

YAO

More than 550,000 Yao people live in secluded communities among the high mountains of northern Vietnam. They live in six provinces along the China-Vietnam border with the main concentration being in Quang Ninh Province. The Yao originated in China (where more than two million members of the Yao nationality still reside). Most of the Yao in Vietnam (where their name is officially spelt *Dao*) are part of the *Iu Mien* language group. Iu Mien is spoken in Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, and about 10 Western countries where they have settled as refugees.

There are numerous subgroups and self-appellations among the Yao. Names such as *Red Yao*, *Yao With White Trousers*, *Yao With Coins*, etc. help the Yao identify themselves

locally. This trait is also seen throughout southern China where the Yao "are thought to have as many as 300 such different appellations... making research and classification ethnically an impossible task... [the different Yao groups] are probably not of the same ethnic stock."⁵⁴ The Yao are believed to have started migrating from China into Vietnam in the late 1700s. They fled persecution in their native homelands in Fujian, Guangdong and Guangxi provinces.

The *Lantien* are a subgroup of Yao who speak a language very different from Iu Mien. Their name means 'those who make dye'. They are also known as *Kim Mun* ('the people in the forest') and *Shanzi Yao* ('Mountaineer

Yao'). The Lantien and Yao claim to have once been brothers, but they were separated during a migration and ever since have developed their own customs and languages.

The Lantien are famous for their many ingenious inventions, including the tradition of making paper from roots and leaves. Until recently, a young Lantien man taking a wife had to pay a price... "Betrothal was actually a negotiation of the bride price, which was divided into five different grades, depending on such natural qualities as the girl's beauty and health. The girl's parents would not let the man take their daughter away until the price had been paid in full. The five different grades ranged from 72 to 12 ounces of silver."⁵⁵ During courtship, Lantien youth sing romantic songs to each other... "If a girl falls in love with a boy, she bites his arm as a token of her love for him."⁵⁶

In China many Yao call themselves *Pan Yao*, after their legendary ancestor and pioneer of the Yao race, Pan Hu. Pan can be traced in historical Chinese records as far back as the 5th century AD. The *Chronicles of the Later Han Dynasty* ('*Hou Han Shu*') tells the story of Pan Hu, the pet dog

of Emperor Gao Xin (2435-2365 BC) who killed his lord's arch-enemy, General Wu, the chief of the Quan Rong tribe. The dog was rewarded by marrying a young princess. Their descendants, known as 'the race of Pan Hu', became the forefathers of the Yao. At some time the Imperial Court issued *The King Ping's Charter*. This proclamation was designed to reward the Yao by perpetually releasing them from paying taxes. This edict was forgotten by later generations of Chinese rulers. The Yao's stubborn refusal to pay taxes led to their persecution and ensuing Diaspora throughout Southeast Asia.

The Yao's adoration of their ancestors has evolved into worship. They believe Pan created the heavens and the earth. They worship and burn incense before images of him.

The Lantien group believe when a bad person dies, they will go to a place they perceive as hell—a thick, dark forest with no villages or clearings. It is believed good people will go to one of several levels of heaven, depending on how much care the eldest son gives the spirit of his dead parent. Men without sons, therefore, do whatever it takes to procure a son, since their soul will be lost without one. The Lantien worship their ancestors by sacrificing pigs three times each year.

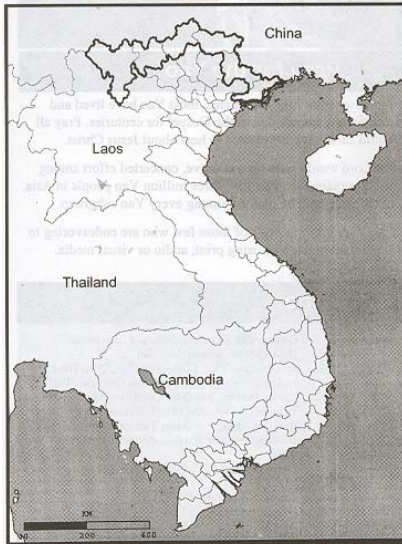
The Yao remain a people in desperate need of the Gospel, although in recent years more than 3,000 are confirmed to have come to Christ in Vietnam. Most of the new believers are Red Yao who were converted after hearing Gospel radio broadcasts in their language.

In China there are no more than 150 confirmed Christians among more than two million Yao people. The New Testament has been translated for the Yao in Thailand, but very few of the Yao in Vietnam are able to read the script. The Iu Mien Yao *Jesus* film is in production.



Pray for the Yao

- 1 Living on the top of high mountains, most Yao have lived and died without any knowledge of the Gospel for centuries. Pray all Yao would soon have the chance to hear about Jesus Christ.
- 2 Pray the Lord would raise up a massive, concerted effort among Christians to reach the more than three million Yao people in Asia. Pray churches would be planted among every Yao subgroup.
- 3 In prayer, support the efforts of those few who are endeavoring to take the Gospel to the Yao using print, audio or visual media.



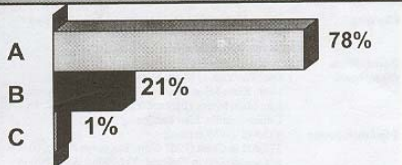
Population:
473,945 (1989)
588,600 (2000)
718,100 (2010)

Language:
Hmong-Mien

Religion:
Daoism

Christians:
3,250

Status of Evangelization (Awareness of Christ and the Gospel)



A = have never heard the Gospel or the name of Christ
B = were evangelized but have not yet become Christians
C = Adherents to any form of Christianity

Overview of the Yao

Countries	China, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, USA, France, Canada, Myanmar, Denmark, New Zealand, Taiwan, Switzerland, Australia	Location	Quang Ninh and along China and Laos borders
Pronunciation	"Yaow"	Language	Hmong-Mien, Mienic, Mian-Jin
Other Names	Dao, Pan Yao, Iu Mien, Mien, Man, Trai, Dong, Diu Mien, Kiem Mien, Lowland Yao, Coc Mun, Jimren, Kim Mun, Myen, Highland Yao, Dou, Mun, Lamien, Lantien, Lantim, Man Lantien	Dialects (4)	Man Do, Yao Tien, Cham Quan Chet, Quan Trang
Population Source	473,945 (1989 census); 712,000 in China (1987 China Language Atlas); 60,000 in Laos; 40,000 in Thailand; 23,000 in USA; 2,000 in France; 100 in Canada; 100 in Myanmar; 12 in Denmark; 7 in New Zealand; also in Taiwan, Switzerland, Australia	Subgroups (11)	Lo Gang, Yao Do (Red Yao), Yao Tien (Yao With Coins), Lantien, Yao Quan Chet (Yao With Light Trousers), Yao Ao Dai (Yao With Long Dress), Dai Ban, Coc Nping, Coc Mun, Tam Dao, Quan Trang
		Religion	Daoism, Ancestor Worship, Animism, Christianity
		Christians	3,250
		Scripture	New Testament 1975; Portions 1932
		Jesus film	in progress
		Gospel Recordings	Yao #00417, Lantien #03122
		Christian Radio	available (FEBC - 2 x 15 minutes per day)
		ROPAL code	TUM00 (Iu Mien) and MJT00 (Kim Mun)