

About the Samtao

"More than two thousand years ago, Han expansion (the Chinese dynasty that ruled from 206 BC until AD 220) reached Samtao country. By the Tang Dynasty of the 7th and 8th centuries, the Samtao had begun to distinguish themselves ethnically from surrounding peoples, acquiring a sense of group identity based on language and religion." Many centuries ago the Samtao were converted to Theravada Buddhism. William Clifton Dodd, a missionary to China in the early 1900's, said, "These Sam Tao are the branch of the aboriginal stock found all over Indo-China...[they] have been Buddhists for 900 years, and are the best Buddhists we have met."

The Samtao depend heavily on agricultural duties. They grow crops such as tea, maize, rice, cotton, and sugarcane, with their foremost occupation being tea cultivation. The Samtao may either be monogamous or polygamous. To become a polygamous family, the husband must first receive permission from the village leader. It is even common in some families for infant marriage to be arranged. Perhaps as a sign of their devotion to Buddhism, the Samtao men often tattoo their limbs and torsos with passages of Buddhist scriptures.

Generally speaking, the Samtao are highly devoted Buddhists, scattered throughout the Mekong River Basin, and have absorbed the various cultures and heritages in which they live.

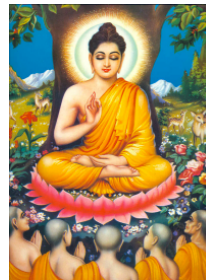


What are their beliefs?

Nine centuries ago, the Lu people (still found all throughout the Mekong River Basin) converted the Samtao from animism to Buddhism. Still today, traces of animism can be found in their religious beliefs.

The word Buddhism comes from the word 'budhi' (lit. "to awaken"), and it originated about 2,500 years ago when Siddhartha Gotama, known as the Buddha, supposedly was "awakened" at the age of 35. Buddhists seek to find peace within the inner person through meditations, striving to overcome 'negative minds' such as anger, jealousy and ignorance, and developing 'positive minds' such as love, compassion and wisdom. Buddhists believe that the "teachings of Buddha reveal a step by step path to lasting happiness."

Buddhism teaches that when one dies that person enters into a cycle of rebirth, with the accumulated karma (good or bad circumstances as an effect following a cause) being the deciding factor on how the individual is reborn. Buddhists are taught not to fear death, as death will lead to rebirth.



Gospel Progress - RED (5% or less professing Christians)



Praying for the Samtao

- † Pray for the glory of God to be seen through the Samtao
- † Pray that God would raise up missionaries from neighboring tribes to tell the Samtao about the gospel of grace; how no man can save himself from eternal punishment apart from Christ, and that to be reborn is to be *spiritually* reborn by the *Spirit*. (John 3:1-8; Rom. 10:14-15)
- † Pray that even now, despite a long history of Buddhism, the Spirit would work in Samtao hearts. (Rom. 8:16)
- † Pray for the Lord to establish churches in Samtao communities.
- † Pray for the countries Myanmar, Thailand, China, and Laos, the countries where most Samtao reside, that God would cause those countries to be more receptive to the gospel within the coming weeks.
- † Pray that Commerce Community Church would continue in prayer, with a heart given by God that aligns with his mission: to redeem a people from the four corners of the earth, for the glory of Christ Jesus.
- † Pray that his passion for the glory of his name would be our passion. Pray that the nations would be glad in Christ alone.

*Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon the earth*

Psalm 67:4

Scripture Verses for Prayer

- † *“God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. . . . For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life”* (Romans 5:8-10).
- † *“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’”* (Romans 10:14-15)
- † *“God, mark us with grace and blessing! Smile! The whole country will see how you work, all the godless nations see how you save. God! Let people thank and enjoy you. Let all people thank and enjoy you. Let all far-flung people become happy and shout their happiness because You judge them fair and square, you tend the far-flung peoples. God! Let people thank and enjoy you. Let all people thank and enjoy you. Earth, display your exuberance! You mark us with blessing, O God, our God. You mark us with blessing, O God. Earth’s four corners-honor him!”* (Psalm 67, *The Message*)



Gospel Work

† *“There is not a single trace of Christianity among the Samtao today. They have never been focused on with the gospel throughout their long history and remain a completely unevangelized people group on both sides of the China-Myanmar border.”*

RESOURCES

- † *Peoples of the Buddhist World: A Christian Prayer Diary*, Paul Hattaway, p. 232
- † https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/14680/CH
- † <http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma5/viewdeath.html>
- † <http://www.aboutbuddhism.org/>
- † <http://www.pbs.org/edens/thailand/buddhism.htm>

Commerce Community Church www.c3forchrist.org

*“Delighting in **CHRIST**,
Declaring His **GLORY**”*

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14).

Samtao People (Mekong River Basin)



Religions in Myanmar (2010 census)
-Buddhism (80.04%)

Total Population in Myanmar (2010 census)
-50,495,672 [36% unreached: approx. 18 million]

Location:

There are approximately 12,500 Samtao spread across Southeast Asia (Myanmar, China, Laos, and Thailand), the bulk of which live primarily within the Mekong River Basin. This region is hot and humid most of the year, with monsoon rains spanning 7 months out of the year, lasting between April and October. Most sources report significantly differing figures for the Samtao population, but there seems to be a general consensus that the majority “live in the eastern part of Shan State in Myanmar, especially in mountain villages north-east of Kengtung City.”