



Dwayne Graybill

**Location:** More than 64,000 Eastern Gepo live in the eastern part of Yunnan Province in southwest China.<sup>1</sup> They are distributed in parts of ten different counties. Xundian County, with 23,000 Eastern Gepo, contains the largest concentration of this group.<sup>2</sup>

**Identity:** Commonly called *Bai Yi* (White Yi) by the Chinese, this people group refers to itself as *Gepo*. Chinese sources further divide the Eastern Gepo — according to their style of headdress — into *Pingtou Yi* (Flathead Yi) and *Jiantou Yi* (Conehead Yi). Nevertheless, both of these groups refer to themselves as *Gepo* and speak the same language.<sup>3</sup> The Eastern Gepo are different from the Depo of northern Yunnan. The Depo also sometimes refer to themselves as *Gepo* or *Gepuo*.

**Language:** Eastern Gepo is a distinct language within

the Eastern Yi linguistic group. It is different from Western Gepo.

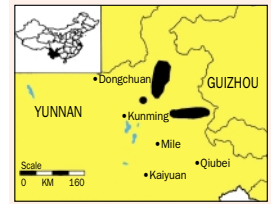
**History:** Before 1949 there seems to have been four classes among the Yi peoples of eastern Yunnan: two lower classes, both called *Gepo*; and two upper classes, both of whom referred to themselves as *Neisu* or *Nasu*. The Gepo “were further separated into Greater and Lesser Gepo as were the Nasu. In their own language, *Gepo* means ‘white people’. They were enslaved by the Greater and Lesser Nasu. Many subtle social rules and marriage restrictions that existed between the Greater and Lesser Gepo are all but discarded today.”<sup>4</sup>

**Customs:** The Eastern Gepo are culturally distinct from all other surrounding communities. They are proud of their ethnic identity and prefer to be left alone by outsiders. Many of China’s Yi people were

decimated by disease in the past. Missionary Samuel Clarke explained the customs of one Yi group that were designed to limit the death toll caused by disease. “When it is known that disease has visited a neighbor’s house, a pole seven feet long is erected in a conspicuous place in a thicket some distance from the house.... On the pole an old plow-share is fixed, and it is supposed that when the spirit who controls the disease sees the plow-share he will retire to a distance from these homesteads.”<sup>5</sup>

**Religion:** The Eastern Gepo are polytheists: they worship a multitude of gods and deities. Each year they offer sacrifices of chickens and livestock to the god of the Harvest to ensure a successful crop. The Gepo also carefully observe customs relating to health and hygiene.

**Christianity:** There are a small number of believers among the Eastern Gepo. The Christians in Huize County, including the Eastern Gepo, have experienced horrific persecution from local authorities in recent years. Land has been confiscated, believers beaten and tortured. One report stated, “The instruments of torture they use include clubs, firewood, ropes, handcuffs and electrically-charged stun-batons. They cuffed and kicked until these instruments broke.” Evangelist Cui Chaoshu was “pounded to death with a thick stick, his nose and mouth bleeding profusely.”<sup>6</sup>



**Population in China:**  
62,400 (1999)  
64,000 (2000)  
80,300 (2010)  
**Location:** Yunnan  
**Religion:** Polytheism  
**Christians:** 300

## Overview of the Eastern Gepo

**Countries:** China

**Pronunciation:** “Geh-po”

**Other Names:** Gepuo, Gepu, Bai Yi, Nasu, Jiantou Yi, Pingtou Yi, Guo, Guopo, Gupu, Guzu, White Yi, Gepo

**Population Source:**  
62,400 (1999 J. Pelkey);  
Out of a total Yi population of 6,572,173 (1990 census)

**Location:** *E Yunnan:* Xundian (23,000), Luxi (12,000), Shizong (9,000), Luoping (5,000), Malong (4,000), Songming (2,200), Huize (2,000), White (2,000), Shilin (1,700), and Dongchuan (1,500) counties

**Status:**  
Officially included under Yi

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

**Dialects:** 0

**Religion:**  
Polytheism, Animism, Christianity

**Christians:** 300

**Scripture:** None

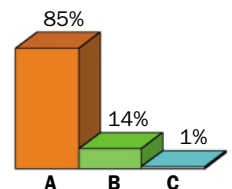
**Jesus film:** None

**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