

Location: Approximately 2,500 Apu people were counted in a recent study of the peoples of Honghe Prefecture in Yunnan Province.¹ They live in one small area: the western part of Maandi District within Jinping County. They may also spill across the border into northern Vietnam.

Identity: The Apu were only “discovered” in the past few years. Apart from the fact that they have been officially included as part of the Yi nationality by the Chinese government, little is known about the Apu.

Language: The Apu language has never been studied. It is part of the Lolo (Yi) branch of the Tibeto-Burman language family, but its genetic affiliation remains unclassified.

History: The Apu are one of 120 distinct tribes and groups of Yi in China that have been officially combined into the Yi nationality. This great number of groups is the result of war, migrations, and the threat of slavery over the course of many centuries. Conflict has caused small groups like the Apu to leave their homes and move away to more peaceful settings. After being isolated for generations, the Apu developed their own customs, identity, and dialect.

Customs: Yi groups in China celebrate weddings in various ways. An observer recounted how one ceremony took place “on a day chosen in consultation with a shaman for its

auspiciousness as determined by its conjunction with the couple’s birthdates and those of their parents. The men of the groom’s party are greeted by the women of the bride’s family, first with witty remarks, then with buckets of water; their faces may be smeared with pepper and soot, and some girls even physically attack them. Once the ice has been broken, the pig and other ingredients for the marriage feast are prepared. After the feast, the bride is taken to the groom’s home, with much weeping and protestation. For three to five days the bride remains at the groom’s parents’ home, during which time the groom and bride are separated. The bride then returns to her parents’ home for a ‘waiting-at-home-period’ that may last for one or two years or until she is pregnant. During this time, the bride takes lovers — often cousins — and the groom must not only bring presents if he wishes to have sexual intercourse with her but must usually use force to do so. This is a probationary period, which allows both parties to reconsider the match and allows the woman to prove her childbearing abilities.”²



Jamin Pelkey

Religion: The Apu worship a host of spirits that they believe control the life of their communities. Among these spirits the Dragon god is held in great honor.

Christianity: The Apu are a people group in dire need of the gospel. Alcoholism and sexual immorality have affected the Apu so that few adults do not live in bondage to one or both of these. Although many Hmong and Lu Mien living in Jinping County have come to faith in Christ in recent years through gospel radio broadcasts in their languages, they live some distance away from the Apu and have little contact with them. There are no Scriptures, recordings, or gospel radio programs presently available in a language the Apu readily comprehend.



Population in China:
 2,500 (1999)
 2,560 (2000)
 3,210 (2010)
Location: Yunnan
Religion: Polytheism
Christians: None Known

Overview of the Apu

Countries: China, possibly Vietnam
Pronunciation: “Ah-poo”
Other Names:
Population Source: 2,500 (1999 J. Pelkey); Out of a total Yi population of 6,572,173 (1990 census)
Location: S *Yunnan*: Maandi District in Jinping County, Honghe Prefecture; Possibly also in Vietnam
Status: Officially included under Yi

Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Burmese-Lolo, Lolo, Northern Lolo, Yi, Unclassified
Dialects: 0
Religion: Polytheism, Animism, Ancestor Worship
Christians: None known
Scripture: None
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: None
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: None

