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Location: Seven thousand Bisu live in the southern tip of Yunnan Province. Approximately 1,000 Bisu also inhabit two villages near Chiang Rai in northern Thailand. The Bisu in China live in eight large villages in three different counties of Xishuangbanna Prefecture, including Mengzhe Village of Menghai County; Zhutang, Laba, Donglang, and Fubang villages of Lancang County; and Jingxin, Fuyan, and Nanya villages of Menglian County. A few are also found in Ximeng County. The Bisu are neighbors of the Lahu, Hani, and Dai minority groups.

Identity: The Bisu have been included as part of the Hani nationality in China, yet they firmly hold to their own identity, wear their own distinct dress, and speak their own language. The Bisu in Menghai County are called *Laopin* or *Pin*, while those in Lancang and

Menglian call themselves *Laomian*. This suggests possible ethnolinguistic differences between the two areas.

Language: The Bisu language — which has three tones — is part of the Tibeto-Burman language family and is closely related to the Mpi, Pyen, and Phunoi languages spoken in Laos and Myanmar. Bisu is reported to have 36% lexical similarity with Hani, 32% with Lahu and 31% similarity with Lisu.¹ Among some Bisu communities there are dialect differences. Some Bisu use Dai loanwords while the Bisu living in other areas have adopted many Lahu loanwords.

History: The Bisu share a common history with a larger group of related peoples, including the Mpi, Phunoi, and Pyen in the adjoining areas of Laos and Myanmar. Bisu history has

been one of harassment and persecution at the hands of neighboring groups. The 1,000 Bisu in northern Thailand migrated south along the Mekong River from either Yunnan or Laos earlier this century, encountering hostile peoples wherever they went. Today the Bisu are despised by both the Chinese and Thai majorities who call them a host of derogatory names.

Customs: Most aspects of Bisu village life revolve around their zealous appeasement of evil spirits. No sacrifice is spared in an effort to keep peace with the demanding demons. This traps the Bisu in dire poverty, as numerous valuable livestock are wasted in needless sacrifices.

Religion: Few groups seem to be so serious in their devotion and so bound in their fear of evil spirits as the Bisu. Every part of the Bisu culture includes spirit appeasement. The Bisu desire to live at peace and believe that ignoring the demons' demands will result in suffering, sickness, and disaster.

Christianity: Few attempts have been made to take the gospel to the Bisu, despite the presence of Lahu and Wa Christians in the vicinity. There are a small number of believers in Menglian County,² including a few Bisu, but the majority have absolutely no awareness of the gospel. In Thailand the Bisu have recently invited a Christian family to live in their village and to invent a written script for their language. The handful of Bisu who have embraced

Christianity have invariably experienced severe persecution from other Bisu in their communities.³



Population in China:
 6,000 (1991)
 7,380 (2000)
 9,260 (2010)
Location: Yunnan
Religion: Animism
Christians: 20

Overview of the Bisu

Countries: China, Thailand, possibly Myanmar
Pronunciation: “Bee-soo”
Other Names: Mbisu, Misu, Mibisu, Mbi, Laopin, Pin, Laomian
Population Source: 6,000 (1991 Li Yongsui); Out of a total Hani population of 1,253,952 (1990 census); Less than 1,000 in Thailand (1987 E. Purnell); Possibly also in Myanmar
Location: SW Yunnan: Menghai, Lancang, Menglian, and Ximeng counties
Status: Officially included under Hani
Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Burmese-Lolo, Lolo, Southern Lolo, Phunoi
Dialects (3): Phadaeng, Tako, Huai Chomphu
Religion: Animism, Polytheism
Christians: 20
Scripture: None
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: None
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: BI100

