



**Population in China:**  
 223,000 (1981)  
 273,700 (2000)  
 327,300 (2010)  
**Location:** Yunnan, Guangxi  
**Religion:** Ancestor Worship  
**Christians:** 500

## Overview of the Giay

**Countries:** China, Vietnam, Laos, France, USA

**Pronunciation:** “Zay”

**Other Names:** Nhang, Niang, Nyang, Giang, Giai, Yay, Dioi, Nhaang, Yai, Dang, Pau Thin, Pu Na, Pu Nam, Cui Chu, Sa, Nong

**Population Source:** 223,000 (1981 *Pacific Language Atlas*); Out of a total Zhuang population of 15,489,630 (1990 census); 38,000 in Vietnam (1991); 5,000 in Laos (1995 L. Chazee); 100 in France (1992 B. Grimes); 5 in USA (1992 B. Grimes)

**Location:** SE Yunnan; SW Guangxi

**Status:** Officially included under Zhuang

**Language:** Daic, Tai, Northern Tai

**Dialects:** 0

**Religion:** Ancestor Worship, Animism, Polytheism, Christianity

**Christians:** 500

**Scripture:** None

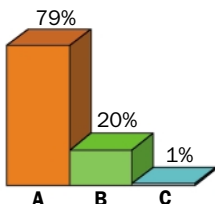
**Jesus film:** None

**Gospel Recordings:** None

**Christian Broadcasting:** None

**ROPAL code:** NHA00

### 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 a quarter of a million Giay (pronounced “Zay”) are located in eastern Yunnan and western Guangxi, along the southern Chinese border with Vietnam.<sup>1</sup> The Giay in Vietnam inhabit three provinces of the Red River valley that borders China. Five thousand also live in northern Laos. A few Giay refugee communities have also sprung up in France and southern California.

**Identity:** In Vietnam, the 38,000 Giay are given official status by the government. In China, the Giay have been combined with many other related groups to make up the huge Zhuang nationality. The Giay, however, speak their own language and possess a distinct historical identity. The Giay are also often referred to as the *Nhang*, which is a name given to them by the Vietnamese.

**Language:** According to one linguist, the Giay language is the same as Bouyei in China.<sup>2</sup> The Giay in China use a different script from their counterparts in Vietnam.<sup>3</sup>

**History:** The Giay who now live in Vietnam migrated there from China approximately 200 years ago, “perhaps during the Black and Yellow Flag Wars.”<sup>4</sup>

**Customs:** The traditional dress worn by Giay women included a knee-length skirt, but now the women have begun wearing normal Han Chinese clothing. Giay families are dominated by the males. Wives must obey their husbands, unmarried women must obey their fathers, and widows must

obey their sons. Giay women prefer to give birth in a squatting position, in a room where an altar has been erected to ensure that the spirits oversee a favorable birth. The placenta is later buried beneath the woman’s bed. When the baby is a month old the parents call for a ceremony to inform the ancestors of the birth and to name the baby.<sup>5</sup> The Giay consult horoscopes to determine the fate of the child.

**Religion:** The Giay practice ancestor worship. Many are also animists, while some of the current generation of youth are nonreligious, having received an atheistic education under the Communist system. Each Giay village has a “forbidden forest” called a *doong xia* where the biggest tree is considered sacred. Twice a year, worship of the spirit of the village is celebrated at the foot of the tree. Whenever these rituals take place, outsiders and visitors

are strictly forbidden to enter the village. Bamboo is cut down and placed at the entrance of the village to bar access to all strangers. Parts of sacrificed animals are then hung from the tree; ears of pigs or buffaloes, chickens’ feet, and tufts of animal hair are commonly used.

**Christianity:** Few Giay have heard that Jesus Christ died for them. They are trapped in superstition and a fear of evil spirits. There are no strong Christian communities near the Giay. The southern tip of China and northern Vietnam are two large unreached regions. A small number of Catholics do live among the Giay in China, and a few believers can be found among the Giay in Vietnam. There are no Scriptures in the Giay language, even though they are one of a relatively small number of groups in China which possesses its own orthography.



Paul Hattaway