



**Population in China:**

2,309 (1990)  
2,690 (2000)  
3,140 (2010)

**Location:** Tibet, Yunnan

**Religion:** Tibetan Buddhism  
**Christians:** 100

## Overview of the Northern Naxi

**Countries:** China

**Pronunciation:** "Na-shee"

**Other Names:** Deqen Naxi

**Population Source:**

2,309 (1990 census);  
Out of a total Naxi population  
of 278,009 (1990 census)

**Location:**

*SE Tibet:* Markam County (1,236);  
*NW Yunnan:* Deqen County  
(1,073)

**Status:**

Officially included under Naxi

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

**Dialects:** 0

**Religion:** Tibetan Buddhism,  
Polytheism, Ancestor Worship,  
Christianity

**Christians:** 50 to 100

**Scripture:** None

**Jesus film:** None

**Gospel Recordings:** None

**Christian Broadcasting:** None

**ROPAL code:** None



Paul Hattaway

**Location:** According to the 1990 census, 2,309 Northern Naxi live in the highlands between Yunnan and the Tibet Autonomous Region in southwest China. They inhabit villages on both banks of the Lancang (Mekong) River. Near the source of its origin, the river is crystal clear and narrow. By the time it spills into the ocean in Vietnam it is a vast, dirty waterway that measures 11 kilometers (6.8 mi.) wide at its broadest point. The majority of Northern Naxi (1,236) live in Markam County just inside the Tibet Autonomous Region. An additional 1,073 live in Deqen County in northern Yunnan Province.

**Identity:** The Northern Naxi are linguistically distinct from other groups of Naxi in China, including those who live in Zhongdian County. The Northern Naxi also possess a different style of dress and customs from their counterparts in Lijiang. The Northern Naxi, including those inside Tibet, still proudly identify themselves as members of the Naxi nationality.

**Language:** Although no detailed linguistic studies have been done to determine the difference between Northern and Lijiang Naxi, one missionary who visited the area played the new Naxi gospel recording and found the Northern Naxi could only understand about 60% of the vocabulary.<sup>1</sup> Because of several centuries of geographic separation, Northern Naxi today displays

many influences from Deqen Tibetan, while Lijiang Naxi has been greatly influenced by Chinese.

**History:** Today's various branches of the Naxi nationality in China, including the Mosuo, Naru, and Naheng, all share the same migration stories. They claim they originated on the Tibetan Plateau and migrated en

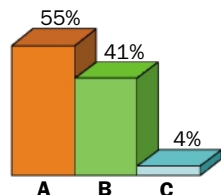
masse approximately 1,000 years ago in search of better pasturelands. The Northern Naxi claim they came to live in their present location by two means. Firstly, during the original migration certain families who had fallen sick or weak were left behind while the main body continued their journey south. They settled down along the banks of the Lancang River and gradually formed into communities. Secondly, the Northern Naxi say Naxi soldiers from Lijiang were sent north in the past to guard the fertile valleys from invaders and bandits. Many of these soldiers stayed behind in the area.

**Customs:** To an outsider, there is little to visually distinguish the Northern Naxi from neighboring Tibetans today. The Northern Naxi wear Tibetan clothing.

**Religion:** The Northern Naxi are comprised of several interesting religious elements. Most follow Tibetan Buddhism. Ancestors are also worshiped and revered. In addition, a small number of Northern Naxi have converted to Catholicism.

**Christianity:** Between 50 and 100 Catholic believers are found among the Northern Naxi. Most of them meet in Deqen Tibetan churches, including one church at Yanjing, just inside Tibet, which contains more than 700 ethnic Tibetan believers and a small number of Northern Naxi.

**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