



Paul Hattaway

Location: Although it is difficult to estimate the population size of the Menia, there are believed to be more than 1,200 speakers of the Menia language living in southern Sichuan Province. Few outsiders have ever ventured into the area in and around Muli County. Still today, access is difficult and foreigners are not allowed to enter the region. When Joseph Rock launched an expedition from Lijiang in northern Yunnan Province in 1925, he offered a glimpse of the geographic wonders encountered along the way: "The mountains are pierced by the mighty Yangtze, which has cut a trench 13,000 feet deep through a wall of limestone rock covered with eternal snow.... The whole region is a vast conglomeration of peaks and mighty gorges, with very little level ground."¹

Identity: Although they are now officially included under the Tibetan nationality, the Menia formerly belonged to the Chrame group who are commonly called *Xifan* (Western Barbarians) by the Chinese. Other tribes or subgroups of the Chrame include the Manyak and Hor.

Language: Menia is a member of the Qiangic branch of the Tibeto-Burman language family. Menia was first described by Edward Colborne Baber in 1881.² Based on the information Baber compiled and on later Chinese data, linguist Jackson Sun has identified Menia as belonging to the Ersu group of languages.³

History: From the Menia's language it appears that they can trace their ancestry to the Qiang race who roamed northwest China in former times. Over the

course of many centuries the various tribes became dispersed across the vast geographical area of Sichuan and surrounding provinces. Some groups have been completely assimilated by the Tibetans or by the Chinese. Others, including the Menia, still retain their original language but have ceased to be culturally different from the surrounding peoples.

Customs: When, in the 1920s, a Western explorer visited the region inhabited by the Menia, he wrote, "We pitched camp on the banks of the Muli River, 8,000 feet above the sea, and here we made our first acquaintance with Muli villagers, especially the women, who barter grass and barley for the horses of caravans. Their dress consisted of dark-gray woolen skirts with fringes, and leather jackets. Their wealth of hair, a good deal of it false, was decorated with garlands of gilded Szechwan [Sichuan] rupees, a coin common in this region."⁴

Religion: The Menia were once controlled by the Chrame king, who was also the head lama of the Muli Monastery. Tibetan Buddhism still pervades every aspect of Menia society.

Christianity: There has never been a known Christian among the Menia. This is the tragic result of never having heard the gospel throughout their long history. Although they may show some interest in Christ, Buddhists do not believe in a God or a Creator and do not view sin as an act of the will, but rather an external influence.

These beliefs have created additional barriers to the gospel's advance.

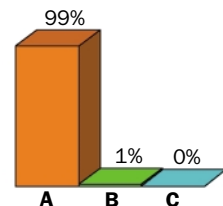


Population in China:
 1,200 (1998)
 1,250 (2000)
 1,540 (2010)
Location: Sichuan
Religion: Tibetan Buddhism
Christians: None Known

Overview of the Menia

Countries: China
Pronunciation: "Mee-nya"
Other Names: Munia
Population Source:
 1,200 (1998 AMO);
 Out of a total Tibetan population of 4,593,330 (1990 census)
Location: S Sichuan: Muli County and surrounding areas
Status:
 Officially included under Tibetan
Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Qiangic, Ersu
Dialects: 0
Religion:
 Tibetan Buddhism, Polytheism
Christians: None known
Scripture: None
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: None
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: None

Status of Evangelization



A = Have never heard the gospel
B = Were evangelized but did not become Christians
C = Are adherents to any form of Christianity