



Jamin Pelkey

Location: More than 5,000 Tushu people live in Weining County of northwest Guizhou Province and in adjoining areas of Yiliang County in northeast Yunnan Province. One researcher estimates 2,000 Tushu people live on the Yunnan side of the border.¹

Identity: The Tushu are not the same ethnic group as the Tusu, even though both are officially included under the Yi nationality in China. The Tushu, who speak an Eastern Yi language, live a considerable distance apart from the Western Yi-speaking Tusu.

Language: The Tushu language is part of the Eastern Yi branch of Tibeto-Burman. Some publications have overstated the level of cultural and linguistic assimilation among the Yi groups in Guizhou Province. In one book it was stated, "Today in Guizhou only approximately 30 per cent of

the Yi people speak their own language, the rest use Chinese."² An official Chinese publication, the *Weining Yizu Huizu Miaozu Zizhixian Minzuzhi* (The Annals of the Minority Nationalities of the Weining Yi, Hui, and Miao Autonomous County), however, states that 85% of the Yi in Weining County still speak their native tongue and use it daily. Only in those districts where there is a smaller concentration of Yi (i.e., districts with less than 1,000 Yi) has the language been lost.³

History: Although many people presume the various Yi groups were the original inhabitants of the Weining area, the Yi themselves claim that when they first entered the region "they found a people already in possession of the land, whom they call the *P'u*, and whom the Chinese today speak of as the *Yao-ren*.... The Nosu [Yi] say the Yao-

ren moved to Szechuan [Sichuan]."⁴

Customs: Because of the poor quality of the soil, the Tushu cannot grow rice or most vegetables. Instead, the main crops in the area are corn and potatoes. In many places they also brew their own liquor, which is central to their culture.

Religion: Polytheism is the main religion of the Tushu. Spirit priests, or shamans, were once prevalent in their villages but are now rarely seen. Missionary Samuel Pollard, who worked in the area extensively in the early 1900s, noted in his diary: "Had a visit from a Nosu Wizard. He believes that chanting sacred books is expiation for the sins of dead people. In olden times, he told me, they had a book of chanting by which Wind and Rain could be called. But during the Mohammedan Rebellion the book was lost and has never been found again. They believe that all people go to Hades and that there is no Heaven. People saved by chanting come back again."⁵

Christianity: There are at least 400 Tushu Christians today, especially in the Weining area. In 1907 Pollard started to see the firstfruits of large-scale turning to Christ among the Yi of Guizhou. Not only the slaves but the landowners themselves were being saved. He wrote, "A blind Nosu [Yi] here who has become a Christian has released all his slaves and burnt the papers that bound them to him. He told them that they could remain as tenants. He has persuaded his nephew to do the same

and other families have followed suit. Some he has persuaded to destroy their idols."⁶



Population in China:
5,000 (1999)
5,120 (2000)
6,430 (2010)
Location: Guizhou, Yunnan
Religion: Polytheism
Christians: 400

Overview of the Tushu

Countries: China
Pronunciation: "Too-shoo"
Other Names: Tushupo, Tusu, Bai Yi, White Yi
Population Source: 5,000 (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, Shamanism, Christianity
Christians: 400
Scripture: None
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: None
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: None

