



Population:
 161,550 (2000)
 199,550 (2010)
 245,800 (2020)
Countries: China
Buddhism: Tibetan
Christians: 2

Overview of the Situ Jiarong

Other Names: Eastern Jiarong, Eastern Jyarung, Gyarong, Gyarung, Rgyarong, Chiarong, Jarong, Chiajung, Situ

Population Sources:
 139,000 in China (1993, Lin Xiangron)

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

Dialects: 4 (Lixian, Jinchuan, Xiaojin, Barkam)

Professing Buddhists: 90%

Practising Buddhists: 65%

Christians: 0.01%

Scripture: none

Jesus film: none

Gospel Recordings: none

Christian Broadcasting: none

ROPAL code: JIR

A 1993 study listed a total of 139,000 Situ Jiarong people in Sichuan Province in western China.¹ The Situ Jiarong group is the dominant Jiarong group in China. The Situ, also known as the Eastern Jiarong, inhabit parts of Li, Wenchuan and Xiaojin counties in central Sichuan, as well as sections of Barkam (Ma'erkang) and Jinchuan counties. Many Situ Jiarong live in a V-shaped valley between the Zagunao River—which originates in the Zhegu Mountains—and the upper section of the Min River.

The name Situ 'refers to the traditional territory of the four chieftaincies of Zhuokeji, Suomo, Songgang and Dangba in the heartland of Jiarong country. The term is adopted since it is now a widely used local label for this language.'²

The several Jiarong groups in China have been officially counted under the Tibetan nationality. The Jiarong, however, speak their own distinct languages and believe that they are ethnically and historically different from the Tibetans. They have been listed as one of the people groups in China that 'need further investigation'.³

The classification of the Jiarong language has baffled Chinese scholars. One scholar reported, 'The languages of the Jiarong who live in Aba and Garze areas of Sichuan are a puzzle. Their language is different from Tibetan in terms of grammar, and akin to the Qiang and Pumi languages. They are considered the "language bridge" between Tibetan and Burmese.'⁴ Differences in the five Jiarong languages are great.

Situ Jiarong has only 55 per cent lexical similarity with Sidabao Jiarong and 75 per cent with Chabao Jiarong.⁵

Until 1949, the Jiarong were divided into 18 small kingdoms. They kept the Chinese military at bay for ten years during the 18th century. Today the majority of Situ Jiarong are farmers, herding livestock and growing crops along the river basins in central Sichuan. A number of urban Jiarong are merchants and shop owners.



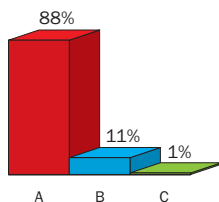
China Advocate

Most Jiarong are Tibetan Buddhists, but many have also adopted the polytheistic practices of the Qiang. Few have any awareness of Christianity. One source states, 'Compared to other Tibetan groups, the Jiarong are less antagonistic towards the Chinese. Living between the Tibetan and Chinese areas puts them in a great place to be reached by the Chinese.'⁶ The Jiarong were first evangelized in the early 1900s by

the American Baptists—who had a mission base at Ya'an—and by the Border Mission of the Church of Christ in China in the 1910s. One writer summarized their efforts: 'In the early half of this century some missionaries stationed in areas relatively close to the Jiarong took some trips into Jiarong territory. This led to the translation of some tracts. It was not until the 1930s that an effort to specifically learn and analyze the Jiarong language got underway. A draft translation of the book of Jonah was in progress when the invasion of the Red Army in 1936 made work impossible. All materials were lost in the war.'⁷

Today, just two Jiarong individuals are known to follow Jesus Christ. May they be the first fruits of a great harvest!

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