



**Population in China:**  
 10,000 (1984)  
 13,700 (2000)  
 16,900 (2010)  
**Location:** Gansu, Sichuan  
**Religion:** Animism  
**Christians:** None Known

## Overview of the Baima

**Countries:** China

**Pronunciation:** “Bai-ma”

**Other Names:** Di, White Horse Tibetans, Pe, Pingwu Tibetans

**Population Source:**  
 10,000 (1984 Wong How-Man);  
 Out of a total Tibetan population  
 of 4,593,330 (1990 census)

**Location:**  
 SW Gansu: Wenxian County along  
 the Baimajiang Valley, 25km  
 southwest of Wenxian Township;  
 N Sichuan: Nanping, Pingwu, and  
 Wenchuan counties

**Status:**  
 Officially included under Tibetan

**Language:** Sino-Tibetan,  
 Tibeto-Burman, Bodic,  
 Unclassified

**Dialects:** 0

**Religion:** Animism, Shamanism

**Christians:** None known

**Scripture:** None

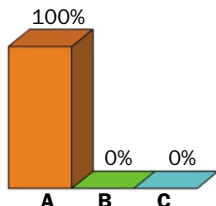
**Jesus film:** None

**Gospel Recordings:** None

**Christian Broadcasting:** None

**ROPAL code:** BQH00

### Status of Evangelization



**A** = Have never heard the gospel  
**B** = Were evangelized but did not become Christians  
**C** = Are adherents to any form of Christianity



Midge Conner

**Location:** Approximately 13,700 Baima people live in 14 villages along the Baima (White Horse) Valley, on both sides of the Sichuan-Gansu provincial border. Several recent publications have claimed a Baima population of 110,000, but such a high figure is incorrect.<sup>1</sup> Baima villages are accessible from the town of Wenxian in Gansu Province — 32 kilometers (20 mi.) away.

**Identity:** The Baima have been counted as part of the Tibetan nationality, but they are clearly a distinct ethnic group who have little to do with Tibetans. They speak their own language, wear their own distinct dress, proudly maintain their own traditions and culture; and perhaps most conclusively of all, they have never been followers of Tibetan Buddhism.

**Language:** The Baima language — which has four tones — is an unclassified member of the Bodic linguistic group. It borrows words from both the Chinese and Tibetan languages. One linguist describes Baima as containing “certain lexical characteristics of the ancient Tibetan language.”<sup>2</sup>

**History:** The Baima claim to be descendants of the ancient Di tribe. Chinese records from AD 551 mention that “The Di... are also called Baima.”<sup>3</sup> One

historian states, “The Baima tribe was the largest tribe of the Di nationality, which lived in Gansu, Sichuan and Shaanxi during the Three Kingdoms Period (AD 220–265).”<sup>4</sup> During the Western Zhou Dynasty (1100–771 BC), considerable numbers of Han Chinese migrated to Gansu to live in mixed communities with the Di.<sup>5</sup> Other groups over the course of history — including one Miao clan more than 2,000 years ago — were banished to the remote mountains where the Baima live today. They may have contributed to the current ethnic makeup of the people groups in the region.<sup>6</sup>

**Customs:** Before marriage Baima youth are allowed to be sexually active, but once married, fidelity is stressed and divorce is considered a disgrace. After they are married, Baima women wear fishbone necklaces and hats made of goatskin and chicken feathers. The Baima live near the home of China’s giant pandas.<sup>7</sup>

**Religion:** The Baima regard *Lord White Horse* as the greatest of all gods. Baima tombs are topped with small colorful flags, nine flags for a deceased male and seven for a female. It is said that these flags will lead the souls of the dead into heaven. The Baima also regard the rooster as one of their protective gods. They say that at one time enemy troops were preparing to attack a Baima village in the middle of the night. A rooster crowed loudly and woke up the villagers who were then able to repel the attack.<sup>8</sup>

**Christianity:** The Baima have never been exposed to the gospel. Their cultural, linguistic, and geographic isolation has blocked them off from the rest of the world. Even Chinese gospel radio broadcasts are unable to penetrate the high remote mountains. It is possible that not one individual among them has ever heard the gospel. The Baima are a good choice for a church or agency wanting to focus on a 100% untouched tribe.