

Location: More than 20,000 people belonging to a little-known ethnic group, the Enu, live in several counties of southern Yunnan Province. They are spread from Jinggu County in Simao Prefecture as far south as Mengla County in Xishuangbanna Prefecture, near the China-Laos border. The center of the Enu people could be placed at Tayisai District in Mojiang County. In most locations the Enu do not have their own villages; rather, they live in mixed communities with people from other nationalities.

Identity: The Enu, who are officially part of the Hani nationality, are also known as the *Ximeluo* in China. The “Si-mou-lou” were first mentioned in a 1903 survey of Yunnan’s ethnic composition.¹ Missionary John Kuhn, in his 1945 tribal survey of Yunnan, listed the “Simoulu” as living at “Ning Erh and Qingku.”² Qingku is the old spelling for today’s Jinggu County, in Simao Prefecture.

Language: Enu is part of the Bi-Ka branch of the Tibeto-Burman language family, related to other Hani languages such as Biyo, Kado, and Ake. A 1986 Chinese linguistic study studied the Enu.³ The Enu language seems to consist of two dialects which may be mutually unintelligible. Li Yongsui has given a brief linguistic account of the two varieties, “including comparative phonological notes and a few lexical items.”⁴

History: By the 1960s the Enu living near Chinese towns and cities had already begun the gradual process of

assimilation. Today, only those living in more remote locations retain their ethnicity and language. The demise of the Enu as a distinct people group may have been a contributing factor in the Chinese government’s decision not to grant them status as a separate minority.

Customs: Most Enu live in simple homes constructed of wood and thatched roofs. Most customs and ceremonies of the Enu now closely mirror that of the dominant Han Chinese. Earlier in the twentieth century, however, they still retained many unique customs that reflected their animistic beliefs. In one sacrifice, they spread the hide of a bull over a wooden frame, under which family leaders from feuding sides would drink the bull’s blood and take a peace oath. If either party broke this oath, its members would meet the same fate as the slaughtered animal.

Religion: Most Enu people are animists, especially the elderly, who continue to offer prayers and burn incense before spirit and ancestral altars. The younger generation reluctantly continue the practices of their parents out of respect for their forefathers.



Paul Hattaway

Christianity: There are a small number of scattered Enu Christians, including some who attend a church consisting of people from nine different minority groups in Mengla County near the Laos border.⁵ Overall, however, southern Yunnan has been woefully neglected by the scouts of Christianity. Lottie Moon, a Baptist missionary, was disturbed by the lack of interest in China’s lost. She bluntly stated, “It is odd that a million Baptists of the south can furnish only three men for all China.... I wonder how these things look in heaven. They certainly look very queer in China.”⁶



Population in China:
 20,000 (1998)
 20,920 (2000)
 25,750 (2010)
Location: Yunnan
Religion: Animism
Christians: 600

Overview of the Enu

Countries: China
Pronunciation: “E-noo”
Other Names: Si-mou-lou, Simolu, Similu, Xiumoluo, Ximeluo, Yaysai Enu, O-nu
Population Source: 20,000 (1998 AMO); Out of a total Hani population of 1,253,952 (1990 census)
Location: S Yunnan: Mojiang, Jinggu, and Mengla counties
Status: Officially included under Hani

Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Burmese-Lolo, Lolo, Southern Lolo, Akha, Hani, Bi-Ka
Dialects: 0
Religion: Animism, Ancestor Worship
Christians: 600
Scripture: None
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: None
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: None

