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Each group firmly believes it is ethnically and historically distinct from the others. The Ao Biao do not like to intermarry with other Yao people.

Language: The Ao Biao language belongs to what is loosely labeled the *Hmong-Mien* language family. Chinese scholar Fei Xiaotong, who visited the area over a period of 50 years, documents five distinct Yao languages, including Ao Biao, spoken by the inhabitants of the Dayaoshan.³ People from the different Yao groups are forced to speak Chinese in order to communicate with each other.

History: The Ao Biao share the belief of many Yao groups that they are descended from the dragon-dog Pan Hu. The Ao Biao claim to be one of the original inhabitants of the mountains, having migrated from Guizhou via Bai Se and Nanning.⁴ The Ao Biao possess most of the best land in the mountains. They live in brick and wood homes in villages concentrated near the rivers. By the time the Lu Mien and Kim Mun groups arrived in the region, they were forbidden to own land and had to live in bamboo sheds. In addition, they were forced to pay rent

and render manual labor to the Ao Biao and to the other groups already established in the area.⁵

Customs: The Ao Biao have a legend about a great flood that destroyed the earth long ago, and about the repopulation of the earth. In part, it states: "All the people in the world have been drowned by the flood.... We brother and sister got married. After being true husband and wife for a few years, on the seventh morning the flower entered her body."⁶

Religion: The Ao Biao are one of the few minorities of China who adhere to the religion of Daoism. Fearsome pictures of Daoist deities are posted on the walls and doors of most of their homes. Gruesome religious masks are used in their ceremonies and festivals. The Ao Biao also worship their ancestors, believing any action that goes against centuries of tradition will insult the spirits of their forefathers. Each year the Ao Biao participate in the Pan Hu Festival, an occasion of great significance in the community. The Ao Biao dress in their best traditional clothing for the ceremony. Here the youth have an opportunity to meet prospective partners.

Christianity: The Ao Biao are a relatively unreached people group, although in 1996 the first known penetration of the gospel among them occurred. A Hong Kong-based ministry won approximately 30 Ao Biao and Lu Mien believers to Christ in Jinxiu County.

Location: More than 12,000 Ao Biao people inhabit the Dayaoshan (Big Yao Mountains) of Jinxiu County in the central part of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.¹ The Ao Biao are not located in any other part of China.

Identity: The Ao Biao have been officially included under the Yao nationality in China. *Ao Biao* is their autonym. The Chinese call them *Ao Yao*, which means "Yao of the plateau". They are one of five different branches of Yao people in the Dayao Mountains, "all speaking different languages and each having its own peculiar customs and living habits."²



Population in China:

10,000 (1990)
12,900 (2000)
16,600 (2010)

Location: Guangxi
Religion: Daoism
Christians: 15

Overview of the Ao Biao

Countries: China
Pronunciation: "Aow-Beeew"
Other Names: Au Byau, Ao, Au, Ao Yao
Population Source: 10,000 (1990 AMO); Out of a total Yao population of 2,134,013 (1990 census)
Location: *Guangxi:* Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County

Status: Officially included under Yao
Language: Hmong-Mien, Mienic
Dialects: 0
Religion: Daoism, Polytheism, Animism, Ancestor Worship
Christians: 15
Scripture: None
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: None
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: BJE01

