



**Population in China:**  
 29,000 (1999)  
 29,700 (2000)  
 37,300 (2010)  
**Location:** Yunnan  
**Religion:** Polytheism  
**Christians:** 100

## Overview of the Puwa

**Countries:** China

**Pronunciation:** "Poo-wah"

**Other Names:** Wapuo, Lapeitula, Lepeitulapuo, Pula, Pupula, Green Pu, Pu, Pupo, Puzu, Puren, Aza, Azar, Azarpuo

**Population Source:**  
 29,000 (1999 J. Pelkey);  
 Out of a total Yi population of 6,572,173 (1990 census)

**Location:** SE Yunnan: Mengzi (23,000), Yanshan (4,000), and Kaiyuan (2,000) counties

**Status:**  
 Officially included under Yi

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

**Dialects:** 0

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

**Christians:** 100

**Scripture:** None

**Jesus film:** None

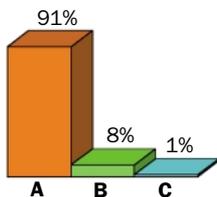
**Gospel Recordings:**

Yi: Puwa Kaiyuan  
 Yi: Pula Mengzi

**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:** More than 29,000 members of the Puwa tribe live in thatched-roof huts throughout the southern and southeastern parts of Yunnan Province. The majority (23,000) live in Mengzi County, while 4,000 live in Yanshan County, and 2,000 in Kaiyuan. The Puwa are one the largest of the Yi groups in the China-Vietnam border region, but they do not spill across into northern Vietnam.

**Identity:** The name *Puwa* is both the autonym and the name used by all other people in the area to describe this group. There may be several distinct tribes or clans among the Puwa. The Puwa are not related to the ancient Pu tribe who founded the Ailao Kingdom in Yunnan between the first and fifth centuries AD. Today's Mon-Khmer peoples in Yunnan, such as the De'ang, Wa, and Bulang, are thought to be descended from the former Pu Kingdom. The Puwa are related to the larger Poluo group who inhabit areas in southeast Yunnan.

**Language:** The Puwa language is part of the Southeastern Yi group. It is still spoken by all members of this ethnic group, including children.

**History:** These people have a reputation for being very independent and hostile to outsiders. They rarely venture into the townships and marketplaces and, therefore, have little contact with members of other nationalities. The Puwa prefer to stay in their mountain villages where they retain their customs, language, and lifestyle without interruption.

**Customs:** The Puwa celebrate many festivals throughout the year. One of the largest is the Cattle Festival that takes place during the second month of the lunar calendar. The people pick flowers and place them in the horns of their cows and water buffalo. They also place flowers above the doors of their homes and stables. The primary reason for the festival is the worship of the Mountain god. The Puwa believe large and powerful demons live



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inside the highest mountains. They offer sacrifices in honor of these spirits, which — they believe — if not kept happy, can cause disaster to fall on their communities.

**Religion:** The Puwa are a superstitious people who worship numerous spirits. The most revered is the Dragon god. The first "dragon day" of every third lunar month is set aside to appease the dragon. Every village stops work and sacrifices a pig under the village dragon's tree.<sup>1</sup>

**Christianity:** There is at least one Puwa Catholic village in Mengzi County. Mengzi has the longest history of Christianity in all of Yunnan. Catholic missionaries first entered the county in 1716 from Sichuan. Beginning in 1894, much work was done in Laozhai and Mingjiu districts, mostly impacting the Hmong but also reaching at least one Puwa village for Christ.<sup>2</sup> Work was also started among the Puwa of Dayakou Village in Mengzi County in 1896. Through the years nine families believed, and a church was formed. After almost 50 years of persecution, however, none of the converts there still cling to Christ. Their church building still stands but has not been used since 1951.<sup>3</sup>