



Population in China:
 5,600 (1999)
 5,740 (2000)
 7,200 (2010)
Location: Yunnan
Religion: Animism
Christians: None Known

Overview of the Aling

Countries: China
Pronunciation: "Ah-ling"
Other Names:
 Alingpo, Gan Yi, Yiqing, Yiqin
Population Source:
 5,600 (1999 J. Pelkey);
 Out of a total Yi population of
 6,572,173 (1990 census)
Location: *Yunnan:* Shizong
 (3,000), Luliang (2,400), and
 Shilin (200) counties
Status:
 Officially included under Yi
Language: Sino-Tibetan,
 Tibeto-Burman, Burmese-Lolo,
 Lolo, Northern Lolo, Yi, Eastern Yi
Dialects: 0
Religion: Animism,
 Ancestor Worship, No Religion
Christians: None known
Scripture: None
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: None
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: None



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Location: A total of 5,600 ethnic Aling people live in Yunnan Province, China. The majority inhabit the villages of Yimai, Faze, Chezhai, Musheluo, Yinie, Qianjia, Shugandian, and Dashao within Shizong County. Some 2,400 Aling dwell in the Longhai Mountains of Luliang County, while just a few hundred more inhabit villages within the Guishan, Zhuqing, and Dake districts of Shilin County (formerly called Lunan County). In Shilin, the largest Aling concentration is found in Yumeidu Village of the Guishan District.¹

Identity: The Aling are one of many subgroups of the Yi nationality in southern China. They view themselves as a distinct people group with their own history and language. The Han Chinese call the Aling different names in different locations. In Luliang County they refer to the Aling as *Gan Yi* (Sweet Yi). In Shizong County they call them *Gan Yi* (Dry Yi) (Here a different Chinese character for *Gan* is used). In Shilin County the Aling are known as the *Yiqin* or *Yiqing*.

Language: The Aling language falls into the Eastern Yi group of Tibeto-Burman languages. It contains some similarities with Da Hei Neisu and Xiao Hei Neisu.

History: Very little is known about the history of the Aling. Few people have ever

heard of them. They no longer wear any traditional clothing that might visually distinguish them from other groups.

Customs: The Aling is one of many groups in the area who celebrate the annual Torch Festival. According to one visitor, "The first two days of the festival were fairly rough and ready, but on the third day the girls had a chance to compete against one another in the beauty contest. The scene for this event was a leveled piece of ground on a mountain slope. Early in the morning, the slope was already crowded with girls carrying their yellow oilcloth umbrellas, looking from a

distance like so many yellow blossoms on the grassland. I heard that girls from counties all around had set off for this contest two or three days before, making their way across mountains and rivers. The girls gathered together, formed circles and began a dance called *duoluohu*. The panel of judges consisted of elderly villagers. They shuttled about amidst the dancers trying to find suitable candidates. The first criterion was that she should be a Yi girl living in the countryside. The other criteria was simple: an oval face and a tall, slim figure."²

Religion: Although many Aling no longer consider themselves to be religious, traditionally the Aling were animists, worshipping a host of spirits and protective deities.

Christianity: The gospel has made no impact at all among the unreached Aling people group. They have never been targeted by missionaries or church planters. A 1922 mission report issued a challenge for workers to give their lives to reach the Yi, a challenge which still stands true today: "These aborigines are tall, strong, brave, keen, and clever, and some of them are extraordinarily anxious that missionaries should go and teach them. Whoever takes up this work needs to be courageous and to have plenty of grit. Such a one would become an uncrowned king."³

