



**Population in China:**  
 4,000 (1999)  
 4,100 (2000)  
 5,150 (2010)  
**Location:** Guizhou  
**Religion:** Polytheism  
**Christians:** 200

## Overview of the Gouzou

**Countries:** China  
**Pronunciation:** "Gow-zo"  
**Other Names:**  
**Population Source:**  
 4,000 (1999 AMO);  
 Out of a total Yi population of  
 6,572,173 (1990 census)  
**Location:**  
 NW Guizhou: Weining County  
**Status:**  
 Officially included under Yi  
**Language:** Sino-Tibetan,  
 Tibeto-Burman, Burmese-Lolo,  
 Lolo, Northern Lolo, Yi, Eastern Yi  
**Dialects:** 0  
**Religion:** Polytheism, Animism,  
 Ancestor Worship, Christianity  
**Christians:** 200  
**Scripture:** None  
**Jesus film:** None  
**Gospel Recordings:** None  
**Christian Broadcasting:** None  
**ROPAL code:** None



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likely that each of these "dialects" should be viewed as a distinct language.<sup>5</sup>

**History:** Guizhou may have been the original homeland of all Yi. The Nosu in Sichuan say their two ancestors, Gu Mmu and Cho Li, came from a town called Zzupu in Guizhou. "Even now when a Nosu person dies the relatives chant so that the dead person's spirit will be able to walk back the same way to the original family home in Guizhou."<sup>6</sup> The history of the Yi in Guizhou is one of war and conflict, including numerous clashes with the Hui Muslims.<sup>7</sup>

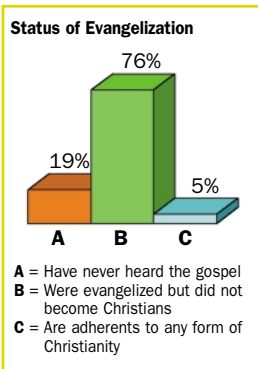
**Customs:** Before the introduction of modern medicine, whole Gouzou communities were wiped out

**Location:** Approximately 4,000 people belonging to the Gouzou people group live in Weining County in the northwest part of Guizhou Province.<sup>1</sup> The landscape in Weining "is an unimaginable labyrinth of inter-tangled valleys which run in every direction. The soil is formed out of a very soft limestone, which is quickly eroded by running water. A frequent result is that the stream sinks too low, cannot find an escape from the valley it has entered, and finally erodes a subterranean passage and disappears into a cavern."<sup>2</sup>

by a fever called *Nomatsi*. "No person will stay by the sick-bed to nurse the unfortunate patient. Food and water are placed by the bedside, the sick one is covered with a quilt and left at the mercy of the disease. Since the patient will perspire as the fever progresses, heavy stones are placed upon the quilt that it may not be thrown off.... Many have died from suffocation."<sup>8</sup>

**Religion:** The polytheistic Gouzou have a flood legend: "A certain man had three sons. He received warning that a flood was about to come upon the earth, and the family discussed how they should save themselves when this calamity came upon them. One suggested an iron cupboard, another a stone one, but the suggestion that they should make a cupboard of wood and store it with food was acted upon."<sup>9</sup> Ancestor worship is also prevalent among the Gouzou. Since the early 1900s, Christianity has made an appearance among them also.

**Christianity:** Today there is a small church among the Gouzou. One official publication states that as many as half of the overall total of 85,000 Yi people in Weining County follow Christ. The majority of the believers are female and over 30 years old.<sup>10</sup>



**Identity:** The Gouzou are part of the official Yi nationality in China. They are not the same as the *Guopu* people group who inhabit the same area. The various Yi groups in Guizhou Province were considered endangered in the early 1900s. One writer noted, "The unsanitary conditions in which they live — the water they drink is often drawn from stagnant pools fouled by sheep and cattle — and their riotous indulgence in whisky, opium, and other vices, sufficiently account for this.... They are burdened with the thought that their doom as a race is sealed."<sup>3</sup>

**Language:** Gouzou is part of the Eastern Yi branch of Tibeto-Burman. Some of the Eastern Yi varieties reportedly have only a 50% lexical similarity with each other.<sup>4</sup> It is