

Population in China:

184,500 (1999)
189,200 (2000)
237,400 (2010)

Location: Sichuan, Yunnan

Religion: Polytheism

Christians: 200

Overview of the Suodi

Countries: China

Pronunciation: "Swohr-dee"

Other Names: Suod, So-ti, Huili Yi, Suodi Nosu, Nuosu, Black Yi

Population Source:

184,500 (1999 AMO);
170,000 in Sichuan (1998 J. Matisoff);
14,500 in Yunnan (1999 J. Pelkey);
Out of a total Yi population of 6,572,173 (1990 census)

Location: *S Sichuan:* Huili, Dechang, Miyi, and Puge counties; *N Yunnan:* Yuanmou (6,000), Luquan (6,000), and Yongren (2,500) counties

Status: Officially included under Yi

Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Burmic, Burmese-Lolo, Lolo, Northern Lolo, Yi, Northern Yi

Dialects: 0

Religion: Polytheism, Animism, Ancestor Worship, Christianity

Christians: 200

Scripture: None

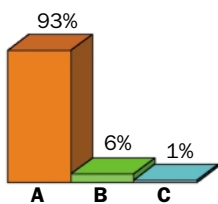
Jesus film: None

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

Location: Approximately 190,000 ethnic Suodi people live in the high mountains of southern China, including some 170,000 in Huili, Dechang, Miyi, and Puge counties of southern Sichuan Province,¹ and 14,500 in Yuanmou, Luquan, and Yongren counties of northern Yunnan Province.²

Identity: Few people have ever heard of the Suodi. Most publications have failed to distinguish the Suodi from the Nosu, who are the largest Yi group inhabiting the Daliangshan in southern Sichuan. Although the Suodi and Nosu languages are related, they are different enough that speakers have difficulty in communicating and often must revert to Chinese in order to be understood. Just as important, *Suodi* is the autonym of this group. They do not call themselves Nosu or Yi. The Suodi have been included under the official Yi nationality by the Chinese authorities.

Language: The Suodi language is part of the Northern Yi branch of Tibeto-Burman. The Nosu pictographic script is used in some Suodi villages. Prior to 1949 it was only used by shamans, so the script never gained widespread use among the common people.

History: For centuries the Suodi have been caught up in violence, slavery, and warfare with their Nosu neighbors and between respective clans of Suodi. As Chinese influence expanded into the Suodi area, frequent clashes between the Suodi and Chinese soldiers erupted. In 1911 the Suodi took several

hundred people into slavery to avenge a surprise Chinese attack near Huili a few weeks earlier. "Jubilant in victory, the Chinese loaded four ponies with Lolo [Suodi] heads to bring them to Ningyuanfu. Since this load was too heavy, the Chinese cut off the ears and brought them into the city to be presented to their commander."³

Customs: The Suodi are engaged in a wide variety of occupations, including traders, farmers, and herders. In the past many Suodi were opium addicts — a vice that is slowly resurfacing among Suodi youth.

Religion: A complex form of polytheism is practiced by the Suodi. They worship a host of deities and spirits, hoping their devotion will prevent disaster coming upon their families and villages. They also believe in *Yasomu*, an all-powerful deity, and they keep ancestral tablets.

Christianity: Catholic missionaries first reached out to the Suodi in Huili in 1802. In 1809, "Monsieur Hamel sent Thomas Tsin into this area, and he founded five stations, baptized seventy-four adults, and registered the names of thirty-six catechumens."⁴ American and Australian Baptist missionaries were also stationed at Huili before 1949. Little long-term work actually survived in the area. Numerous obstacles were placed before the missionaries by Chinese officials. "The desire of the missionaries was to plant a strong church among the savages in the mountains, but the opposition from both the [Suodi] and the Han Chinese was too great. They had to settle for spreading the faith among the Chinese."⁵ Today there are no more than a few hundred Catholic believers among the Suodi. Most members of this group have yet to hear the gospel for the first time.



Target Ministries