

**Population in China:**  
 22,000 (1999)  
 22,550 (2000)  
 28,300 (2010)  
**Location:** Yunnan  
**Religion:** Polytheism  
**Christians:** None Known

## Overview of the Luowu

**Countries:** China

**Pronunciation:** "Luo-woo"

**Other Names:** Lowu, Alu, Lou-wou, Nisu, Lao-wou

**Population Source:**  
 22,000 (1999 J. Pelkey);  
 Out of a total Yi population of  
 6,572,173 (1990 census)

**Location:** Yunnan: Yimen (9,000), Lufeng (7,000), Shuangbai (4,000), and Chuxiong (2,000) counties

**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

**Christians:** None known

**Scripture:** None

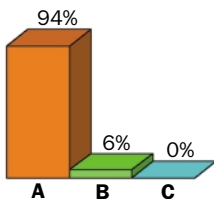
**Jesus film:** None

**Gospel Recordings:** Yi: Luowu

**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:** More than 22,000 people belonging to the Luowu ethnic group live in the mountains of central Yunnan Province. They are distributed in Yimen (9,000), Lufeng (7,000), Shuangbai (4,000), and Chuxiong (2,000) counties.<sup>1</sup>

**Identity:** The Luowu, who were first referred to in a 1909 study,<sup>2</sup> are one of numerous subgroups of the official Yi nationality. The Luowu were described in 1913 as timid and peaceful. Ninety percent of the people suffered from goiter, while other prevalent diseases included malaria, smallpox, leprosy, typhoid fever, and tuberculosis.<sup>3</sup> The Luowu living in the Tongchang District of Yimen County call themselves *Alu*. These people reportedly speak a language so different from the Nisu (another Yi subgroup) in the southern part of their own district that they have to use Chinese to communicate with each other.<sup>4</sup>

**Language:** The Luowu language, which enjoys widespread usage among the people, is part of the Eastern Yi language affiliation.<sup>5</sup> Luowu is different from Laowu, which is reportedly a Western Yi variety, and from Lawu, said to be Southern Yi. The Luowu and Lawu, however, are said to be originally descended from the Laowu.

**History:** The Luowu are believed to have originated in Wuding County, northern Yunnan. Chinese records state that the Luowu lived there in the 1380s, in the early years of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). Because of their many expeditions the Luowu were

allowed to serve in the local court of the area. They migrated to other parts of Chuxiong Prefecture and ended up where they live today.<sup>6</sup>

**Customs:** The 1995 *Chuxiong Xian Zhi* states, "The Luowu are monogamous and prefer to marry only other Luowu. A

**Religion:** The Luowu are polytheists. They live in fear of and bondage to a number of deities and demons. They believe that, although some spirits are good, most are vengeful and bad, desiring to kill and destroy them. The Luowu also venerate their ancestors to the fourth or fifth generation.



Jamin Pelkey

Luowu couple meets through a matchmaker and then becomes engaged. A Luowu wedding ceremony lasts for three days. On the first day the bridegroom gets up at daybreak and goes to the home of his bride where he meets with his matchmaker, bride, and all of her relatives to present wedding gifts to them. Many important rituals ensue. On the final day the *suona* (a long horn which emits a high-pitched sonorous wail) is blown. The bride and her entourage are forbidden to enter the house of the groom until the bride's family have blown the *suona* horn. The two are considered married when the bride has entered the home of her bridegroom.<sup>7</sup>

**Christianity:** Many early missionaries were great ambassadors for Christ. Maria Dyer, who became Hudson Taylor's wife, revealed her deep commitment when she considered Taylor's marriage proposal. Dyer wrote, "If he loves me more than Jesus he is not worthy of me — if he were to leave the Lord's work for the world's honour, I would have nothing further to do with him." However, few missionaries working in China prior to their expulsion in 1949 targeted the groups in the mountains of central Yunnan. As a result, the Luowu remain unreached today, although gospel recordings in their language were produced in 1999.