



Population:
 46,000 (2000)
 53,700 (2010)
 66,100 (2020)
Countries: China
Buddhism: Tibetan
Christians: 100

Overview of the Mosuo

Other Names: Mosso, Moso, Lushi, Hli-khin, Musu, Moxie, Mo-hseih, Jang

Population Sources:
 40,000 in China (1991, Shi Yuoyi)

Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Lolo-Burmese, Naxi, Eastern Naxi

Dialects: 0

Professing Buddhists: 95%

Practising Buddhists: 70%

Christians: 0.2%

Scripture: none

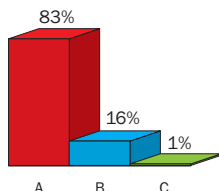
Jesus film: none

Gospel Recordings: Mosuo

Christian Broadcasting: none

ROPAL code: none

Status of Evangelization



A = Have never heard the gospel
B = Have heard the gospel but have not become Christians
C = Are adherents to some form of Christianity

A 1991 study counted 40,000 Mosuo people,¹ living on both sides of the Sichuan-Yunnan border in south-west China. The Mosuo are primarily concentrated around the shores of beautiful Lugu Lake. Lugu is one of the highest inhabited lake areas in China, at an altitude of 2,685 metres (8,800 ft.) above sea level. Lion Mountain, home to the goddess Gammo, the chief Mosuo deity, rises majestically over the northern shore.

No roads led to the lake until 1982. Before that time the Mosuo area was only accessible by foot or on horseback.

The Mosuo have been officially included as part of the Naxi nationality in China. The Mosuo deeply resent this and despise being called Naxi.

The two groups have different languages, religions and cultures. Although distantly related to the Naxi, Mosuo speakers are not able

to communicate with them in their own language and generally revert to Chinese in order to do so. According to Mosuo legends, the ancestors of today's Naxi and Mosuo migrated down from the Tibetan Plateau about 1,000 years ago.² Part of the group stopped at Lugu Lake and became today's Mosuo people, while the remainder continued south until they reached Lijiang, where today they are the Naxi. After many centuries of separation, the two groups have developed major ethnolinguistic differences.

For centuries the Mosuo have been a matriarchal and matrilineal society. The *azhu* system means that all property and assets are transferred to the female side of the

family, from mother to youngest daughter. Even the family name is passed down from the mother. Instead of taking a husband, Mosuo women are traditionally able to have 'walk-in' relationships. Men are only allowed to visit their lovers at night. They must leave the woman's house early the next morning and return to their mother's home. If a child is born, the responsibility to raise the child falls to the mother and her brothers.

Often the identity of the father is not known at all. Despite pressure from the government to discontinue the *azhu* system, a 1994 study revealed that 60 per cent of the Mosuo still follow this way of life.³

Tibetan Buddhism has a strong grip on the Mosuo. Because the Mosuo have no written language, 'shamans had to memorize the equivalent of 71 volumes of text and recited them word for word during funerals, births and other



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events. From the first utterance to the last, a master's recitation took up to 60 hours.⁴ One source states, 'The pantheon of Mosuo deities includes thousands of invisible beings who reside in heaven and in purgatory and throughout the natural world. Every plant, animal and major geographical landmark has its own deity, and often the Mosuos believe such gods have demonic counterparts. Life, and the world itself, is one long struggle for power between good and evil.'⁵

There had never been a known Mosuo believer until recently, when a Mosuo family came to Christ under quite extraordinary, supernatural circumstances.⁶ Today there are about 100 Mosuo believers.