



Population in China:

1,480,750 (1990)
1,910,200 (2000)
2,464,100 (2010)

Location:

Guizhou, Guangxi, Hunan

Religion: Polytheism

Christians: 1,000

Overview of the Southern Dong

Countries: China, Vietnam

Pronunciation: "Dong"

Other Names: Kam, Tung, Tungchia, Tungjen, Gam, Tong, Tongjia

Population Source:

1,480,750 (1990 census);
Out of a total Dong population of 2,514,014 (1990 census);
Also in two villages in Vietnam

Location: The area where SE Guizhou, W Hunan, and N Guangxi meet

Status:

Officially included under Dong

Language: Daic, Kam-Sui

Literacy: 55%

Dialects: 3

Religion: Polytheism, Animism, Ancestor Worship

Christians: 1,000

Scripture: None

Jesus film: In progress

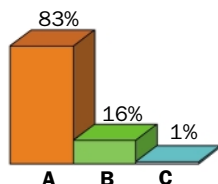
Gospel Recordings:

Dong: Southern #04831

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: KMC00

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: The Southern Dong are the larger of the two Dong language groups in China. Almost 1.5 million speakers of Southern Dong were counted in the 1990 language census, from a total of 2.5 million people in the Dong nationality. The Southern Dong live primarily in the Rongjiang, Jinping, Liping, Zhenyang, and Congjiang counties in Guizhou Province; Longsheng, Sanjiang, and Rongshui counties in northeastern Guangxi; and Tongdao County in Hunan Province. Two villages of Dong are also located in northern Vietnam, although only one individual in Vietnam is still able to speak Dong.

Identity: The Southern Dong speakers are counted as part of the official Dong nationality. The Southern Dong have retained more of their culture and ethnicity than the Northern Dong.

Language: Southern Dong, which is a member of the Daic language family, is related in part to the Zhuang, Maonan, Mulao, and Li languages.¹ A Dong orthography using Roman letters was developed in 1958 but has never gained widespread acceptance among the people. Despite their large population, the Dong have never migrated outside of China. Recent research found just one individual who spoke the Dong language in Vietnam.²

History: During the Qin and Han dynasties (221 BC–AD 220) there were numerous tribes scattered across southern China. At that time the ancestors of today's Dong were slaves. The slave society gradually eroded

away during the Tang Dynasty (618–907).³ For countless centuries the Dong have lived alongside Miao and Zhuang people and have absorbed numerous aspects of their culture and language.

Customs: The Dong love to stage bullfights. Every Dong village raises its own bull. "As the bulls lock horns and clash and strain to topple each other, the Dong cheer on their favourite beasts and toast them in fiery *mao tai* [whisky]."⁴ A Dong girl is usually taught to weave and embroider at the age of seven. By the age of 12, she starts working on her wedding dress. Marriage usually occurs at the age of 17 or 18. After marriage, a woman lives with her parents until after the birth of the first child. At that time, she is allowed to move into her husband's home.

Religion: The Dong are a highly superstitious people who worship a host of demons and gods. They make annual offerings to the spirits of their village, homes, and crops. Ancestral altars are also found in the main room of most homes.

Christianity: The China Inland Mission commenced work among the Dong around 1910. In the 1930s missionaries from Liuzhou in Guangxi traveled to northern Guangxi and won 80 Southern Dong to Christ near Fuluh Township. In 1998 one ministry led several of this group to Christ. They returned to their village and started a house fellowship of 40 people.⁵ Gospel recordings and the *Jesus* film are currently being produced in the Southern Dong language.



Paul Hattaway