



Paul Hattaway

**Location:** Approximately 430,000 members of the Shui minority live in southern Guizhou Province, primarily in Duyun, Sandu, and Libo counties. In addition, small numbers of Shui are located in northern Guangxi.<sup>1</sup> The descendants of eight Shui families who migrated out of China about 50 years ago live in northern Vietnam.

**Identity:** The Shui are one of China's 55 official minorities. Their name, which means "water" in Chinese, reflects their history. They were originally part of the Luo-yue tribe who lived along China's southeastern coast. Centuries later they were forced to migrate inland to their present mountainous location. Today the Shui still have more than ten different words for "fish."

**Language:** Shui is a member of the Daic (Tai) linguistic family. The Shui

language of Yunnan and the Shui of Sandu in Guizhou are mutually unintelligible. There is a simple script in use among the Shui, but it is only known by village leaders and is not used by the common people. "The Shui have a system of symbols that is used for divination and geomancy. It is far too simple to have much of a linguistic function and seems to be little more than a set of magic symbols. A few of the 150 or so graphs are real drawings (such as a bird or a fish)... Most of the rest are borrowings from Chinese and are often written upside down or backwards, apparently to give the symbol more magical power."<sup>2</sup>

**History:** The Shui are proud of their history, which dates back as far as 200 BC in Chinese records. The Shui have traditionally enjoyed good relationships with the Chinese. A Shui man, Teng

Enming, was a founding member of the Chinese Communist Party.

**Customs:** Shui women wear a white headdress for three years after the death of a relative. After the three-year period they can wear black again. Most Shui village leaders are able to read the 500 to 600-year-old ancient Shui script. The book contains a Shui code of ethics and behavior. Some leaders are teaching the script to young Shui boys. The Shui live in villages that are arranged according to family clans.

**Religion:** All Shui worship their ancestors. This is considered their main religion. It keeps them in bondage to the past and prevents them from receiving Christ, because to do so would be considered an insult to their ancestors.

**Christianity:** Several French Catholic missionaries first went to the Shui in 1884. By the early 1900s some 30 Catholic churches and 5,000 Shui Christians existed. However, all the believers were put to death or fell away during the anti-Christian movement of 1906. In recent years, missionaries have traveled to the villages that formerly contained Catholic churches and have not found a trace of Christianity remaining — neither old buildings nor any knowledge of the gospel among the people. Today there are reported to be only "a small number of Christians"<sup>3</sup> among the Shui. Another source adds, "a handful of Catholic believers remain."<sup>4</sup> A breakthrough came in late 1997 and 1998 when approximately 100 Shui

people came to Christ and were being discipled by Chinese believers.<sup>5</sup>



**Population in China:**  
 341,600 (1990)  
 430,000 (2000)  
 541,400 (2010)  
**Location:** Guizhou, Guangxi  
**Religion:** Ancestor Worship  
**Christians:** 200

## Overview of the Shui

**Countries:** China, Vietnam

**Pronunciation:** "Shway"

**Other Names:** Sui, Ai Sui, Sui Li, Suipo, Shuijia, Suijia

**Population Source:**  
 345,993 (1990 census);<sup>6</sup>  
 286,487 (1982 census);  
 156,099 (1964 census);  
 133,566 (1953 census);  
 55 speakers of Shui live in Vietnam (1978).

**Location:** *S Guizhou:* Sandu, Duyun, Rongjiang, Duyun City, Dushan, Danzhai, and Libo counties;  
*N Guangxi:* Nandan, Yishan, and Rongshui counties

**Status:**

An official minority of China

**Language:** Daic, Kam-Sui

**Literacy:** 37%

**Dialects (3):** Sandong, Yang'an, Pandong

**Religion:** Ancestor Worship, Animism, Daoism, No Religion, Christianity

**Christians:** 200

**Scripture:** None

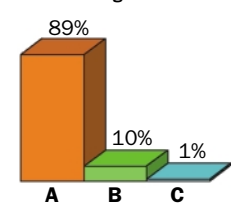
**Jesus film:** None

**Gospel Recordings:** Shui #04855

**Christian Broadcasting:** None

**ROPAL code:** SW100

## 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