



## Quick Facts

**Population:** 5,500,000

China: 5,200,000

India: 150,000

Nepal: 135,000

Bhutan: 5,000

**Religion:** Tibetan Buddhism

**Believers:** 0.02%

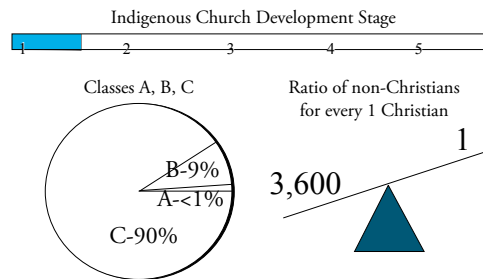
**Scriptures:** NT, OT

**Ministry Tools:** JRGT

**Church Status:** 2

**Mission Status:** 1

**MS Subgroups:** 70+



Class A- Are members of a Culturally Relevant Church  
 Class B- Have close access to a CRC, but have not yet joined  
 Class C- Have no reasonable or close access to a CRC

**Identity:** Genetic tests reveal that the Tibetans are related to the Mongolians, and linguistic tests demonstrate their language has similarities with Chinese. Tibetan nomadic bands have inhabited Tibet since at least the 2nd century B.C. In the 7th century A.D., the major clans were united under a warrior-king into a tribal federation, which developed into a powerful empire with a dynastic ruling family.

**Lifestyle:** Due to lack of arable land, the Tibetans primarily raise livestock for their livelihood. Centuries ago, the Tibetans domesticated the Yak, a large Himalayan bovine, which became central to their traditional economy. The Tibetans depend on Yaks for caravan transporting, as well as for milk, fiber, and meat, though the latter is preferably obtained from wild Yaks, which are much larger than the domestic variety.

**Customs:** The Tibetans practice what anthropologists call a “sky funeral.”

After the dead body is prayed over for seven days, it is taken to a high place to be eaten by vultures. This is based on the belief that vultures will carry the person’s spirit into heaven. If the vultures don’t eat the body, or not enough of it, the spirit will descend into hell.

**Religion:** The first Buddhist monastery in Tibet was established in the 8th century A.D. by an Indian monk named Padmasambhava. He introduced Tantric Buddhism, which involves controlling the body with one’s mind through various techniques to achieve enlightenment. The Tibetans combined his teachings with their ancient religion called Bon—a shamanistic tradition which still survives today with its own sacred specialists. Central to the practice of Bon is its use of sound, such as “singing bowls,” to achieve impact in the spiritual realms.

**Christian Outreach:** In the early 20th century, opposition to the gospel by the Dalai Lama (chief Tibetan Bud-

dhist monk) resulted in the massacre of an entire missionary team and many believers. Following the Chinese conquest, missionaries have been able to work among the Tibetans with considerable less persecution and several small fellowships have been established, including one in the once “forbidden city” of Lhasa.

## How to Pray:

✞ Praise God for the recent efforts of cross-cultural missionaries from the Lisu tribe in China who have led many Tibetans to Christ. Pray for continued outreach, and sensitivity to Tibetan culture and social etiquette.

✞ Most Tibetan believers are in Nepal and India. Pray for their discipleship and commissioning as evangelists to their families, clans and tribes in Tibet.

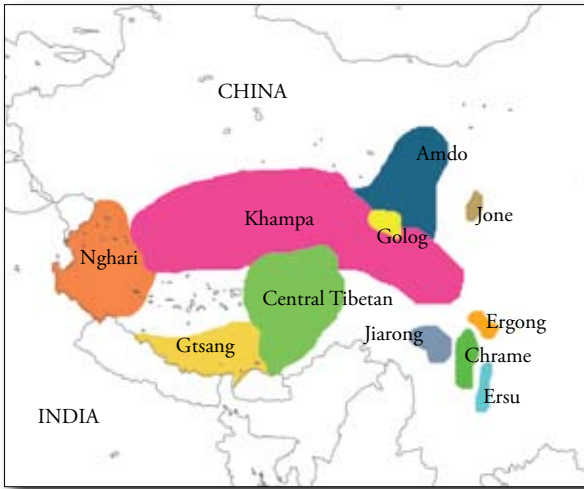
✞ Pray for spiritual breakthrough in the heart of every monk (over 45,000 in 1,780 monasteries), especially the Dalai Lama, who once called Jesus the “greatest Buddha who ever lived.” Pray that he may know him as Lord, Savior and Coming King.

✞ Tibetans have made national blood covenants with demons. Pray for deliverance in the power of Jesus name!

**Every year 50,000  
 Tibetans die  
 without Christ.**

# Tibetan (cont.)

## LEAST REACHED TIBETAN SUB-GROUPS



Sub-Group	Population	% Chr
Khampa	1,600,000	0.025%
Amdo	1,100,000	0.009%
Central Tibetan	850,000	0.005%
Gtsang	650,000	0.003%
Jiarong	200,000	0.00%
Golog	150,000	0.006%
Jone	115,000	0.17%
Nghari	55,000	0.00%
Ergong	55,000	0.00%
Chrame	45,000	0.00%
Ersu	31,000	0.00%

### KHAMPA

The Khampa occupy a large stretch of territory, cutting across Central Tibet and extending into eastern Sichuan province. They are regarded as the fiercest and most aggressive of the Tibetan peoples, and in the past they routinely terrorized their tribal cousins. In 1720 the Chinese annexed “Kham province” and incorporated it with Sichuan province. Since that time the Kham have offered fierce resistance to Chinese occupation, culminating in the 1955 massacre of 3,000 monks and farmers at Litang Monastery. Some Khampa clans continue to practice a nomadic lifestyle on mountain plateaus that can range as high as 17,000 feet. Among these nomadic groups there are no known believers and no history of long-term missionary outreach.

### AMDO

Of the major Tibetan tribes, the Amdo live the furthest north, occupying a good portion of eastern Qinghai province (north of Tibet and Sichuan). There are several large subgroups among them, the largest of which is known as the *Hbrogapa*, or nomadic herdsmen. The Amdo suffered greatly at the hands of the communist Chinese, with as many as 170,000 (20% of the population) perishing from war and starvation between 1950 and 1980. Though the fighting has ceased, the Amdo continue their struggle to protect their nomadic way of life against pressure from the Chinese government, as well as the persistent influences of industrialization in Western China. A breakthrough for the gospel among a Amdo village in Gansu province over twenty years ago, though promising at the time, has yet to see any impact beyond this isolated area.

### JJARONG

The origin of the Jiarong tribes is unknown, but the predominant theory is that they are migrants from the Qiang nationality that began to assimilate to Tibetan culture and religion. Though historically looked down upon by most Tibetan tribes, today they are considered an important ally in the “Tibetan cause.” Five mutually unintelligible Jiarong dialects have been classified, the largest of which is called Situ, with about 180,000 speakers. Situ is considered a bridge dialect between Tibetan and Burmese.

### GOLOG

The Golog are the most isolated of all Tibetan peoples and inhabit a region that is essentially beyond the reach of the Chinese government. They are the descendants of 7th century Tibetan warriors assigned to guard Tibet’s northern frontier from Chinese invasion. Thousands died in the last half century resisting the Communists. Eventually they retreated into the high mountains, and remain defiant to this day of Chinese occupation.