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Location: In 1999 it was estimated that 12,600 Ati people lived in parts of central Yunnan Province in southwest China. The Ati have lived with a shrouded identity for centuries, known only to those who live close enough for direct contact. The majority live in Huaniang County, situated south of Kunming City. Smaller numbers also live in neighboring Jianshui County.¹

Identity: The Ati are one of dozens of distinct tribes and ethnolinguistic groups the Chinese authorities combined to form the official Yi nationality. There are 120 distinct subgroups of Yi in China. The Ati are only distantly related to other Yi groups in the area, such as the Axi, Adu, Long, Xiqi, and Sani.

Language: The Ati language has recently been found to be part of the Southeastern Yi language family.² Because they live in counties dominated by the Han Chinese, most Ati also speak Mandarin Chinese. This does not include the elderly or the women and children in more remote locations.

History: Several hundred years ago, tribes like the Ati lived relatively uninterrupted lives in the hills of central Yunnan. The Han Chinese then flooded the area in massive waves of migration, especially over the last 150 years. Today groups like the Ati, swamped amid the sea of Han Chinese, are barely noticeable to outsiders. As the Han grew in numbers and influence, they forced the Ati off the best land and

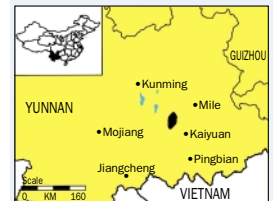
into the mountains. The Ati were forced to move in order to retain their own customs and ethnicity. Those who stayed in the rural areas were soon absorbed culturally and linguistically.

Customs: The Ati share many cultural traits with the Adu, Long, and Xiqi groups who also inhabit Huaniang County and speak Yi languages. The Ati live in two-story wooden homes that are built as a safeguard against intruders and wild animals. Most Ati are engaged in agriculture, but in recent years many youth have ventured into the cities and towns of Yunnan looking for work. Those fortunate enough to gain employment send most of their income home to support their families.

Religion: The Ati are ardent animists and polytheists. In particular they revere and worship the Dragon god. Most Ati villages have a “dragon tree” set aside for this purpose. The antireligion and antisuperstition campaigns of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) caused many Ati rituals to cease. As government opposition has eased, the Ati have slowly revived their former beliefs.

Christianity: A Chinese government survey in 1989 found there to be 23 Christians among the Yi in Huaxi District of Huaniang County.³ These are probably people from the Ati tribe. Little mission work was done in this part of Yunnan Province, although some Catholic endeavors may have resulted in the small amount of fruit that remains today. Despite the presence of these few families of

believers, most Ati are completely unaware of the gospel. No Scriptures or recordings have been translated into the Ati language.



Population in China:
 12,600 (1999)
 12,900 (2000)
 16,200 (2010)
Location: Yunnan
Religion: Polytheism
Christians: 30

Overview of the Ati

Countries: China
Pronunciation: “Ah-tee”
Other Names:
Population Source:
 12,600 (1999 J. Pelkey);
 Out of a total Yi population of 6,572,173 (1990 census)
Location: *Yunnan:* Huaniang and Jianshui counties
Status:
 Officially included under Yi
Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Burmese-Lolo, Lolo, Northern Lolo, Yi, Southeastern Yi
Dialects: 0
Religion: Polytheism, Animism, No Religion, Christianity
Christians: 30
Scripture: None
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: None
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: None

