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Location: More than 2,500 Zauzou live in the mountainous Lanping and Lushui counties in northwestern Yunnan Province.¹ The Zauzou are the most southern of the several Nu groups in China. The mighty Nujiang and Lancang rivers roar through the region, forming two sizable obstacles to travel in the area. The Nujiang rages up to 180,000 cubic feet per second during the rainy season, causing massive landslides.

Identity: The Zauzou have been officially included in the Nu minority in China, but they speak a different dialect from other Nu communities. A

visitor in the 1920s commented on the dire state of the Zauzou, “They live solely on corn, their staple food, which they use for making a liquor of which they drink a great deal.”²

Language: The Zauzou language has not been extensively studied, although it is known to contain six tones. One source states that 1,500 Zauzou people are able to speak their language.³ Zauzou is part of the Lolo branch of Tibeto-Burman, but its specific affiliation has yet to be determined.

History: In the eighth century the whole of western Yunnan Province came under the control of the Nanzhao Kingdom. During the Yuan and Ming dynasties (1271–1644), Nanzhao came under the control of a Naxi headman in Lijiang. The Zauzou in Lanping County are the most Sinicized of the Nu groups in China. Prior to 1949 “their methods of production and standard of living were similar to those of the Hans, Bais, and Naxis.”⁴

Customs: The various Nu groups bury a man on his back with straightened limbs, while a woman is laid on her side with bent limbs. If both the

husband and wife are buried together, the wife’s body is bent toward her husband, symbolizing her submission.⁵ Deaths are announced with the loud blowing of bamboo trumpets. The number of trumpet blasts is determined by the age and status of the deceased — one for an unmarried man, two for a married man, three for a married man with children, five or six for a village elder or clan leader. All the villagers go to the house of the deceased and mourn with the grieving family.

Religion: For centuries the Zauzou have been animists. They slavishly worshiped the sun, moon, stars, mountains, rivers, trees, and rocks. In recent decades the practice of animism has subsided due to pressure from the Communist authorities who brand it “superstition.” There are also believed to be a small number of Christians among the Zauzou.

Christianity: During the Korean War the Communists showed films of the war in one village, hoping to create anti-American fervor. However, the people responded, “American missionaries created written characters for us, enabling our adults and children to read and write. They told us about the benefits of believing in Jesus and abolishing superstition. They educated us to work hard and live thriftily.... They have done so much good for us, we have been constantly concerned about them after they left. How could we say anything against them?”⁶



Population in China:

2,500 (1991)

2,970 (2000)

3,600 (2010)

Location: Yunnan

Religion: Animism

Christians: 100

Overview of the Zauzou

Countries: China

Pronunciation: “Zaaw-zo”

Other Names:

Rouruo, Raoruo, Jao-jo

Population Source:

 2,500 (1991 EDCL);
Out of a total Nu population of
27,123 (1990 census)

Location: NW Yunnan:

Lanping and Lushui counties

Status:

Officially included under Nu

Language: Sino-Tibetan,
Tibeto-Burman, Burmese-Lolo,
Lolo, Unclassified

Dialects: 0

Religion: Animism, Christianity

Christians: 100

Scripture: None

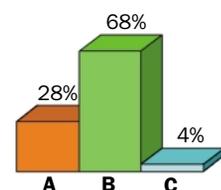
Jesus film: None

Gospel Recordings: None

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: ZAL00

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