

# Monpa, Medog

A 1987 study reported 5,000 speakers of Medog Monpa living in China.<sup>1</sup> The majority are located in Medog County in southern Tibet. A few are also found in the Dongjiu area of Linzhi County. All Monpa in Tibet are located within the vast Menyü Prefecture. One linguist states, 'The Medog Monpa live mainly in Medog County in Tibet as well as Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh. This is a very small group . . . with the majority in India, quite distinct linguistically from the [Tsangla].'<sup>2</sup> Cut off for most of the year due to snow and landslides, Medog was the last county in China to become accessible to land vehicles. In 1994 a road was built there for the first time. Medog contains many Bengali tigers and 40 species of other rare, protected animals.<sup>3</sup>

An unspecified number of Monpa people living in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, India, are believed to speak the same language as the Medog Monpa of Tibet. More research needs to be conducted to determine which of the several distinct Monpa groups in India correspond to this group. The Medog Monpa language has been influenced more by Tibetan than by the Tsangla language. Medog Monpa is not a tonal language, while Tsangla contains four tones. Many Medog Monpa are bilingual in Tibetan, and many can read the Tibetan script.<sup>4</sup>

Unlike some of the Tsangla, whom the Chinese authorities counted as part of the Tibetan nationality, it appears that all of the Medog Monpa have been counted as part of the Monpa nationality. The Medog Monpa became poverty stricken following the

implementation of a feudal system imposed on them by the Zhuba Geju faction in the 14th century. For generations they were effectively slaves of the Tibetans.

The Monpa are known for their hospitality. They have a great love for music, singing and dancing. 'Most of them are able to play the traditional bamboo flute, a short thick instrument with four finger holes. . . . Their silversmiths are skillful in designing bracelets, earrings, necklaces and other ornaments.'<sup>5</sup> At Monpa weddings, the bride's uncle is the most honoured guest. According to tradition, he 'finds fault in



everything, complaining the meat slices are too thick and the drinks too cheap. He bangs on the table with his fists, glowering angrily at everyone who passes. He behaves in this way to test the groom's family and observe their reactions.'<sup>6</sup> The majority of Monpa follow Tibetan Buddhism.

Some, however, still maintain their traditional beliefs in unseen gods, demons and ancestral spirits. Shamans and some Buddhist monks frequently use magic to cure the sick.

Most Medog Monpa are completely unaware that Christ came two millennia ago and died for their sin. No missionaries were allowed to work in this area of Tibet in the past. There is not a single known Christian fellowship or church within the entire Menyü Prefecture of Tibet.



**Population:**  
6,590 (2000)  
8,200 (2010)  
10,100 (2020)  
**Countries:** China, India  
**Buddhism:** Tibetan  
**Christians:** none known

## Overview of the Medog Monpa

**Other Names:** Cangluo Monba, Medog Monba, Canglo Monba, Northern Monba, Motuo Monba, Eastern Monba

### Population Sources:

5,000 in China (1987, *Language Atlas of China*) also in India

**Language:** Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Himalayish, Mahakiranti, Kiranti, Eastern

**Dialects:** 0

**Professing Buddhists:** 85%

**Practising Buddhists:** 35%

**Christians:** 0%

**Scripture:** none

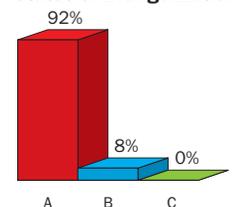
**Jesus film:** none

**Gospel Recordings:** none

**Christian Broadcasting:** none

**ROPAL code:** MOB

## 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