

**Location:** Approximately 6,600 members of the Chesu tribe inhabit the southern part of Shuangbai County in Chuxiong Prefecture and the adjacent northern part of Xinping County in Yuxi Prefecture. The Chesu population in Shuangbai actually fell from 2,769 in 1957<sup>1</sup> to 2,528 in 1986.<sup>2</sup> Most Chesu villages are located in remote mountainous areas, deep within forests.

**Identity:** The existence of the Chesu people has been mentioned in few Chinese publications and never in mission people group lists. The Chesu do not consider themselves part of the Yi nationality. The Han Chinese and other minorities in Chesu areas do not think of the Chesu as Yi either. Local people believe the “Chesu are Chesu, and Yi are Yi... the Chesu speak the Chesu language, and the Yi speak the Yi language,” as one elderly man remarked in northern Xinping County.

**Language:** Although the Chesu claim their language is not a Yi language, preliminary studies suggest it belongs to the Southern Yi language group and is similar to the Lesu language. Few Chesu are able to understand Mandarin Chinese.

**History:** Originally the Chesu were part of a great Tibeto-Burman race, who were forced to migrate south to their present location under pressure from the advancing Han Chinese, beginning in the fourth century AD. The Han themselves had been forced to move south due to the disrupting

influence of the wild barbarian invaders in the north. “Six or seven out of every ten gentry families joined the southward march. In many cases, entire clans including neighbors and servants left their homes and traveled hundreds of miles to establish new homes south of the Yangtze River.”<sup>3</sup> One writer notes the result of these massive Han migrations: “As this contact occurred, the non-Han peoples were pushed back by the Han into the mountains, usually much more barren than the fertile river valleys where they had been living.”<sup>4</sup>

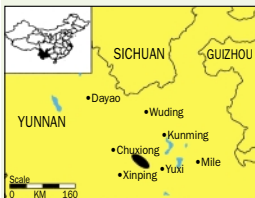
**Customs:** The Chesu people living in Damidi District in Shuangbai County celebrate the annual Body-Wrinkle Dance Festival. It is held on two separate days, on the 24th day of the sixth lunar month and then on the 15th day of the seventh month. Participants dress up in panther costumes and mimic the movements of the panther. The festival remembers the time when large cats roamed the central Yunnan region, terrorizing the local inhabitants.

**Religion:** The Chesu offer sacrifices to animals such as panthers, bears, and



tigers. They believe the spirits of these powerful animals can protect their communities from harm and disease.

**Christianity:** The Chesu are one of the people groups most untouched by Christianity in China. Few Chesu have ever been evangelized, although in March 2000 a few Chesu came to Christ when visited by Chinese evangelists. The preachers reported the Chesu are very responsive and open, but that ministry to them is difficult because of the lack of Mandarin understood by the Chesu. They live in such remote areas that outsiders have failed in their bid to even locate the Chesu.



**Population in China:**

6,350 (1998)  
6,670 (2000)  
8,370 (2010)

**Location:** Yunnan

**Religion:** Polytheism

**Christians:** 20

## Overview of the Chesu

**Countries:** China

**Pronunciation:** “Cheh-soo”

**Other Names:** Chesupuo, Sanpuo, Qisu, Qisupuo

**Population Source:**  
6,350 (1998 J. Pelkey);  
Out of a total Yi population of  
6,572,173 (1990 census)

**Location:** *Yunnan:* Chuxiong Prefecture: Shuangbai County (2,850); Yuxi Prefecture: Xinping County (3,500)

**Status:**  
Officially included under Yi

**Language:** Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Burmese-Lolo, Lolo, Northern Lolo, Yi, Southern Yi

**Dialects:** 0

**Religion:** Polytheism, Animism, Ancestor Worship, Christianity

**Christians:** 20

**Scripture:** None

**Jesus film:** None

**Gospel Recordings:** None

**Christian Broadcasting:** None

**ROPAL code:** None

