


Population in China:

85,000 (1987)
110,300 (2000)
135,600 (2010)

Location: Yunnan

Religion: Animism

Christians: 4,000

Overview of the Woni

Countries: China

Pronunciation: "Woe-nee"

Other Names: Woniu

Population Source:

85,000 (1987 AMO);
Out of a total Hani population of
1,253,952 (1990 census)

Location: S Yunnan: Mojiang,
Pu'er, and Simao counties

Status:

Officially included under Hani

Language: Sino-Tibetan,
Tibeto-Burman, Burmese-Lolo,
Lolo, Southern Lolo, Akha, Bi-Ka

Dialects: 0

Religion: Animism, No Religion,
Ancestor Worship, Christianity

Christians: 4,000

Scripture: None

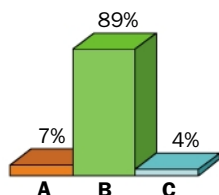
Jesus film: None

Gospel Recordings: None

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: None

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



Paul Hattaway

Location: Approximately 110,000 Woni live in Mojiang, Pu'er, and Simao counties in the southern part of Yunnan Province. The Woni plant crops and have rice paddies in places that others would consider an impossibility. Many Woni villages are situated at an altitude of more than 1,500 meters (4,800 ft.) above sea level.

Identity: The Woni are part of the Hani nationality in China. The Hani are a collection of at least "17 subgroups who speak at least six (and probably closer to 12) mutually unintelligible dialects.... Each group is characterized by its own identity and tribal costume."¹ An early ethnographer Henry Davies said the Yi mixed with the Mon-Khmer peoples to form the Woni.² There is some confusion because the name *Woni* was also formerly used to describe all Hani in China. The Woni profiled here, however, are a distinct ethnolinguistic group.

Language: The Woni language was spoken by "60,000 or more" people in a 1987 study.³ It is a part of the Bi-Ka branch of Hani, similar to Kado and Biyo. Woni is not the same as Haoni, a different group which is often referred to by their alternative name of *Woni*.

History: Most Woni are impoverished peasants. Their average life expectancy is just 58 years, compared to the high national average of 72 years for members of the Manchu nationality.⁴

Customs: The Woni are perceived as shy and distrustful of outsiders. "Despite this, they are noted for their warm, genuine hospitality once one gets to know them. When a guest enters their home, he is offered wine and strong tea. If he declines, the family will be highly offended."⁵ The Woni celebrate the New Year Festival: "At noon on New Year's Day, an announcer throws three balls of blackened rice behind him to bid farewell to the old year. He then greets the new year by tossing three balls of white rice in front of him. Next, he pushes the ropes

of a special swing and all of the people, regardless of sex or age, begin swinging."⁶ The most interesting part of a Woni woman's dress is the long piece of square cloth attached to the turban. "One wonders how comfortable it is... this woman's annex to the turban."⁷

Religion: The Woni venerate the spirits of their parents-in-law. Each year in the second lunar month they hold a grand offering service. The whole village participates in praying to the spirit world for health, prosperity, and an abundant harvest. There is also a strong Christian presence among the Woni.

Christianity: There are at least 48,000 Christians among the various Hani subgroups in China⁸ — the majority of whom are located in the Honghe Prefecture. Several thousand of these believers are members of the Woni ethnic group. In Mojiang County approximately 8,000 of the Hani believers are members of the government-sanctioned Three-Self Church.⁹ The Three-Self Movement has only one ordained pastor, Li Suyi, who was sent from Kunming to shepherd them. The remainder of the Christians belong to unregistered house churches.