

**Location:** The small Tanglang people group — who numbered 947 people within 185 families in a 1996 study — inhabit eight villages in the isolated Tanglang Basin in the southern part of Lijiang County.<sup>1</sup> The locals call the basin *Tanglangba*. Administratively the Tanglang live in the Hongmai Community of Tai'an District. The Tanglang Basin is watered by the Tanglang River and is surrounded by a rim of mountains. During the rainy season, roads to the Basin are impassable; visitors are required to hike three hours from the nearest road in order to reach them.

**Identity:** The Tanglang tribe has been officially included as part of the Yi nationality in China. In the 1920s one study in Lijiang County alone listed 26 different minority groups.<sup>2</sup> The Tanglang believe they are a unique people group, with their own set of customs and their own language. The name *Tanglang* may mean “praying mantis” in Chinese.

**Language:** The language of the Tanglang appears to be a mixture of Lisu and Bai and is not even a Yi variety. It suggests the Tanglang may have been completely misclassified as a Yi group. Tanglang children are still taught their language, which is used extensively despite their small population. Most Tanglang are adequately bilingual in Chinese.

**History:** Some Tanglang claim that they migrated to their present location about 200 years ago.<sup>3</sup> They traveled on horseback from an unspecified

location in the north and settled in the verdant basin, unoccupied at the time. Other Tanglang say that they have always lived in their present location. Despite living in the vicinity of minority groups such as the Naxi, Pumi, and Bai, the Tanglang have managed to preserve their own distinct culture and customs.

**Customs:** A massive earthquake rocked Lijiang County on 3 February 1996, killing 300 people, injuring 40,000, and leaving 300,000 homeless. The epicenter of the earthquake was near the Tanglang area. Many of their homes were destroyed, and because they are desperately poor, they have expended much energy since that time repairing their homes and trying to get their lives back to normal.

**Religion:** Every year the whole Tanglang community gathers to offer sacrifices to a sacred Mountain god. They believe a demon lives inside the largest mountains in the region. The demon must be placated for their lives to prosper and for no ill fortune



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to come their way. The Tanglang had a sacred pagoda, but it was destroyed in the 1996 earthquake. They make a pilgrimage to their sacred mountain every 13th day of the fifth lunar month. They offer sacrifices to the Mountain god.

**Christianity:** The Tanglang have never appeared in any previous ethnolinguistic people group lists of China. They are a completely unevangelized and unknown group. The Tanglang's remote location has prevented outside Christians from having any contact with them. The nearest significant Christian community to them are the Lisu believers farther to the west.



**Population in China:**  
 947 (1996)  
 1,040 (2000)  
 1,300 (2010)  
**Location:** Yunnan  
**Religion:** Polytheism  
**Christians:** None Known

## Overview of the Tanglang

**Countries:** China

**Pronunciation:** “Tung-lung”

**Other Names:** Tanglang Jiang

**Population Source:**  
 947 (1996 J. Pelkey);  
 Out of a total Yi population of 6,572,173 (1990 census)

**Location:** NW Yunnan: Tanglang Basin in Lijiang County

**Status:**  
 Officially included under Yi

**Language:** Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Burmese-Lolo, Lolo, Northern Lolo, Unclassified

**Dialects:** 0

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

**Christians:** None known

**Scripture:** None

**Jesus film:** None

**Gospel Recordings:** None

**Christian Broadcasting:** None

**ROPAL code:** None

