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Location: With a relatively large population of 230,000, the Poluo inhabit a widespread area in southeastern Yunnan Province. The highest concentration are found in Yanshan, Wenshan, and Qiubei counties of Wenshan Prefecture. Smaller numbers live in Maguan, Pingbian, Guangnan, Xichou, and Hekou counties. Yanshan County was only opened to foreign travelers in mid-1997. The Poluo are the dominant Yi group in southeastern Yunnan Province.

Identity: Despite their large population, very little is known about the Poluo, who are officially counted as part of the Yi nationality. The Poluo have never before been listed in ethnographic or linguistic lists from China. One researcher has stated, "The Poluo never refer to

themselves as 'Yi' in their own language; instead, *Poluo* is used. The Han Chinese in their areas are also apt to call this people *Pu* instead of *Yi*. The title *Yi* is virtually meaningless in reference to this people."¹

Language: The Poluo speak their own language which is part of the Southeastern Yi branch of Tibeto-Burman. Almost all Poluo retain the use of their native tongue. In many of the more isolated communities most of the people know only their own language and are not familiar with Chinese. Poluo is also mutually unintelligible with the other Southeastern Yi languages spoken in their area.

History: The Poluo are one of the most far-flung Yi groups in China today. They are believed to be the descendants of a large tribe

that splintered into numerous ethnic groups during migrations many centuries ago.

Customs: Poluo houses are customarily built near streams or rivers to allow easy access to water. Bamboo pipes are arranged to carry the water into the village. Many Poluo live in extremely remote locations at the top of isolated mountains.

Religion: The vast majority of Poluo still adhere to the superstitions of animism, polytheism, and ancestor worship. In some locations a festival is observed on a dragon or ox day of the second lunar month. Each village chooses a day, and all the people gather around a large tree to hold a ceremony in worship of the dragon. The Poluo, along with many other peoples classified as Yi, believe the dragon is responsible for rainfall and other natural phenomena. They hope to appease the dragon in order to quell floods and prevent drought.

Christianity: The Poluo are unreached and largely unevangelized, without any Scriptures or recordings in their language. The first modern-day missionary in China, Robert Morrison, knew people must have the Word of God in their own language. He wrote, "I am still engaged in translation. My courage and perseverance almost fail me. This is a very lonely situation. I am under continual dread of the arm of the oppressor, and the natives who assist me are hunted from place to place and sometimes seized.... What a blessing it is to have

the hope of eternal life rising brighter and brighter as we enter the valley."²



Population in China:
 227,000 (1999)
 232,700 (2000)
 292,100 (2010)
Location: Yunnan
Religion: Polytheism
Christians: 100

Overview of the Poluo

Countries: China
Pronunciation: "Poh-luoh"
Other Names:
 Pu, Pola, Pula, Polo, Puzu, Aza
Population Source:
 227,000 (1999 J. Pelkey);
 Out of a total Yi population of
 6,572,173 (1990 census)
Location: SE Yunnan: Yanshan
 (74,000), Wenshan (67,000),
 Qiubei (63,000), Maguan
 (10,000), Pingbian (6,900),
 Guangnan (3,000), Xichou
 (2,200), and Hekou (1,000)
 counties in Wenshan Prefecture
Status:
 Officially included under Yi
Language: Sino-Tibetan,
 Tibeto-Burman, Burmese-Lolo,
 Lolo, Northern Lolo, Yi,
 Southeastern Yi
Dialects: 0
Religion: Polytheism, Animism,
 Ancestor Worship, Christianity
Christians: 100
Scripture: None
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: None
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: None

