



**Population in China:**  
 4,200 (1999)  
 4,300 (2000)  
 5,400 (2010)  
**Location:** Yunnan  
**Religion:** Polytheism  
**Christians:** None Known

## Overview of the Liwu

**Countries:** China

**Pronunciation:** "Lee-woo"

**Other Names:** Liang'e Ren

**Population Source:**  
 4,200 (1999 J. Pelkey);  
 Out of a total Yi population of  
 6,572,173 (1990 census)

**Location:**  
*N Yunnan:* Yongsheng County

**Status:**  
 Officially included under Yi

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

**Dialects:** 0

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

**Christians:** None known

**Scripture:** None

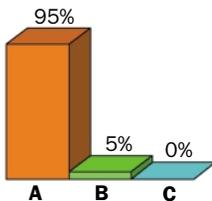
**Jesus film:** None

**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

**Location:** Totalling 4,300 people, the only known members of the Liwu ethnic group live in the Liang'e and Jiehu communities of Xinghu District, in Yongsheng County of northern Yunnan Province.<sup>1</sup> The Liwu live in remote villages in high, isolated mountains.

**Identity:** Apart from their neighbors, few people have ever heard of the Liwu. They do not have much interaction with the other people groups in their area. In the 1950s the Chinese authorities turned down the claims of the Liwu, who asked to be recognized as a distinct ethnic group. Instead, they were placed in the official Yi nationality which contains approximately 120 different ethnolinguistic groups spread throughout southern China.

**Language:** Liwu belongs to the Northern Yi group of Tibeto-Burman languages. It has not been studied but is believed to be at least partially intelligible with other Northern Yi varieties in Yongsheng County: Northern Awu, Talu, Tagu, Naza, Xiaoliangshan Nosu, Naruo, Naru, Western Lipo, and Liude.

**History:** The last several hundred years of history for the inhabitants of Yongsheng County have been ones of terror and domination at the hands of the Xiaoliangshan Nosu, who took slaves at will and imposed their rulership on the other peoples.

**Customs:** In the past many men from different branches of the Yi nationality obtained their wives by force. When Samuel Clarke visited in the

early 1900s, he reported, "The bridegroom gathers his friends and makes an attack on the maiden's home. Arming themselves with cudgels... they approach secretly and then rush towards the house. Strenuous efforts are made by the occupants to prevent their entering, and weighty blows are exchanged.... Occasionally during these fights the maiden's home is quite dismantled. The negotiations being concluded, preparations are made for escorting the bride to her new home. On arriving at the bridegroom's house there is a scuffle. The veil is snatched from the bride's face by her kinsmen, who do their utmost to throw it on the roof, to signify that she will rule over the occupants when she enters. The bridegroom's people, on the other hand, do all they can to trample it down on the

doorstep as an indication of the rigor with which the newcomer will be subjected to the ruling of the head of the house. Much blood is sometimes shed, and people are often seriously injured in these skirmishes."<sup>2</sup>

**Religion:** The Liwu believe their souls live on after death, so great preparation is made to help the soul of a deceased Liwu find its way back to the ancestral home. For this reason, deceased Liwu are buried in their traditional clothing and with objects that help the spirits identify the person as a Liwu.

**Christianity:** The Liwu suffer the misfortune of living in one of the most unevangelized and neglected areas in all of China. As a result, there are no churches or known Christians in their midst. Most have never heard the name of Jesus Christ.



Paul Hattaway