



Population in China:
 17,000 (1982)
 25,800 (2000)
 33,300 (2010)
Location: Guizhou
Religion: Polytheism
Christians: 400

Overview of the Cai

Countries: China

Pronunciation: "Tsai"

Other Names: Caijia, Se-ni, Ma Ah-oh-na, Cai Jia Miao, Song Ren, Man Ni, Awuzi

Population Source:
 17,000 (1982 *Minzu Shibie Wenxian Ziliao Huibian*)

Location: *W Guizhou:* Dafang, Zhijin, Nayong, Weining, Bijie, and Qianxi counties

Status: Counted in census as an *Undetermined Minority*

Language: Daic, Tai, Unclassified

Dialects: 0

Religion: Polytheism, Animism, Ancestor Worship, Christianity

Christians: 400

Scripture: None

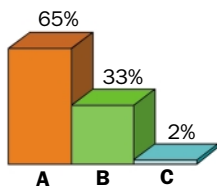
Jesus film: None

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: In 1982 a total of 17,000 Cai people inhabited communities in western Guizhou province. They are concentrated in Dafang, Zhijin, Nayong, Weining, Bijie, and Qianxi counties.¹ The Cai live in the vicinity of numerous ethnic groups, including several distinct Yi and Miao groups. The Cai may call themselves *Man Ni*. The Miao call the Cai *Se-ni*; the Yi call them *Ah-oh-ma*, and the Han know them as *Cai Jia Miao*.

Identity: The Cai, who are also known as the Caijia, have never been included as part of any official nationality by the Chinese authorities. In the 1982 census they were placed in a list of *Undetermined Minorities*. The Cai were just one of 80 groups in Guizhou on this list which totaled more than 900,000 people.² In 1985 many of these groups were assigned into existing nationalities, but scholars remained baffled by the complexity of the Cai. They remain an unclassified group, although the authorities believe them to be related to the Miao. The Cai consider themselves distinct from all other ethnic groups in the region and strongly insist on being granted their own minority status.

Language: It is believed that the Cai speak a language which is part of the Tai linguistic family, possibly related to Gelao; however, no specific research has ever been conducted to determine their linguistic affiliation.

History: During the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), when the Cai were a stronger and much larger group than

today, they appeared in historical accounts as the *Song Ren*. They are believed to have fragmented into smaller groups over the past 300 years. Today the Lu ethnic group are ethnoculturally close to the Cai. The Cai intermarry with the Lu and consider them to have once been related.

Customs: Dafang, where most Cai live, is renowned across China for its beautiful lacquerware. More than 70 varieties of wild azaleas and rhododendrons also grow in the area. The Cai used to wear clothes made of fur. This can still be seen in some of the more remote Cai villages today. Many Cai are employed as shepherds and goatherds. A sizable number also work in the carpet-making industry.

Religion: Most Cai worship many gods and spirits, although in recent decades an increasing Christian presence has also emerged

among them. The polytheistic Cai blow leaves to worship spirits. When a Cai person dies, the people attending the funeral are not permitted to cry or show any remorse. Instead, they walk around the corpse and sing.

Christianity: A conservative estimate places the number of Cai Christians at 400. The true number of believers may be significantly higher. Most Cai Christians heard the gospel from Yi and Miao evangelists who were sent to reach out to them. The northwest Guizhou region was first targeted by missionaries in the late 1800s. A mass people movement to Christ occurred in the early 1900s, especially among the A-Hmao (Big Flowery Miao). Today there are numerous Christian communities in Dafang County, but believers live in dire poverty and have few Bibles.



Paul Hattaway