



Population in China:

- 1,600 (1993)
- 2,060 (2000)
- 2,660 (2010)

Location: Inner Mongolia

Religion: Shamanism

Christians: 100

Overview of the Tungus Ewenki

Countries:

China, Mongolia, Russia

Pronunciation:

“Tuun-giss-E-wen-ee”

Other Names: Tungus, Ewenki;

Chenbaehru, Tungus Evenk, Tunguz, Tongoose, Khamnigan, Khamnigan Ewenki, Khamnigan Ewenki, Khamnigan Tungus, Horse Tungus, Tonggusi

Population Source:

1,600 (1993 J. Janhunen); Out of a total Ewenki population of 26,315 (1990 census); Also in Mongolia and Russia

Location: NE Inner Mongolia;

Chenbaehru Banner

Status:

Officially included under Ewenki

Language: Altaic, Tungus,

Northern Tungus, Ewenki

Dialects: 0

Religion: Shamanism,

Tibetan Buddhism, Christianity

Christians: 100

Scripture: None

Jesus film: None

Gospel Recordings: None

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: EVN03

Location: Approximately 2,000 Tungus Ewenki live in the northeastern part of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in China.¹

Considering their modest numbers, the Tungus Ewenki inhabit a large area in the Onin-Argun region of the Chenbaehru Banner. Their location is immediately to the south of the Yakut people. The climate in this part of China is severe. Summer is very short, usually lasting no more than eight to ten weeks. The icy winds from Siberia soon start to blow, forcing the Tungus Ewenki inside their yurt-like homes.

Identity: The Tungus Ewenki — also known as the *Khamnigan Ewenki* — are one of four people groups combined to form the official Ewenki nationality in China. Each group speaks a different language and has varying customs. It is believed that the Ewenki were originally tribes or clans in Russia who migrated into China at different times 300 to 400 years ago.

Language: Approximately 1,000 of the 1,600 Tungus Ewenki are able to speak their language.² One scholar describes the language as “endangered in China and possibly extinct in Mongolia and Russia.”³ For now, it is still spoken in the homes of two-thirds of Tungus Ewenki children, most of whom can also speak the local variety of Mongolian and Chinese.

History: The forefathers of the Ewenki lived in the forests north and east of Lake Baikal in Siberia and along the upper reaches of the Heilong River. They had a close relationship with the

Northern Shiweis during the Northern Wei Dynasty (AD 386–534) and the *Ju* tribe at the time of the Tang Dynasty (618–907). “In the mid-1600s, aggression by Tsarist Russia led the Qing government in China to move the Ewenkis to the area around the tributaries of the Nenjiang River in the Hinggan Mountains. In 1732, 1,600 Ewenki soldiers and their dependents were moved to the Hulunbuir grasslands.”⁴

Customs: The Tungus Ewenki live in *nimor*, or clans, which are groups of three to ten blood families. Some Tungus Ewenki live deep within the forests. Others have chosen to live on the grasslands where they have been influenced by Mongolian culture.

Religion: Many of the Tungus Ewenki who have experienced prolonged

interaction with Mongolians have been converted to Tibetan Buddhism. The remainder practice shamanism, an ancient form of witchcraft and spiritism. The Tungus are also the only Ewenki group in China known to contain Christians.

Christianity: Various sources agree that there are approximately 100 Ewenki Christians in Chenbaehru.⁵ The Tungus Ewenki believers are members of the Eastern Orthodox Church. However, “because of the profound influence of Shamanism, they worship the statue of Jesus and other idols together.... Priests of the Eastern Orthodox Church also participate in the religious activities of the Ewenkis.”⁶ Although the four Gospels were translated into Ewenki in Russia in 1995,⁷ the Chinese Ewenki cannot read the script and have no Scriptures available to them.



Dwayne Graybill

