

Location: Approximately 23,000 Mili people live in the mountains of central Yunnan Province. They inhabit a widespread area encompassing four counties. The majority live in the Anding and Wenlong districts of Jingdong County. About 9,000 inhabit Yunxian County while smaller numbers live in Zhenyuan and Xinping counties.

Identity: The Mili are one of approximately 120 tribes and people groups that the Chinese government combined into the official Yi nationality in China. The Mili are acknowledged by all other people who live near them as a distinct ethnic group with their own history, customs, dress, and language. The Mili first appeared in John Kuhn's 1945 tribal survey of Yunnan Province, located in "Qingku."¹ Qingku is the old spelling for today's Jinggu County in Simao Prefecture.

Language: Chinese scholars have classified Mili as a language belonging to the Western Yi linguistic classification. In Zhenyuan County, where all Yi languages are supposedly Western Yi, one official source states, "The language spoken by each individual Yi group in the county is rather complex, and when different groups are together they have much trouble communicating."²

History: The Mili have never before appeared on Chinese ethnolinguistic lists, simply because they have been lumped together with the many names and subgroups that make up the official Yi nationality in China. The Mili

have a long history of being oppressed by the Chinese.

Customs: Mili culture, like their language, is well preserved. After the death of a Mili person, the sons and grandsons gather around the corpse and, "one-by-one, take turns blowing into the mouth of the deceased. They then each take a silver coin, a little rice, and some tea leaves and wrap them in a red cloth. Having done this, they then place their small, red parcels in the mouth of the deceased. The body stays this way, in the home, two or three days before the burial ceremony."³ For the Mili, this act is a way of honoring their dead before the soul leaves for the next world. They believe the rice and tea will nourish the soul of the deceased, while the coins will provide for any needs that may arise on its journey. Mili weddings are very relaxed. Once a couple decides they are ready for marriage, they choose a day to go farther into the mountains and chop firewood together.

Religion: The Mili are polytheists and animists. They feel close to nature and are careful not to upset the spiritual balance they believe exists



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between themselves and their surroundings. Until the 1950s many Mili villages contained shamans.

Christianity: For hundreds of years the Mili have lived and died without the slightest knowledge of the gospel or the name of Jesus Christ. Without a church or any Christian witness, the Mili remain neglected and in spiritual darkness. No missionaries are known to have ever reached out to the Mili people. The areas inhabited by the Mili are practically devoid of any Christian presence, be it Han Chinese house churches or government-sanctioned believers. The Mili are isolated geographically, culturally, linguistically, and spiritually from outside influence.



Population in China:
 23,200 (1999)
 23,750 (2000)
 29,850 (2010)
Location: Yunnan
Religion: Polytheism
Christians: None Known

Overview of the Mili

Countries: China
Pronunciation: "Mee-lee"
Other Names: Alie
Population Source:
 23,200 (1999 J. Pelkey);
 Out of a total Yi population of
 6,572,173 (1990 census)
Location: Yunnan: Jingdong
 (12,000), Yunxian (9,000),
 Zhenyuan (1,000), and Xinping
 (1,000) counties
Status:
 Officially included under Yi

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

