

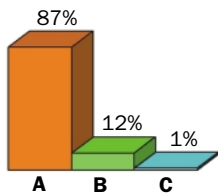


**Population in China:**  
 31,000 (1999)  
 31,750 (2000)  
 39,900 (2010)  
**Location:** Yunnan  
**Religion:** Polytheism  
**Christians:** 20

## Overview of the Tusu

- Countries:** China
- Pronunciation:** "Too-soo"
- Other Names:**  
Tusupo, Tu, Turen, Tuzu
- Population Source:**  
31,000 (1999 J. Pelkey);  
Out of a total Yi population of  
6,572,173 (1990 census)
- Location:** *N Yunnan:* Xiangyun  
(15,000), Binchuan (13,000),  
and Dayao (3,000) counties
- Status:**  
Officially included under Yi
- Language:** Sino-Tibetan,  
Tibeto-Burman, Burmese-Lolo,  
Lolo, Northern Lolo, Yi,  
Western Yi
- Dialects:** 0
- Religion:** Polytheism, Animism,  
Ancestor Worship, Christianity
- Christians:** 20
- 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



Jamin Pelkey

**Location:** Approximately 31,000 Tusu people live in the western central part of Yunnan Province in southwest China. In Xiangyun County the Tusu inhabit the Da'aonai Community of Luwu District; the Jindan, Zhifang, and Dacang communities of Xiashuang District; the Jiangwei Community of Pupeng District; and all the communities within Dongshan District. In Dayao County the Tusu mainly inhabit villages within the Beiyangdi Community in the Sanchahe District, but are also thought to live in some villages of Tiesuo District. The Tusu also live in Binchuan County, but their exact distribution in Binchuan has yet to be determined.

**Identity:** The Tusu actually call themselves *Tu*, but in *Operation China* their alternate name is used to avoid confusion with the official Tu nationality of Qinghai Province. The Chinese refer to many tribal peoples as *Tu* or *Tuzu*. As Jamin Pelkey explains, "In Chinese *tu* means 'dirt' or 'native' and *turen* means 'natives' or 'aborigines'." Nevertheless, this people actually refer to themselves as *Tusu* (Tu people) in their own language — that is to say, Tu is their autonym. This people began to call itself *Tu* in the seventh century AD."<sup>1</sup>

**Language:** The language of the Tusu has been classified by the Chinese as a variety

of Western Yi. Tusu speakers, however, cannot understand the speech of other Western Yi groups in their region and must revert to Chinese in order to communicate.

**History:** For more than 1,300 years the Tusu have appeared in Chinese records of Yunnan Province. The Tusu "are said to be descendants of the ancient Muocha tribe which moved from Baoshan to Weishan in ancient times. In the seventh century AD they moved to present-day Xiangyun County and later spread into southeastern Dayao and parts of Binchuan County."<sup>2</sup>

**Customs:** In some areas the Tusu love to come together and participate in local festivals, since it gives them a chance to relax and forget

about their hardships and struggles. The festivals also serve as a reunion for relatives and friends. The Tiger Dance Festival is held for one week during the first lunar month each year. Large feasts are held, and tribesmen take the opportunity to trade with each other.

**Religion:** At another time of the year the Tusu indulge in ceremonial washing and bathing, which represents a cleansing from sin for the past year's transgressions. Houses are also thoroughly cleaned out as the people bid to start the upcoming year afresh. They also eat glutinous rice, dance, sing, and get drunk. Polytheism (the worship of many gods), animism (spirit appeasement), and ancestor worship are the three main religions among the Tusu people.

**Christianity:** The status of Christianity among the Tusu is uncertain, but there are believed to be about 20 Catholic believers in Binchuan County. There are a number of Han Chinese and Bai churches in the area, but most of the people do not really understand the gospel. Many others have no awareness of the existence of Christianity at all. There are at present no Scriptures or recordings available in the Tusu language.