

**Location:** More than 10,000 Dianbao inhabit part of Funing County in the southeastern corner of Yunnan Province. Funing County is near the juncture where Vietnam, Yunnan, and Guangxi meet. The Funing area is inhabited by Miao, Yao, and Han Chinese people, in addition to other Zhuang language groups.

**Identity:** The Dianbao are one of many tribes and language groups combined to form the Zhuang nationality in China. The Dianbao did not oppose being officially classified under the Zhuang minority. As one writer explains, “After the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, during the stage of the ‘recognition of nationalities,’ the Zhuangs from different districts agreed, through democratic consultation, that they be regarded as the Zhuang nationality as a whole.”<sup>1</sup>

**Language:** There is disagreement among scholars regarding the classification of the Dianbao language. While some regard it as a distinct variety of the Southern Zhuang language group,<sup>2</sup> others state that it “should not be construed as a meaningful division within the dialect scheme of Zhuang.”<sup>3</sup>

**History:** The Dianbao language suggests they are descended from the great Tai race that splintered into dozens of different tribes over the course of history. Today, Tai (or Thai) peoples are scattered throughout Asia from the northeastern part of India to the Tai-speaking minorities in China

such as the Zhuang, Dai, Bouyei, and Li. One historian listed more than 25 different Tai tribes in China.<sup>4</sup> The various Zhuang groups — who first appeared in Hunan during the Song Dynasty (960–1279) — migrated to southwest China in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, “under the pressure of the advancing Mongol armies.”<sup>5</sup>

**Customs:** The Dianbao have a rich collection of folk songs and tales that are handed down from one generation to another.<sup>6</sup>

**Religion:** The majority of Dianbao are animists. They observe a great number of superstitions, especially about eating and how visitors enter their homes.

**Christianity:** There are no known Christians among the Dianbao today. Few have ever heard the gospel. A missionary near the Dianbao region, Mrs. T. P. Worsnip, described her frustrations at the lack of progress she encountered in the early 1920s: “I am sure that when we can speak the language of these people we will be better able to get into their homes. Even though in many cases they can understand Chinese, the fact that they cannot speak it, and we cannot



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converse with them in their vernacular, causes them to turn us away and to look upon us with contempt. We have felt this very keenly, especially when we have visited the streets where every house is occupied by aboriginal families. They invariably turn us away. There are many villages surrounding Lungchow [Longzhou] where the women speak only [Zhuang], and in order to give them the witness we must know their language or take a woman who can speak for us.”<sup>7</sup>



**Population in China:**  
 10,000 (1995)  
 11,000 (2000)  
 13,100 (2010)  
**Location:** Yunnan  
**Religion:** Animism  
**Christians:** None Known

## Overview of the Dianbao

**Countries:** China  
**Pronunciation:** “Dee-ahn-bow”  
**Other Names:** Tienpao, Tienpo, Tianpao, Dienbo  
**Population Source:** 10,000 (1995 AMO); Out of a total Zhuang population of 15,489,630 (1990 census)  
**Location:** SE Yunnan: Funing County

**Status:** Officially included under Zhuang  
**Language:** Daic, Tai, Central Tai  
**Dialects:** 0  
**Religion:** Animism, Polytheism, Ancestor Worship  
**Christians:** None known  
**Scripture:** None  
**Jesus film:** None  
**Gospel Recordings:** None  
**Christian Broadcasting:** None  
**ROPAL code:** TST00

