



Target Ministries

Location: Approximately 37,000 Naluo inhabit the steep mountainsides along the rivers of northern Yunnan and southern Sichuan Provinces. The majority are located in Luquan, Wuding, Dongchuan, and Yuanmou counties.¹ Small numbers of Naluo reportedly live in Huize County of Zhaotong Prefecture and parts of Qujing Prefecture.

Identity: Despite insisting on their own distinct identity, the Naluo (also called *Alu* or *Gani* — Dry Yi) are considered part of the Yi nationality by the Chinese authorities. The *Laka* are a subgroup of the Naluo. The main difference between the two is sociohistorical.

Language: The Naluo speak a distinct Tibeto-Burman language. It cannot be understood by members of other Yi groups. Naluo is part of the Eastern Yi linguistic branch, distantly related to Michi, Gepo,

Eastern Nasu, Naisu, and the Yi varieties spoken in Guizhou Province.

History: For centuries the Naluo were despised as slaves and serfs of the Nasu people. In the early 1950s the slave/serf system was abolished by the Communist authorities. The humble disposition of the Naluo helped many of them see their need for God. Many responded to the gospel when Protestant missionaries moved to their area in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Customs: In the same way that numerous languages and dialects are spoken among the many branches of Yi in China, they also have numerous distinct cultures. Catholic missionary Paul Vial explained, “The Lolo [Yi] do not have a single term that can be applied to an entire nation or a race of men, no more for others than for themselves.... With the

Lolo [Yi], each tribe knows only the tribes around it; beyond this horizon, it knows nothing. In their books, the author uses the name of his tribe, sometimes in a limited sense, if it is a particular history; sometimes in a broad sense, if the history applies to the entire race.”²

Religion: Most Naluo are worshippers of spirits. Others have embraced Christianity, though many who profess to be Christians have retained their former animistic rituals. In the past each Naluo village had a resident shaman.

Christianity: The first Protestant missionaries arrived in northern Yunnan in the early 1900s. Australian Arthur Nicholls was among the early pioneers of the gospel. Others joined him in a mission of love. Medical clinics were established, and large numbers of people were exposed to the gospel. Probably because of their history as a slave people, the Naluo were eager to accept the offer of freedom in Jesus Christ. They turned to Christianity, breaking themselves free from centuries of bondage to spirit worship. Thousands of Eastern Lipo and Eastern Nasu also came to Christ in the Wuding and Luquan areas. Today there are an estimated 11,000 Naluo believers. Many of them meet in ethnically mixed congregations. The Naluo living in Yuanmou County have had less exposure to the gospel. “In the past many Naluo believers used the Pollard New Testament in the Eastern Nasu language, but today most prefer to use the Chinese Scriptures.



Population in China:

36,700 (1999)

37,600 (2000)

47,200 (2010)

Location: Yunnan, Sichuan

Religion: Animism

Christians: 11,000

Overview of the Naluo

Countries: China

Pronunciation: “Nah-luoh”

Other Names: Nalo, Gani, Alu, Dry Yi, Gan Yi, Nalu

Population Source:

36,700 (1999 J. Pelkey);

Out of a total Yi population of 6,572,173 (1990 census)

Location: *N Yunnan:* Luquan (20,000), Wuding (10,300), Dongchuan (2,500), Yuanmou (1,500), Huize (1,400), and Qujing (1,000) counties; *S Sichuan:* Panzhihua area

Status:

Officially included under Yi

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

Dialects: 0

Religion: Animism, Christianity

Christians: 11,000

Scripture: None

Jesus film: None

Gospel Recordings: None

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: None

