



Jamin Pelkey

**Location:** Approximately 16,900 Guopu (also called *Guoluo*) people live in Weining County in the northwestern part of Guizhou Province and in Yiliang County in the northeastern section of Yunnan Province. They inhabit villages amid the imposing Wumeng Mountains which lie on a northeast-southwest axis along the border between Guizhou and Yunnan. The range averages 2,500 meters (8,200 ft.) above sea level, while its major peak, Xiliang, is at 2,800 meters (9,180 ft.). People living close to Weining Township harvest fish from Lake Caohai. *Caohai* means “grass sea” in Chinese and is so named because of the abundance of reeds along its shores.

**Identity:** The Guopu are one of 120 distinct groups of the Yi nationality in China. There are three ethnic names of Yi

groups in northwest Guizhou Province: Guopu, Guozou, and Guoluo. Although these names all sound similar and may refer to a common ethnic origin, today each name represents a distinct group.

**Language:** Guopu is an Eastern Yi language within the Tibeto-Burman family.

**History:** According to some sources, “It was the great Emperor Kang-He who gave the [rulers of Weining] the hereditary government of a number of Lolo [Yi] tribes in 1713. The Emperor Yang Cheng, wishing to consolidate the Chinese suzerainty which until that time had been purely nominal, took up arms against the Lolo in 1727, and crushed them. A great number of them abandoned their country, flying towards the west, crossing the Blue [Yangtze] River, and taking refuge in the wild ranges of

Chonolevo and Shama, then covered with forests, to which they set fire.”<sup>1</sup>

**Customs:** In Weining County, “since the slopes are gentle, strip cultivation rather than terracing is the norm, although the strips do tend to follow the natural contours of the land. In season, the ripening crops produce surprisingly vivid slashes of color, the predominant green tinged with contrasting highlights depending on the crop — pink and red for sweet buckwheat, white for bitter buckwheat, for example. The potato plant is visible everywhere, potatoes forming a dietary staple for the peoples of the Wumeng Mountains. Maize is also grown, but the climate and altitude are unfavorable for rice.”<sup>2</sup>

**Religion:** The traditional religion of the Guopu includes worship of the heavens, earth, mountains, rivers, trees, grass, bamboo, rocks, wells and, above all, the spirits of the sun and the moon.

**Christianity:** Approximately 3,000 Guopu profess Christ as their Lord. The China Inland Mission and the Methodists both had missionaries in Weining County. In 1907 they established the first church in the area. The missionaries soon saw the need to separate their Yi and Miao work. Between 1957 and 1966 the former China Inland Mission churches experienced severe persecution. Because of the government crackdowns against religion, the Yi churches including the Guopu went underground, meeting in

secret. In 1988, fifteen Yi churches were reopened.



**Population in China:**  
 16,500 (1999)  
 16,920 (2000)  
 21,200 (2010)  
**Location:** Guizhou, Yunnan  
**Religion:** Polytheism  
**Christians:** 3,000

## Overview of the Guopu

**Countries:** China  
**Pronunciation:** “Guoh-poo”  
**Other Names:** Gan Yi, Dry Yi, Guoluo, Kuo-lo, Guo  
**Population Source:**  
 16,500 (1999 AMO);  
 2,000 in Yunnan (1999 J. Pelkey);  
 Out of a total Yi population of 6,572,173 (1990 census)  
**Location:**  
*NW Guizhou:* Weining County;  
*NE Yunnan:* Yiliang County  
**Status:**  
 Officially included under Yi  
**Language:** Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Burmese-Lolo, Lolo, Northern Lolo, Yi, Eastern Yi  
**Dialects:** 0  
**Religion:** Polytheism, Animism, Ancestor Worship, Christianity  
**Christians:** 3,000  
**Scripture:** None  
**Jesus film:** None  
**Gospel Recordings:** None  
**Christian Broadcasting:** None  
**ROPAL code:** None

