

Location: More than 575,000 Mishaba Laluo people are distributed throughout 16 counties of north central Yunnan Province. They are concentrated in the counties of southern Dali Prefecture, northern Lincang Prefecture, and eastern Baoshan Prefecture. Jingdong County in northern Simao Prefecture is also represented by a large number of Mishaba Laluo.¹

Identity: The Mishaba Laluo are the largest Western Yi group in China. Until the 1950s, present-day Weishan and Nanjian counties were one administrative unit called Menghua. Since the beginning of the Tang Dynasty (AD 618) Menghua had been inhabited almost exclusively by the Laluo. As a result, the Mishaba Laluo are often called *Menghua* or *Menghuazu* by their neighbors. This group could be said to have two self-names in their language: *Laluo* and *Mishaba*. Laluo denotes their ethnic identity while Mishaba denotes their regional identity. "This people has, since ancient times, been 'the Laluo from the land of Misha', and, in their hearts, consider themselves as nothing else — certainly not 'Yi'."²

Language: Mishaba is a Western Yi language, although many have already lost the use of their mother tongue and have assimilated to Han culture and language. An estimated 400,000 Laluo (about 70%) still speak their language.³

History: Although they had exclusively inhabited the Menghua region since

the eighth century, by the start of the Qing Dynasty (1644) the Laluo made up just 70% of the population. Large-scale Han migrations to the area during the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries made the Laluo a minority in their homeland and forced many to seek refuge in the mountains for the first time, in order to retain their culture and identity.

Customs: In Weishan County, the Laluo celebrate the Festival of the Tree King on the eighth day of the second lunar month. The entire community gathers around a large tree that stands outside the village. A black piglet is sacrificed and the pig's front teeth are offered to the spirit of the tree. The rest of the pig is cooked and eaten by the people, who sing a song in praise of the power of the Tree god.

Religion: Most of the Mishaba Laluo are animists. On the fifth day of the second lunar month they hold a ceremony called Calling Back the Spirit of the Rice. A young man dressed in a goatskin is responsible for making contact with the spirit. He cracks a whip and shouts toward the



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hills. If an echo is heard, the spirit is believed to have entered their presence. In one region around Weibao in Weishan County the Mishaba Laluo engage in Daoism, which they inherited from the Chinese centuries ago. Some Laluo have even become Daoist priests.

Christianity: The extent of Christianity among the Mishaba Laluo is uncertain, but there are believed to be a small number of Christians, mostly among assimilated Laluo. The majority of this people group, however, have no knowledge of the gospel and no contact with any Christian communities.



Population in China:
 565,000 (1999)
 579,400 (2000)
 727,100 (2010)
Location: Yunnan
Religion: Animism
Christians: 500

Overview of the Mishaba Laluo

Countries: China
Pronunciation: "Mee-sha-bah-Lah-luoh"
Other Names: Mishaba, Misan, Misanxu, Menghua, Menghuazu, Turen, Misanru, Misapha, Lалуopo, Lалу, Pingtuo Lolo, Laloba, Misabo, Misapo, Misaru, Xishan Yi, Tutiaozi
Population Source: 565,000 (1999 J. Pelkey); Out of a total Yi population of 6,572,173 (1990 census)
Location: *Yunnan:* Fengqing, Yunxian, Nanjian, Weishan, Midu, Yangbi, Jingdong, Yongping, Baoshan, Changning,

Shuangjiang, Lincang, Gengma, Yongde, Cangyuan, and Nanhua counties
Status: Officially included under Yi
Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Burmese-Lolo, Lolo, Northern Lolo, Yi, Western Yi
Dialects (3+): Weishan, Fengqing, Jingdong
Religion: Animism, Ancestor Worship, Daoism, Christianity
Christians: 500
Scripture: None
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: None
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: None

