

Location: In 1983 Chinese linguist Sun Hongkai listed 5,000 speakers of the Namuyi language.¹ The majority are located in the western parts of the Liangshan (Cold Mountains) Prefecture in southern Sichuan Province. Although small in number, the Namuyi are geographically widespread, inhabiting parts of Mianning, Muli, Xichang, and Yanyuan counties in the Liangshan Prefecture, in addition to parts of Jiulong County in Garze Prefecture.

Identity: Although they officially belong to the Tibetan minority, the Namuyi — who call themselves *Namuzi* in Jiulong and Muli — speak a distinct language belonging to the Qiangic branch. The Namuyi, along with several similar groups such as the Jiarong, Ersu, Shixing, Ergong, and Minyak, have been combined into the Tibetan nationality solely on the basis of their religion.

Language: Little is known about the Namuyi language except that it is part of the Qiangic linguistic family. Most Namuyi are able to speak the languages of their neighbors, especially Khampa Tibetan. Those living in Muli County are bilingual in Chrame, while some of the easternmost Namuyi, who live in parts of Xichang County, can speak the Nosu Yi language. Namuyi does not possess a written script. Chinese is the most commonly used orthography.

History: Areas of the western Liangshan Prefecture used to be in a province called Xikang, which was

grafted into Sichuan Province in 1939. Xikang was a violent region; murder and banditry were commonplace. “Much of the banditry and lawlessness in Sikang [Xikang] can be traced to the opium trade. Confusion and violent civil strife often break out in opium-growing districts after the harvest.... The prevalence of such lawlessness makes firearms almost a necessity, even for law-abiding citizens.”² For more than 200 years, up until the 1950s, the Namuyi were subject to the powerful Chrame Kingdom that was based in Muli. The king ruled with “absolute spiritual and temporal sway”³ over his subjects.

Customs: The Namuyi practice traditional Tibetan wind burial. Corpses are cut up with an axe into small pieces and placed on a mountaintop. Ravens and other birds of prey descend and devour the flesh and organs. The Namuyi believe this enables the soul of the dead person to be scattered to the four winds.

Religion: Most Namuyi are Tibetan Buddhists, but those who live near the large and influential Nosu group have adopted their polytheistic practices.



Paul Hattaway

Christianity: The Namuyi have yet to hear the gospel for the first time because of their geographic, social, and religious isolation. There are few Christians among any of the ethnic groups in the region. Of the hundreds of self-sacrificing missionaries who gave their lives for China, none is known to have worked in the Namuyi area. C. T. Studd, a well-known sportsman in England, gave up his fame and career to serve Christ in Africa and China. For Studd, the decision was not a difficult one to make. He simply explained, “If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.”⁴



Population in China:
5,000 (1983)
6,950 (2000)
8,570 (2010)

Location: Sichuan
Religion: Tibetan Buddhism
Christians: None Known

Overview of the Namuyi

Countries: China

Pronunciation: “Nah-moo-ye”

Other Names: Namuzi, Nameji

Population Source:
5,000 (1983 Sun Hongkai);
Out of a total Tibetan population of 4,593,330 (1990 census)

Location: S Sichuan: Liangshan Yi Prefecture: Mianning, Muli, Xichang, and Yanyuan counties; Jiulong County in Garze Prefecture

Status:

Officially included under Tibetan

Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Qiangic, Namuyi

Dialects: 0

Religion: Tibetan Buddhism, Polytheism

Christians: None known

Scripture: None

Jesus film: None

Gospel Recordings: None

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: NMY00

