



**Population in China:**

6,300 (1999)  
6,450 (2000)  
8,100 (2010)

**Location:** Yunnan

**Religion:** Polytheism

**Christians:** None Known

## Overview of the Zuoke

**Countries:** China

**Pronunciation:** "Zuoh-keh"

**Other Names:**

Niuweiba, Changpu, Baipu

**Population Source:**

6,300 (1999 J. Pelkey);  
Out of a total Yi population of  
6,572,173 (1990 census)

**Location:** SE Yunnan: Wenshan County: Dongshan, Guanlijie, and Panzhihua districts

**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

**Christians:** None known

**Scripture:** None

**Jesus film:** None

**Gospel Recordings:** None

**Christian Broadcasting:** None

**ROPAL code:** None

**Location:** More than 6,300 people belonging to the Zuoke ethnic group live in Wenshan County of Wenshan Prefecture, in the southeastern part of China's Yunnan Province. They live in a number of unmixed villages (i.e., communities inhabited solely by Zuoke people): Daxing, Wujia, Nanlinke, Kemali, Yahu, Shangziongdong, Shazipo, Jiahua, Yujiake, Bairenjiao, Shujingwan, and Liujiu. Only in four villages do the Zuoke live in mixed communities with other nationalities: Xiaxiangdong, Banzhai, Youshidongzhong, and Guniang.<sup>1</sup> In total, there are 16 Zuoke villages, all situated in the southeastern part of Wenshan County. All of the Zuoke villages are under the jurisdiction of either Dongshan or Guanlijie districts, except for Guniang Village which lies within Panzhihua District.

**Identity:** The Zuoke are a distinct ethnic group. They are proud of their unique ethnicity and history as a people and do not see themselves to be the same as any other people group. Despite these facts, the Chinese authorities have placed the Zuoke under the large and all-embracing Yi nationality which contains 120 different groups. Jamin Pelkey notes, "The Zuoke consider themselves different from the Poluo around them, and certainly do not consider themselves to be Yi."<sup>2</sup> Some of the alternate names for the Zuoke include *Niuweiba* (Cowtail), *Changpu* (Long Pu) and *Baipu* (White Pu). These are probably names given to them by other ethnic groups

and are not used by the Zuoke themselves.

**Language:** Although little is known about the Zuoke language, it is part of the Southeastern Yi branch of the Tibeto-Burman family. Zuoke is still spoken by all members of the ethnic group and is not in immediate danger.

**History:** According to Zuoke oral history, they originally lived in the Dali area of west central Yunnan and migrated to Wenshan around the time of the Nanzhao Kingdom (possibly about AD 900).

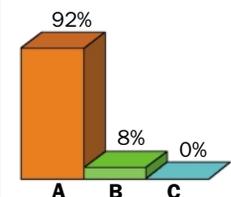
**Customs:** Chinese anthropologist Lu Jinyu visited the Zuoke extensively in the early 1990s. He studied Zuoke culture in all 16 of their villages and published a 30-page paper in Chinese.<sup>3</sup> Lu found that the Zuoke culture and language are thriving. The Zuoke practice a number of special customs and

festivals throughout the year, when they dress up in their traditional attire.

**Religion:** The Zuoke are polytheistic animists. Their worldview is shaped by their belief in the spirit world. The Zuoke live in simple houses near streams or some other water source. Traditionally, they do not dig wells, for fear of "striking the veins of the dragon" that they believe lives in the water underneath the earth.

**Christianity:** The Zuoke have no known Christians in their midst. Their close-knit communities and strong desire to maintain their culture possibly mean they will view Christianity as a threat to their way of life. To date, few Zuoke have ever heard of Jesus Christ. They are a unique unreached people group with no Scriptures, recordings, or ministries known to be targeting them with the gospel.

**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



Jamin Pelkey