

Location: The Baihong “have a larger population” among the various Hani subgroups in China.¹ The Baihong live over a widespread area between Mojiang and Yuanjiang counties in southern Yunnan Province. Almost 200,000 Baihong live in villages that are “situated halfway up the mountain, shrouded by clouds and mists. Their houses are made of earthen walls and thatched roofs sloping down on four sides.”²

Identity: The Baihong are one of many people groups combined by the government to form the official Hani nationality in China. The Baihong were formerly named *Mahei* — which is the name they are still listed under in most mission publications today.³

Language: Baihong is one of at least five different Hani languages in Mojiang (Ink River) County alone.⁴ One visitor to the region “learned that there were around 14 different Hani dialect groups in just one area.”⁵ Most of these dialects are mutually unintelligible. Linguist David Bradley places the Baihong language in the Hao-Bai branch of the Tibeto-Burman language family and notes that fewer than 80,000 Baihong are still able to speak their language.⁶

History: The Baihong belong to a large historical group who are thought to have migrated from the Tibetan Plateau about 2,500 years ago. Legend says the ancestors of the Baihong, at that time numbering 7,000 households, “once lived on a vast fertile plain away in the east

where the sun rises.”⁷ The importance of preceding generations of Baihong is recognized by their saying, “With a strand of hair from each ancestor, one would have to hold nine handfuls of hair.”⁸

Customs: One visitor to the Baihong noted, “The dress of the women here is quite an unusual style. I saw a Baihong woman wearing short, tight pants and attached to her back was a piece of blue cloth about one foot long decorated with silver balls. As she moved, the cloth waved in the air, looking, when seen from a distance, for all the world like a tiny funny tail.”⁹ They call this “armor.” If armor is not worn by a Baihong woman she is considered indecent.

Religion: Because all Baihong youth have been educated in atheistic schools, most are not religious. Traditionally, however, the Baihong were animists. They believe spirits dwell in trees, water, mountains, and the sky. They believe that some of these spirits guard their villages, while others are bad spirits that bring disease and suffering. This has led to a complex set of superstitions and



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beliefs among the Baihong. For example, they are careful not to strike their hands together while washing because they do not want to offend the spirit of the water.

Christianity: Some Baihong have heard the gospel from the neighboring Kado and Biyo, whose languages are related to the Baihong. As a result, there are some Baihong Christians today. Other Baihong who live in remote communities have yet to be visited by evangelists. The believers among the Baihong have at times encountered severe persecution from the local authorities, who are eager to arrest the spread of Christianity in their areas. Gospel recordings were recently produced in the Baihong language for the first time.



Population in China:
150,000 (1987)
194,600 (2000)
239,200 (2010)
Location: Yunnan
Religion: Animism
Christians: 5,000

Overview of the Baihong

Countries: China
Pronunciation: “Bai-hong”
Other Names: Mahei, Mahe, Mabe, Pai-hung, Buku, Boo Koo
Population Source: 150,000 (1987 AMO); Out of a total Hani population of 1,253,952 (1990 census)
Location: S Yunnan: Between Mojiang County in Honghe Prefecture and Yuanjiang County in Yuxi Prefecture
Status: Officially included under Hani

Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Burmese-Lolo, Southern Lolo, Akha, Hao-Bai
Dialects (3): Mahei, Eshan, Woni
Religion: Animism, Polytheism, Christianity, No Religion
Christians: 5,000
Scripture: None
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: Hani: Bukong #04853
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: HOW01 (Baihong); MJA00 (Mahei)

