

**Population:**

1,460 (2000)

1,890 (2010)

2,300 (2020)

**Countries:** China**Buddhism:** Theravada**Christians:** none known**Overview of the Hu****Other Names:****Population Sources:**

1,000 in China (1984, J-O Svantesson)

**Language:** Austro-Asiatic, Mon-Khmer, Northern Mon-Khmer, Palaungic-Khmuic, Palaungic, Western Palaungic, Angkuic**Dialects:** 0**Professing Buddhists:** 60%**Practising Buddhists:** 25%**Christians:** 0%**Scripture:** none**Jesus film:** none**Gospel Recordings:** none**Christian Broadcasting:** none**ROPAL code:** HUO

In 1984, linguist Jan-Olof Svantesson estimated that there were 1,000 speakers of the Hu language in south-west China.<sup>1</sup> They inhabit five villages in the Xiaomengyang District of Jinghong County in Xishuangbanna Prefecture of Yunnan Province.<sup>2</sup>

The Hu live near the Manmet people and are also surrounded by Lu and Bulang communities. The area inhabited by the Hu—the extreme south-west of China—is semi-tropical. It is warm and humid most of the year, while the rainy season inundates the crops between May and September every year.

The Hu are a distinct ethnolinguistic people group. Although their language is related to those of the Manmet and Angku who live in the same area, it does have significant differences. The Hu applied to be recognized as a separate

minority in the 1950s, but the Chinese government rejected their application. The authorities then offered the Hu a chance to be included as part of one of the several minority groups in the area, which they, in turn, refused to accept. Consequently, in the 1982 Chinese census, the Hu were listed under the *Undetermined Minorities* category.

The tonal Hu language is part of the Angkuic branch of the Mon-Khmer language family. It appears that the Hu language is closely related to that of the Angku, who live in the same part of China. The Hu do not possess their own written script, but some

of the Hu village leaders can read Chinese. Although little is known about the origins of the Hu, they were probably part of a larger collection of Mon-Khmer peoples in the region who later splintered to become groups like today's Wa, Palaung and Bulang. Lu and Chinese landowners oppressed the Hu until the Communist takeover of China in 1949. The land redistribution programmes of the 1950s ended their oppression. Because they have no official status, few people except those in their

immediate neighbourhood know of the Hu's existence.

These days the Hu live in small, secluded communities. Their houses, 'constructed from bamboo, are elevated above the ground, and the area underneath is used for livestock. They are mountain farmers who use agricultural techniques consistent with different ecological settings. Some farmers still use thirteenth-century techniques

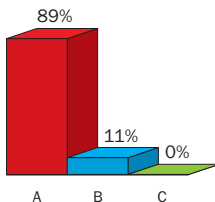
of slash-and-burn, fertilizing land with ashes and using a stick to plant seeds. . . . Wheat, dry rice, maize, millet, and tubers are the most common crops.<sup>3</sup>

Although on the surface the Hu claim to be Theravada Buddhists, their daily lives are much more influenced by animistic beliefs. They fear demons and believe all sickness and bad luck comes upon them as a result of upsetting the delicate balance between the natural and spiritual worlds.

The Hu are a people group untouched by the message of the gospel. Few have ever heard the name of Jesus Christ.



Myanmar Faces and Places

**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