



Population in China:
 17,900 (1999)
 18,350 (2000)
 23,000 (2010)
Location: Yunnan
Religion: Polytheism
Christians: 10

Overview of the Boka

Countries: China

Pronunciation: "Bo-kah"

Other Names: Baka

Population Source:
 17,900 (1999 J. Pelkey);
 Out of a total Yi population of
 6,572,173 (1990 census)

Location: S Yunnan: Pingbian
 County in Honghe Prefecture

Status:
 Officially included under Yi

Language: Sino-Tibetan,
 Tibeto-Burman, Burmese-Lolo,
 Lolo, Northern Lolo, Yi,
 Southern Yi

Dialects: 0

Religion: Polytheism, Animism,
 Ancestor Worship, Christianity

Christians: 10

Scripture: None

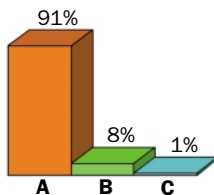
Jesus film: None

Gospel Recordings: None

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: None

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



Jamin Pelkey

Location: Researcher Jamin Pelkey estimated a 1999 population of 17,900 Boka people in southwest China.¹ They live totally within the Pingbian Miao Autonomous County in Honghe Prefecture of Yunnan Province.

Identity: The Boka are one of more than 100 distinct tribes and people groups that comprise the official Yi nationality in China. The Boka speak their own language which is not mutually intelligible to any of the Yi varieties in the area. They also possess their own unique dress, customs, and festivals.

Language: Boka belongs to the Southern Yi group of Tibeto-Burman. It has only 40% to 50% lexical similarity with Muji and less with Xiuba, two other Southern Yi languages in Pingbian County.²

History: The Boka appear to consist of people from more than one historical migration. Most Boka claim to have first arrived in the area after fleeing the chaos of war in Hunan Province more than 1,000 years ago. Their migration route took them through Wenshan Prefecture and into Honghe where they finally settled in Pingbian County. Some Boka people living near Pingbian Township, however, claim to have migrated from Guizhou and Sichuan

provinces only about 200 years ago.³

Customs: The Boka are skilled at making rice and corn whiskey, which they consume in copious quantities. As soon as a guest enters a Boka home, he or she is offered a bowl of powerful whiskey which the host clasps in two hands as a mark of respect for the guest. To refuse to drink the whiskey is considered a grave insult by the Boka, and a visitor may not be allowed to stay if they cannot offer a good excuse. The Boka have many superstitions relating to preparation of food and eating.

Religion: On certain occasions throughout the year, the polytheistic beliefs of the Boka come to the fore. The Boka set aside the 16th day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar to worship the dragon. Each village has a sacred tree on the outskirts of their village. They believe the tree is home to the spirit of the dragon. The entire village gathers around the tree to offer prayers, incense, and sacrifices. They plead with the dragon to protect them and cause them to prosper in the coming year, and to cause all calamities and disease to stay far from their communities. The Boka living in the northeast corner of Pingbian County "appease the dragon god by placing spicy whiskey on an altar beneath the dragon tree. They then take the whiskey and pour it into a basin in the altar. Having filled the basin they use a hollowed reed and take turns sucking the potent brew from the altar."⁴

Christianity: There are just a few Christians among the unreached Boka people. There are a large number of Catholic Hmong believers in Pingbian County, some of whom have contact and exchanges with believers in France. The only known Yi Christians in Pingbian are about 150 Puwa in Beihe District. They were led to faith in Christ by the Hmong Catholics. The Boka, however, have never been targeted by the gospel. They remain unevangelized and devoid of any Christian witness. There are also no Scriptures or gospel tools available in the Boka language.