



Population in China:
 22,000 (1997)
 23,900 (2000)
 30,850 (2010)
Location: Yunnan
Religion: Christianity
Christians: 18,800

Overview of the Maru

Countries: Myanmar, China

Pronunciation: “Mah-roo”

Other Names: Malu, Matu, Lhao Vo, Lawng, Laungaw, Lansu, Lang, Mulu, Diso, Lang’e

Population Source:
 22,000 (1997 AMO);
 Out of a total Jingpo population of 119,209 (1990 census);
 150,000 in Myanmar (1996 Tribes & Nations Outreach)

Location: *W Yunnan:* Luxi County in Dehong Prefecture

Status:
 Officially included under Jingpo

Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Burmese-Lolo, Burmish, Northern Burmish

Dialects: 0

Religion: Christianity, Animism

Christians: 18,800

Scripture: New Testament 1994, Portions 1940; Work in progress

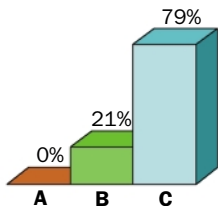
Jesus film: None

Gospel Recordings:
 Maru #01159

Christian Broadcasting:
 Available (FEBC)

ROPAL code: MHX00

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

Location: Under the British Empire, all Maru lived within the borders of Burma. When the British left Burma in the 1940s and the borders were redrawn, approximately 10% of the Maru suddenly found themselves living in southern China. Today about 150,000 Maru live on the Burmese (now Myanmar) side of the border. An additional 23,900 live on Chinese soil.¹ It’s believed that they live only in Luxi County, even though the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Chinese Linguistics* states that the Maru live in parts of five counties: Luxi, Longchuan, Yingjiang, Ruili, and Lianghe.²

Identity: The name *Maru* is used by the Kachin and Jingpo to describe this group. The Maru call themselves *Lhao Vo*. In China the Maru have been classified as part of the Jingpo nationality, while in Myanmar they are viewed as part of the large Kachin ethnic group. The Maru earnestly oppose such classifications, insisting on a separate historical and cultural identity.

Language: The Maru language has three tones. It is related to the other Jingpo languages in China but contains loanwords from Chinese, Jingpo, Tai Mao, and Burmese. The Maru use a Roman script, devised in 1957.

History: The Maru claim to have migrated from the Tibetan Plateau thousands of years ago. They lived first in the Nujiang River valley in Yunnan before settling down in northern Myanmar. They claim to be the original inhabitants of Myanmar —

an assertion that upsets the Burmans and Kachin.³

Customs: The Maru live in close-knit communities. When a house is being built, the whole village lends a hand in its construction. When a Maru family moves, they carry the fire from their old home along in a torch, believing the unbroken fire will ensure the continuing well-being of the family.

Religion: The majority of Maru in both Myanmar and China claim to be Christians, but in many cases their faith is nominal. One Maru church leader explains, “Many Maru animists decided to accept Christ for their convenience. They wanted to get rid of the burden of sacrificing offerings of chickens, buffaloes etc. to appease the spirits. They did not really know who Christ is. That’s why when they received the copy of the Word of God in their own language, they learned that Jesus is the Redeemer; that

they were redeemed from the hands of Satan to become the son of the Almighty Father; that they were a holy priesthood, a holy nation, not just plainly called Christians, but that they are an anointed people. They then understood the meaning of being a Christian for the first time.”⁴

Christianity: Missionaries first targeted the Maru 100 years ago. As a result, most Maru in China and Myanmar are Christians — primarily Baptists and Catholics. However, despite the apparent success, Christianity never really took root in the people’s hearts. This was primarily because the Bible was not translated in their own language. In 1994 the Maru New Testament was completed. Four thousand copies have been distributed in Myanmar.⁵ At the present time three ministries are busy translating separate copies of the Maru Old Testament.⁶



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