



**Population in China:**

15,000 (1987)  
19,460 (2000)  
23,900 (2010)

**Location:** Yunnan

**Religion:** Polytheism

**Christians:** 100

## Overview of the Yiche

**Countries:** China

**Pronunciation:** “Yee-cher”

**Other Names:** Yeche

**Population Source:**

15,000 (1987 Xie Shixun);  
Out of a total Hani population of  
1,253,952 (1990 census)

**Location:** S Yunnan: Honghe  
Prefecture: Chegu, Landi, and  
Dayangjie townships

**Status:**

Officially included under Hani

**Language:** Sino-Tibetan,  
Tibeto-Burman, Burmic,  
Burmese-Lolo, Lolo,  
Southern Lolo, Akha

**Dialects:** 0

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

**Christians:** 100

**Scripture:** None

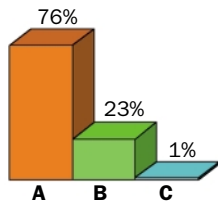
**Jesus film:** None

**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 19,000 members of the Yiche tribe inhabit isolated villages in the Ailao Mountains. They are located in parts of Chegu, Landi, and Dayangjie townships. Honghe Prefecture is divided by two large rivers: the Honghe (Red) River which flows south into Vietnam and the Nanpanjiang River which is the upper section of the Pearl River. Banana, pineapple, and pomegranate are grown, while sugarcane, peanuts, and tobacco are important cash crops.

**Identity:** The Yiche are part of the Hani nationality in China. Yiche women are unique among all the peoples of China because they wear shorts. They also wear conical hats, similar to the Jino people, and short-sleeved blue blouses held together by five-colored girdles. “The clothes are layered one on top of each other, numbering from six to more than a dozen.... The layers indicate a family’s financial standing. Women wear black shorts with pleats at the legs.”<sup>1</sup>

**Language:** Yiche is similar to other Hani languages in the area. The Yiche’s knowledge of Mandarin is poor, especially among women and children.

**History:** Little is known about the origins of the Yiche people, because they have never possessed a written script. Legends are handed down orally from generation to generation. The Yiche say they were once part of a tribe of 7,000 families, living “on a vast fertile plain away in the east where the sun rises.”<sup>2</sup>

**Customs:** Yiche houses are 16 stories high and have tiled roofs. The upper floor serves as a storehouse and the lower floor as the living quarters. Every year in the fifth lunar month the Yiche celebrate the Kuzhazha Festival. “According to traditional custom, every family must light pine torches after sunset.

Burning torches in hand, they walk around the house to perform a ‘mopping up’ and then follow a forked chestnut rod to the top of the road outside the hamlet and place the torches beside the chestnut rod. This drives evil away from the house ensuring the coming year is filled with peace and happiness.”<sup>3</sup>

**Religion:** The Yiche are polytheists. “Most of their villages have temples where a multitude of gods are worshipped. These gods are

associated with the earth, water, and fire, as well as famous ancestors. It is common for brothers of the same family to worship their dead parents at the eldest brother’s house.”<sup>4</sup> On the lunar New Year’s Eve, Yiche children hear stories about their ancestors and learn their family genealogies.

**Christianity:** Some parts of Honghe Prefecture experienced a mass people movement to Christ in the 1940s as a result of the labors of missionaries. During the Cultural Revolution great persecution broke out against the church. Many fledgling believers fell away, but others “conducted Sunday services in cattle stables or on mountain peaks.”<sup>5</sup> Today most believers in the area are Kado or Biyo, but there may be a few Yiche Christians.



Pauli Hattaway