

Location: Approximately 5,500 Sidabao Jiarong live in an extremely remote and relatively widespread area of northwest Sichuan Province. “Most of its speakers live in the three townships of Caodeng, Kangshan and Ribu in the Sidabao District of Ma’erkang (Barkam) County, hence the language name Sidabao. Small outlying communities, however, exist both to the north in certain villages of Kehe and Rongan townships at the southwestern corner of Aba County, and, to the west, along the middle Doqu River between Wuyi and Shili townships in Zamtang County, spilling over even to a small area near the confluence of the Sertar and Doqu rivers in Sertar County. Exact population statistics of Sidabao are not available, but should run to several thousand.”¹

Identity: Although they have been officially included as part of the Tibetan nationality, Chinese scholars have considered the Jiarong distinct for several decades. In 1957 the Chinese Academy of Science listed a population of 70,000 Jiarong. One linguist notes, “The Jiarong... are within the cultural orbit of Tibetan Buddhism but speak distinct languages.”²

Language: Sidabao Jiarong is part of the Qiangic branch of Tibeto-Burman. There are two main dialects of Sidabao: Ribu and Caodeng. Ribu further divides into “several quite different local varieties, such as Shili in Zamtang County, Rongan in Aba

County, Ribu proper and Dawei in Barkam County.”³

History: One Chinese source claims the Jiarong “are a branch of Tibetans who moved in remote antiquity from Qungbu in Tibet to live in the Songpan Plateau of northern Sichuan.”⁴ Buddhism arrived in Tibet during the reign of King Songsten Gampo (c. AD 605–650). It officially replaced the Bon religion and gradually worked its way to the extremities of the Tibetan world, including the area inhabited by the Jiarong today.

Customs: The Jiarong are looked down upon by both the Chinese and the Tibetans. “Those Jiarong in the towns hold no more than low-level clerical jobs, as they are generally poorly educated.”⁵

Religion: There is a revival of the ancient Bon religion in recent years among the Jiarong. For the past 13 centuries, Buddhism has been something of a veneer on ancient Bon rituals. The spiritism and black magic, still prevalent in Tibetan Buddhism, stem from Bon.



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Christianity: The few attempts to evangelize the Jiarong in the past met with some success. In 1934 missionaries listed 34 Jiarong believers.⁶ Another book from the 1930s lists a number of Jiarong Christians, but presently there is no indication of any believers among them. “Social ostracism of possible converts, and persecution to the extent of the placing of severe curses by the lamas, or poisoning through family members, are other hindrances to spreading the Gospel.”⁷ There are no Scriptures, gospel recordings or other ministry tools available to help evangelize the Jiarong.



Population in China:
5,000 (1995)
5,580 (2000)
6,850 (2010)

Location: Sichuan
Religion: Tibetan Buddhism
Christians: None Known

Overview of the Sidabao Jiarong

Countries: China

Pronunciation:
“See-da-baow-Gee-ah-rong”

Other Names: Western Jyarung, Gyarong, Gyarung, Rgyarong, Chiarong, Jarong, Sidabao, Western Jiarong

Population Source:
5,000 (1995 AMO);
Out of a total Tibetan population of 4,593,330 (1990 census)

Location: NW Sichuan: Barkam, Aba, Zamtang, and Sertar counties

Status:

Officially included under Tibetan

Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Qiangic, Jiarong

Dialects (2): Caodeng, Ribu

Religion: Tibetan Buddhism, Bon, Polytheism

Christians: None known

Scripture: None

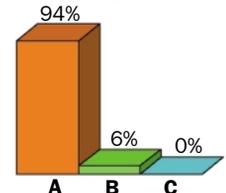
Jesus film: None

Gospel Recordings: None

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: JIWO0

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