



**Population in China:**

800,000 (1989)  
1,024,400 (2000)  
1,285,600 (2010)

**Location:**

Sichuan, Yunnan, Tibet  
**Religion:** Polytheism  
**Christians:** 12,000

## Overview of the Shengzha Nosu

**Countries:** China, USA

**Pronunciation:**

“Shung-jah-Nor-soo”

**Other Names:** Northern Yi, Sichuan Yi, Lolo, North Lolo, Black Yi, Manchia, Mantzu, Naso, Nuosu, Daliangshan Nosu, Shengcha Yi, Shengzha Yi

**Population Source:**

800,000 (1989 Shi Songshan);  
Out of a total Yi population of 6,572,173 (1990 census);  
45 in USA<sup>1</sup>

**Location:** *S Sichuan:* Daliangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture; *NE Yunnan:* Lushui and Zhaotong counties; *SE Tibet*

**Status:**

Officially included under Yi

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

**Dialects (1):** Xide

**Religion:** Polytheism, Shamanism, Animism, Ancestor Worship, Daoism, Christianity

**Christians:** 12,000

**Scripture:** Portions 1913; Gospel tracts 1996

**Jesus film:** Available

**Gospel Recordings:**

Yi: Sichuan #04671

**Christian Broadcasting:** None

**ROPAL code:** III00



Paul Hattaway

**Location:** More than one million speakers of Shengzha Nosu live in southern Sichuan Province.<sup>2</sup> Their primary locations are in Xide, Yuexi, Zhaojue, Ganluo, and Jinyang counties. Other significant communities are in Puge, Leibo, Xichang, Dechang, Mianning, Yanyuan, and Yanbian counties; while small numbers can be found in Muli, Shimian, Jiulong, and Luding counties.<sup>3</sup> A few Shengzha Nosu spill over into northeast Yunnan and into southeastern areas of Tibet.

**Identity:** The name *Nosu* means “black people.” Many early travelers who came into contact with the Nosu remarked on the beauty and Caucasian features of the Nosu women. One described them as “a black branch of the Caucasian race.”<sup>4</sup> The Daliangshan area has a great level of ethnic complexity. A 1983 official government report seems to lament “44 Nosu subgroups with different self-designations and obscure dialects.”<sup>5</sup> Another publication written by Chinese scholars mentions “more than 100 patriarchal clans in the Daliangshan area,... independent of each other and with their own area of jurisdiction.”<sup>6</sup>

**Language:** The Nosu possess an ancient pictographic syllabic script. It was mainly used by religious leaders prior to 1950,<sup>7</sup> but in recent years it has been taught to whole villages of Nosu.

**History:** Nosu history is one of violence and interclan warfare. For centuries the Nosu raided villages and took slaves, forcing them to do manual labor. One missionary noted, “In retaliation for the taking of slaves, it was not uncommon in the 1940s to see Chinese soldiers walking through city streets carrying on their backs large baskets filled with Nosu heads, still dripping with blood.”<sup>8</sup> The Nosu region, in 1956, was the last part of China to come under Communist rule. In the violent clashes ten Chinese troops were killed for

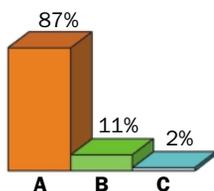
every Nosu, earning the Nosu the nickname, “Iron Peas.”<sup>9</sup> Since the collapse of the slave system, the class structure among the Nosu has weakened. Today even the former Bai Yi slaves “tease and mock [the Nosu]... who are mockingly called princes and princesses.”<sup>10</sup>

**Customs:** Early literature on the Nosu called them *Lolo*, in reference to the small basket they carried around with them which supposedly contained the souls of their dead ancestors.<sup>11</sup>

**Religion:** The Shengzha Nosu believe in Mo'm Apu, a supreme creator spirit who controls the universe. His son, Gee Nyo, gives rain, prosperity, and happiness.<sup>12</sup>

**Christianity:** Mission work among the Shengzha Nosu began in the late 1800s, but resulted in few conversions.<sup>13</sup> In the mid-1940s China Inland Mission worker James Broomhall tried to mobilize Yi Christians from Yunnan to evangelize the Nosu, but they could not adjust to the differences in language and culture.<sup>14</sup> After more than a century of labor and prayer, a breakthrough occurred in 1996 when 18 Nosu leaders of the Mentu Hui cult heard and believed the gospel. They publicly renounced the cult and by mid-1997 had led 12,000 Shengzha Nosu to faith in Christ.<sup>15</sup>

**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