Monba, Cona

Overview of the Cona Monba

Countries: Bhutan, China, India
Pronunciation: “Co-nah-Mon-bah”
Other Names: Tsangla, Sangla, Tshangla, Cuona Monba, Mutou Monba, Central Monba, Moinba, Menba, Monpa, Mompa, Momba, Mempa, Memba, Southern Monba
Location: Southern Cona
Religion: Tibetan Buddhism
Christians: None Known

Population in China:
30,000 (1987)
34,850 (2000)
43,400 (2010)

Language:
Officially included under Monba
Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Bodic, Eastern Bodic Himalayan, Kiranti, Eastern

Dialects (2):
Northern Cona, Southern Cona

Religion:
Tibetan Buddhism, Shamanism, Polytheism, Animism

Christians: None known

Scripture: None

Jesus film: None

Gospel Recordings:
Bhutanese Tsangla #00595

Christian Broadcasting:
Available in Bhutan (FEBC)

ROPAL code: TSJ00 and MOB02

History:
Nearly three centuries ago the Monba people migrated across the Himalayas from the Moinyu area to southeast Tibet. Numerous Monba speakers today still live within the borders of India. Until 1959 the Monba were oppressed serfs of the Tibetans. They had to ask permission from the Tibetans even just to make a journey.

Customs:
The Monba are the only minority group in China to practice “river burial,” by which a corpse is cut into 108 pieces and hurled into a rushing river to be washed away. The Tibetans consider this to be the lowest form of burial and only use it for children and lepers. Some Monba practice Tibetan bird burials. The number 20 is the basic counting unit of the Monba. Thus, 67 becomes three twenties plus seven, and so on. Monba silversmiths are renowned for their skill in making intricate jewelry and ornaments.

Religion:
Although most Monba are outwardly Tibetan Buddhists, the majority continue to practice numerous shamanistic and polytheistic rituals. The Monba believe all disease is caused by demons. They feel they are forced to sacrifice their valuable cattle and horses in order to pacify these angry demons and cause the affliction to cease. They also believe humans can be demons who cause sickness. A boy or girl who marries into a “demon family” too becomes a demon. Therefore “demon families” are allowed to intermarry only.

Christianity:
The Monba are one of the most unreached and inaccessible people groups in all of China. They have no knowledge of the gospel. Few Christians have ever prayed for them. Foreigners are not permitted to enter their region from either the Tibetan or the southern side of the border. There are currently shortwave gospel radio broadcasts in the Tsangla language of Bhutan which perhaps can be heard and understood by the Cona Monba. In 1996 several Bhutanese Christians crossed into Tibet for the purpose of evangelism.