, the dynasty of the kings of Ho-Nan [Hunan] — kings without a kingdom — retired to their steppes; and when in their turn the Manchus seized the empire [1644] they utilized the Mongols for the purpose of holding the Tibetans in check, for which reason a horde was sent to establish itself in this region."<sup>3</sup> The Sogwo Arig continued to have a succession of kings until the 1950s, when the Communist authorities stripped the Sogwo Arig royal family of its authority, at least as far as appearances are concerned.

**Customs:** Today one of the few remaining Sogwo Arig cultural features is their Mongolian style of *yurt*. Sogwo Arig men will not leave their homes without

being armed with their rifle. When they go on hunting expeditions, they take wooden tripods for resting their weapons on when firing.

**Religion:** All Sogwo Arig are followers of either Tibetan Buddhism or Bon. They worship at crude sacrificial altars, constructed of yak dung piled about three feet high, upon which they regularly offer animal sacrifices to various gods and demons.

**Christianity:** Hidden away in communities virtually inaccessible to the outside world, the Sogwo Arig are untouched by Christianity. Intrepid evangelists will need to overcome severe weather, rugged terrain, linguistic and cultural barriers, and fierce packs of dogs which the Sogwo Arig have trained to attack strangers.



Paul Hattaway