

Jiarong, Guanyingqiao

More than 5,000 speakers of the Guanyingqiao Jiarong language live in the remote north-western part of Sichuan Province in China. According to linguist Jonathon Evans, 'The language is spoken along the tributaries of the Jinchuan River in the south-western tip of Ma'erkang (Barkam) County, north-western Jinchuan County, and south-eastern Zamtang County. It has been named Guanyingqiao after the district in Jinchuan County which is the focal point of the Guanyingqiao-speaking area.'¹ They share this area with Tibetans. Very few outsiders ever visit the Guanyingqiao area.

Although the Guanyingqiao Jiarong have officially been classified as members of the Tibetan nationality, they do not speak a language that is closely related to Tibetan and are known to have a different history, origin and customs. Whereas certain Chinese government experts were in favour of giving the Jiarong status as a distinct minority group, some Tibetan leaders are believed to have campaigned for their inclusion in the Tibetan nationality, fearing that the exclusion of the Jiarong would weaken the Tibetan cause.

Guanyingqiao Jiarong is a member of the Qiangic branch of the Tibeto-Burman language family. It is most closely related to Ergong and Shangzhai Jiarong. Despite their small population, studies indicate the existence of eight dialects within Guanyingqiao Jiarong. 'Representative local varieties of Guanyingqiao, some very

different, include Xiaoyili and Siyaowu in Zamtang County, Muerzong in Barkam County, Guanyingqiao, Ergali, Taiyanghe, Ere and Yelong in Jinchuan County.'²

Thousands of years ago, the various branches of the Jiarong in Sichuan were more closely related to the groups in today's Qiang nationality. The Jiarong, however, migrated into Tibetan areas and have been culturally assimilated to Tibetan ways.

Most Jiarong people embrace Tibetan Buddhism today. Polytheism (Bon) and shamanism are also practised among them.

The deities most feared by the Jiarong are the mountain gods, which they believe dwell inside large mountains and are responsible for most bad things that happen. 'The most important holy mountain for the Jiarong is Murduo Mountain in Danba County. The Jiarong, Ergong and other Tibetans worship this mountain, trying to appease the spirits and gain protection. The most important monastery is in Guanyingqiao, Jinchuan. The Jiarong take pilgrimages to holy

sites and are often seen spinning prayer wheels. Some families send their son to the monastery, both to get an education and as an offering.'³

The geographic remoteness of the Guanyingqiao Jiarong has separated them from gospel witness throughout their history. There are few roads in this sparsely populated part of China. Very few Han Chinese have settled in this part of Sichuan, except for government officials and some adventurous merchants. Few Guanyingqiao Jiarong have ever heard the name of Jesus Christ.



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Population:
5,110 (2000)
6,300 (2010)
7,750 (2020)
Countries: China
Buddhism: Tibetan
Christians: none known

Overview of the Guanyingqiao Jiarong

Other Names: Gyarong, Gyarung, Rgyarong, Chiarong, Jarong, Chiajung, Guanyingqiao

Population Sources:
5,110 (2000, P Hattaway)

Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Tangut-Qiang, Gyarong

Dialects: 8 (Xiaoyili, Siyaowu, Muerzong, Guanyingqiao, Ergali, Taiyanghe, Ere, Yelong)

Professing Buddhists: 90%

Practising Buddhists: 70%

Christians: 0%

Scripture: none

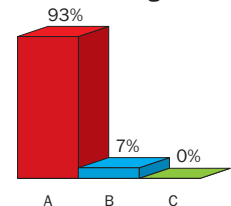
Jesus film: none

Gospel Recordings: none

Christian Broadcasting: none

ROPAL code: JIQ

Status of Evangelization



A = Have never heard the gospel
B = Have heard the gospel but have not become Christians
C = Are adherents to some form of Christianity