

Shan Summary – Adopt-a-People Project IPC

updated March 2022

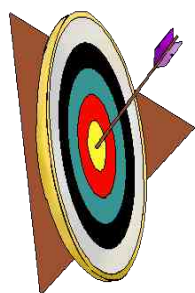


How it all started:

Randall and Karin Zindler, after taking the “Perspectives Course” (an overview of the history of cross-cultural missions), purchased the curriculum for the Adult Bible Study course entitled “Vision for the Nations” which is a kind of condensed “Perspectives” course for easy use with a local church.

In the winter and spring of 2001, Randal and Karin facilitated the “Vision for the Nations Course” during the Adult Sunday School hour, in which about a dozen IPCers regularly attended. At the end of the course, 10 ideas regarding how congregations could possibly be called to become involved in cross-cultural missions in concrete ways were presented. One of these ways involved researching whether God wanted IPC to adopt a people group - to pray specifically for that people group, maybe to financially support work in that people group and possibly one day to send out missionaries.

The Adopt-a-People Project idea at first was a bit overwhelming for the course attendees, but one of Barbi Mott’s au pair contacts at the time was Liesel Reimer. Liesel was quite new to IPC and her home congregation in the USA had adopted the Taliban people group a few years before. IPC’s group met with Liesel to get her personal take on the Adopt-a-People Project. Her experience was most helpful and encouraging, so the group felt like it was God’s will to press on by prayerfully investigating whether God wanted IPC to adopt a people group. This process lasted all summer and throughout the autumn of 2001. There were various ideas and leads, but the country that came up again and again was Myanmar. The Rohingya were discussed at length and IPC even hosted a missionary who had experience with them, but the group didn’t feel the Rohingya were God’s leading. In the end, the group felt the Shan were for IPC.



Therefore, on March 3, 2002, the Shan were officially “adopted” in the morning worship service at IPC. At the beginning of that worship service, a visitor introduced herself and in tears told the congregation that she had prayed for years that a congregation would adopt the Shan (she was a missionary in Asia at the time). This woman and her husband were only in Zurich for two Sundays and God had orchestrated such an amazing confirmation of His will. Not only that, but about one month following that Sunday, a man from Myanmar visited IPC. Though not a Shan, he was from the Chin people group (which is a reached people group living near Shan State) and was also an encouragement to IPC concerning the adoption of the Shan.

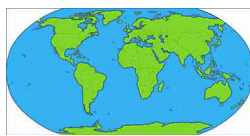
In the spring of 2002, a new version of the Shan Bible similar to the English “Good News” version was finally finished (after about 40 years of work!). IPC had the privilege of helping to fund the publishing of that Bible and it is this version that many Shan use all over their region now. It is also the version used for the online App and for translating into other Shan dialects.

In 2005, the group started to think about sending a short-term team to Myanmar to prayer walk, at the suggestion of Andrew Goodman who had visited IPC in person. After various meetings and trying to work out a schedule and itinerary that would work for different people, it seemed that such a trip might never happen. Therefore, in the autumn of 2006, Christoph and Lanette Meister felt they should go to Shan State, just the two of them, to prayer walk and connect with anyone God sent their way. (details of that trip can be requested)

In 2009, Christoph and Lanette felt called to become long-term missionaries and were sent to Thailand with their daughter, Lydia, to work with OMF. After 9 months of intense language and culture training in Central Thailand, they starting working out of Chiang Mai with OMF. Incidentally, the first month of their moving to Chiang Mai



coincided with the founding of the first Shan church in Chiang Mai. Now, after ten years, there are six congregations in the greater Chiang Mai area. Praise God for His work!



Who are the Shan?

The Shan originate from China and moved to the area of the Shan State in Northeast Myanmar in the 13th century. There, they had a sort of feudal system for centuries whereby one Shan prince would control the area and ask tribute from neighboring, lower princes. They are their own people group with their own language and culture, different from the people groups around them. However, when the Burmese gained their independence from Britain in 1948, the Shan State was included within Burma's borders. Though the British had promised that the Shan would have their own country after an interim period, this never came to be. Therefore, the Shan State has been marked by military unrest between the Shan and the Burmese these many decades. There are also many drug lords and the "Golden Triangle" is partially located in the Shan State. Hundreds of thousands of Shan have become internally displaced within Burma or have been forced to flee to Thailand or China. Currently, about 5 million Shan live in Shan State (about 10% of Myanmar's population), 1 million live in North Thailand and about 300,000 live in southern China.



The Shan in Myanmar are mostly farming people though timber and mining also are important sources of income. Malnutrition, limited medical care, drug abuse and insufficient sanitation make life challenging, not to mention the weather and mountainous terrain.

The Shan in Northern Thailand are manual laborers working for others, whether in farming or construction, but are often quite mistreated. Many girls are sold into prostitution and HIV/AIDS is a problem.

The Shan are still an unreached people group (less than 1% Christian) since the majority of the Shan still believe that to be Shan is to be Buddhist. However, they are not just Buddhist, but also follow many animistic traditions by trying to appease the spirits. The local temple is the center of their communities and most male children will spend at least some of their lives as monks there.

Christian Missions amongst the Shan:

Missionaries began work with the Shan in Myanmar in 1861 and there was a Bible produced early on by Kushing. However, the Shan have mostly been unresponsive. A newer and easier to understand version of the Bible was published in 2002. Currently, the Kushing Bible is being digitalized and updated so that it can be widely used (October 2019 has seen the New Testament finished, so praise God for this)!



OMF and other missions organisations have sent cross-cultural workers to all three nations in which the Shan live. As of September 2019, none of those missionaries are able to live in Southern China any longer. There are two OMF couples in Myanmar and four families in North Thailand.

The Shan Consultation was started in 2001 and the first meeting was held in English as most of the 20 or so attendees were expat workers in the region. The goal of the consultation is to network among the missionaries and leaders of the Shan to increase effectiveness and to get a clear look each year as to where the work stands. Now, after years of work and God's Hand in growing local leaders, there are normally at least 200 Shan people attending and the consultation is held in the Shan language.



Though Shan congregations are usually small and have many challenges, we are praying that a movement towards Christ will come. May God send His Holy Spirit and turn many to Himself. May there soon be a group of Shan believers in every village reaching out to their neighbors.