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Location: The 1982 Chinese publication *Minzu Shibie Wenxian Ziliao Huibian* listed a population of 1,500 Yizi people living in southern China.¹ Despite their tiny population, the Yizi are distributed in three different provinces. The majority are located in Bijie County of northern Guizhou Province. Smaller numbers live in nearby Zhenxiang County in Yunnan Province and in Gulin County in Sichuan Province.

Identity: Despite their similar names, the Yizi are not related to any of the Yi groups in China who are speakers of Tibeto-Burman languages. The Yizi are also known as *Yiren* or “Yi people,” which further confuses the matter. In the 1950s the Yizi applied for recognition as one of China’s official minority groups. They were rejected. At the time of the 1982 national census they still had not been classified and were included in a list of *Undetermined Minorities*.

After some debate, the Yizi were placed under the Gelao nationality in 1985.² The Yizi, who have a separate ethnicity from the Gelao, are not entirely happy with this decision. They view themselves as different from all other groups in China. The Yizi may call themselves *Wo*. The Miao call them *Ke*; the Han call them *Yizi*; and the Gelao know this group as *Yipu*.

Language: The Yizi have lost the use of their mother tongue and now speak exclusively the Southwest dialect of Mandarin Chinese. A few can also speak some Yi which they have learned from their Yi neighbors. Most Yizi also read and write Chinese.

History: Although today there are less than 2,000 ethnically distinct Yizi remaining, during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) they were recorded to have a population of more than 20,000.³ During the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) the

Yizi were considered a Yi group, even though they have never claimed to be Yi themselves. Today, most Yizi have been assimilated to Han and Yi culture.

Customs: Most Yizi are now sedentary agriculturists, but before the advent of Communism in 1949 they were renowned and feared throughout the region as a fierce people. Still today, neighboring peoples despise the Yizi and claim they are all thieves.

Religion: Some of the more remote communities of Yizi are animists, although in most places now only the elderly continue to observe animistic rituals and appease spirits. Ancestor worship is a common thread that ties the Yizi together. The Yizi in different locations have the same ancestors. At least three times each year a ceremony is held to honor the spirits of those family members who have gone before.

Christianity: Because of a lack of specific information about the Yizi, it is not known if there are any Christians among them. It is possible they do include believers, however, because of the high density of Christians in the Bijie area of Guizhou Province especially among the A-Hmao, Gha-Mu, and the various branches of the Yi nationality. Samuel Pollard is credited for being used by God to bring the gospel to the people in the northeast Yunnan and northwest Guizhou areas. Pollard labored sacrificially among several people groups, seeing thousands come to Christ.



Population in China:

- 1,500 (1982)
- 2,280 (2000)
- 2,940 (2010)

Location:

- Guizhou, Yunnan, Sichuan
- Religion:** Ancestor Worship
- Christians:** None Known

Overview of the Yizi

Countries: China

Pronunciation: “Yee-zee”

Other Names: Yiren, Wo, Ke, Yipu

Population Source:

1,500 (1982 *Minzu Shibie Wenxian Ziliao Huibian*); Out of a total Gelao population of 437,997 (1990 census)

Location:

NW Guizhou: Bijie County;
NE Yunnan: Zhenxiang County;
S Sichuan: Gulin County

Status: Officially included under Gelao since 1985; Previously included in a list of *Undetermined Minorities*

Language: Chinese

Dialects: 0

Religion: Ancestor Worship, Animism, No Religion

Christians: None known

Scripture: None

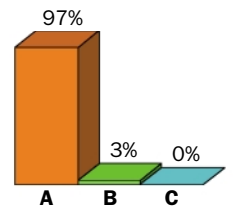
Jesus film: None

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