

Unreached Peoples: China's Minority Groups

#4 the Dai

by Paul Hattaway

The Dai people, a minority group in southern Yunnan, China, are in need of prayer and evangelistic outreach as they face persecution and have a potential for future strategic impact.

Scripture: Matthew 5:10

Topics: "Missions Outreach", "Persecuted Church"

Description

This sermon explores the rich cultural tapestry and unique lifestyle of the Dai people in southern Yunnan, highlighting their traditions, beliefs, and challenges. It delves into the influence of Buddhism on the Dai community, their openness to Christianity, and the increasing persecution they face. The sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer for the Dai children and the potential impact of their faith on the evangelization of the region.

Transcript

In the lush tropics of southern Yunnan, it feels like the rainforests of Brazil. The monsoon season lasts from May to October. The green lasts year-round.

At the southernmost tip of Yunnan province is an exotic wonderland called Xishuangbanna. This small area is a refuge for elephants and peacocks and boasts over 5,000 higher forms of plant life. The locals call Xishuangbanna the jewel in the crown of the flora and fauna kingdom.

Over the centuries, at least 13 different minority people groups have settled in this choice land. The collage of cultures in just one marketplace fill a tourist's photo album. This video profiles the larger groups of southern Yunnan, the Dai and the Hani peoples.

Visiting several other people groups as well, including the Bulong, Lahu, Genua, Jinghua, and Kutsong peoples. This exclusive footage is meant to give you a push off the dock. So come along as a tourist with a missionary mind and heart.

The mighty Mekong River courses through southeastern Asia. Originating in central China, it flows through Tibet and Yunnan province, leaving China to skirt the borders of Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia, and through Vietnam to the sea. Transportation on the Mekong links all of southeast Asia and

opens the doors to increased trade between these diverse nations.

But near the border of China and Myanmar, formerly Burma, the river is as narrow as a stone's throw. Crossing the border between these two nations is like crossing the street to a neighbor's home. The people say that China's chickens lay eggs in Myanmar, and Myanmar's melon vines bear melons in China.

Burmese minority peoples, such as these women, cross the river to trade with one of China's most prosperous minority groups, the Dai people. The Dai are interested in novelty items from southeast Asia, such as cosmetics, women's fashions, and cigarettes from Hong Kong. Their trade partners from Myanmar are eager to buy tropical fruits, peanuts, purple rice, and other products grown in the fields of Sichuan, Myanmar.

The Dai people number just over one million and enjoy the highest social status of any of the minorities in southern Yunnan. While other groups work the rugged mountainsides, the Dai villages are found in the most fertile lowlands. Purple rice is a delicacy grown by one specific branch of the Dai, called the flowery-waisted Dai, named for the unique clothing style of the women.

The flowery-waisted Dai live in adobe houses with flat roofs. Farm tools are simple, and the people live in the harmony of small community life. A short trip up the river leads to another kind of Dai village.

This branch of the Dai people is known as the Dai village. Another branch of the Dai people is called the water Dai. The majority of the Dai belong to this subgroup.

Some build homes on bamboo stilts in the swamps of the Mekong River. Life in these villages is adapted to the true climate of the tropics. Another branch of the Dai group is the dry land Dai.

These people live inland in two-story homes with thatched roofs. Both dry land and water Dai women dress in the typical Dai costume. Ancient pagodas in this region of Xishuangbanna boast the cultural pride of the Dai people and the importance of Buddhism among this people group.

The Dai follow Hinayana Buddhism, introduced into their area many centuries ago. The landmarks of their culture are the opulent temples and shrines boasting their great devotion to Buddha. Daily temple rituals demand observance by all members of the community.

All young Dai boys enter the monastery at the age of seven, where for six years they learn about their culture, survival skills, and the philosophy of Buddha. Churches in different parts of the world have adopted the Dai people as targets for evangelistic prayer, and it's working. Evangelists from many nearby countries are finding a real openness to Christ in many villages, and the Bible is now available in the Dai language.

Although the percentage of Christians is still small, these new saints can be very strategic in the future evangelization of southern Yunnan. Sadly, the Chinese government has responded with increased severe persecution of Dai Christians. Now more than ever, the Dai are in need of a prayer covering.

Pray that the future of these Dai children will be forever changed by Christ.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/QvlyZsz0dMU.mp4>

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