



**Population in China:**  
 6,000 (1996)  
 6,570 (2000)  
 8,130 (2010)  
**Location:** Hainan Island  
**Religion:** Islam  
**Christians:** None Known

## Overview of the Utsat

**Countries:** China

**Pronunciation:** “Oot-sat”

**Other Names:** Huihui, Hainan Cham, Utset, Tsat, Sanya

**Population Source:**  
 6,000 (1996 AMO);  
 4,500 (1991 I. Maddieson);  
 Out of a total Hui population of  
 8,602,978 (1990 census)

**Location:** *S Hainan Island:*  
 Huihui and Huixin villages in  
 the Yanglan District, Yaxian  
 County, near Sanya

**Status:**  
 Officially included under Hui

**Language:** Austronesian,  
 Malayo-Polynesian,  
 Western Malayo-Polynesian,  
 Sundic, Malayic,  
 Achinese-Chamic, Chamic,  
 Northern Chamic

**Dialects:** 0

**Religion:** Islam

**Christians:** None known

**Scripture:** None

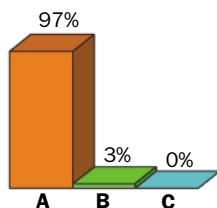
**Jesus film:** None

**Gospel Recordings:** None

**Christian Broadcasting:** None

**ROPAL code:** HUQ00

### 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



Paul Hattaway

**Location:** More than 6,500 Utsat live on the southern tip of China’s tropical Hainan Island. The majority live in the two large villages of Huihui and Huixin in the Yanglan District of Yaxian County, on the outskirts of Sanya City.<sup>1</sup>

**Identity:** The Utsat are known by a variety of names. The Chinese call them *Huihui*, a repetition of Hui — the generic term for Muslims in China. They call themselves *Utsat* or *Tsat*. Linguists in the past have called them *Hainan Cham*, in reference to their linguistic affiliation to the Cham people of Southeast Asia. The Utsat have been officially included as part of the Hui nationality in China, based solely on their adherence to Islam. The Utsat share no ethnic, historical, or linguistic relationship with the Hui. One writer comments, “It is unfortunate the [Utsat] have been assigned to this larger ‘nationality’, since the association is likely to discourage research directed specifically at this tiny group of Muslims.”<sup>2</sup>

**Language:** Utsat is unique among the languages of China because it is a member of the Chamic branch of the Malayo-Polynesian language family.<sup>3</sup> All Utsat are able to speak their mother tongue which, due to a long history of isolation, has

diverged substantially from other Chamic languages.<sup>4</sup> The Utsat are a multilingual race. In addition to their own tongue, many can also speak Li, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Maihua — a local dialect of Cantonese.<sup>5</sup> An increasing number of Utsat men are also learning Arabic to enable them to read the Qur’an.

**History:** German ethnographer Hans Stubel first “discovered” the Utsat people in 1930, but their history on Hainan Island is believed to date back to the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, when they claim to have migrated by sea from present-day Vietnam or Cambodia. The Utsat still derive most of their income from fishing.

**Customs:** Utsat women wear traditional Muslim head coverings, except on special occasions when they wear a multicolored, flamboyant ethnic dress indicative of their unique origins. The southern part of Hainan Island is frequently lashed by severe typhoons. Much of the Utsat’s time is spent recovering from the damage these storms cause. Fishing nets, boats, and homes are destroyed every year.

**Religion:** The Utsat were already Muslim by the time they arrived in China, and they have never wavered in their beliefs. They are the only Muslim community on Hainan Island. Muslim teachers from Malaysia have traveled to Hainan Island and taught the Qur’an to the Utsat since the mid-1980s. The Utsat do not eat pork, and they live in tightly structured communities.

**Christianity:** Few Utsat have ever heard the gospel, and there has never been a single known Christian from among their group. They are considered resistant to change, since much of their identity as a people is strongly linked with their religion. The nearest vibrant Christian community to the Utsat are the Indonesians on Hainan Island. It is possible that audio gospel materials in the Cham language of Southeast Asia may be usable among the Utsat.