
Population in China:

29,737 (1993)
35,700 (2000)
46,100 (2010)

Location: Guangdong, Hunan

Religion: Animism

Christians: 200

Overview of the Zaomin

Countries: China

Pronunciation: "Zaow-min"

Other Names: Yao Min, Bapai, Dzao Min, Yau Min, Pai Yao

Population Source: 29,737 (1996 B. Grimes – 1993 figure); Out of a total Yao population of 2,134,013 (1990 census)

Location: *N Guangdong:* Liannan and Yangshan counties; *S Hunan:* Yizhang County

Status: Officially included under Yao

Language: Hmong-Mien, Mienic, Zaomin

Dialects: 0

Religion: Animism, Daoism, Buddhism, Christianity

Christians: 200

Scripture: None

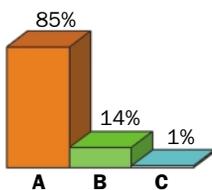
Jesus film: None

Gospel Recordings: None

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: BPN00

Status of Evangelization



A = Have never heard the gospel
B = Were evangelized but did not become Christians
C = Are adherents to any form of Christianity

Location: Approximately 30,000 Zaomin were counted in a 1993 government study.¹ Living among rugged mountain terrain, the Zaomin are located in Liannan and Yangshan counties of northern Guangdong Province, and in the neighboring Yizhang County of Hunan Province.

Identity: The Zaomin are part of the large Yao nationality. The Chinese call them Bapai Yao, meaning "eight row Yao."² Their self-name is *Yaomin* or *Zaomin*.³ The Zaomin "do not consider themselves to be originally of Yao stock, but rather immigrants from the north who became assimilated to the Yao through isolation and the development of common regional interests with the Mien against the Han or Hakka Chinese."⁴

Language: Zaomin is "related to, although unintelligible with, other Yao dialects."⁵ The Zaomin live near the Biao Mien; however, there are only 18 consonants in the Zaomin language compared to 36 in Biao Mien.⁶ Zaomin contains nine tones⁷ and is a member of the Hmong-Mien language family.

History: There were already large numbers of Yao living in Guangdong before the start of the Ming Dynasty (1368). Between 1368 and 1566 many Yao were attacked during large-scale military campaigns launched by the Chinese.⁸ After 52 separate wars,⁹ thousands of Yao fled Guangdong to the west, resulting in the fragmenting of today's Yao subgroups throughout 140

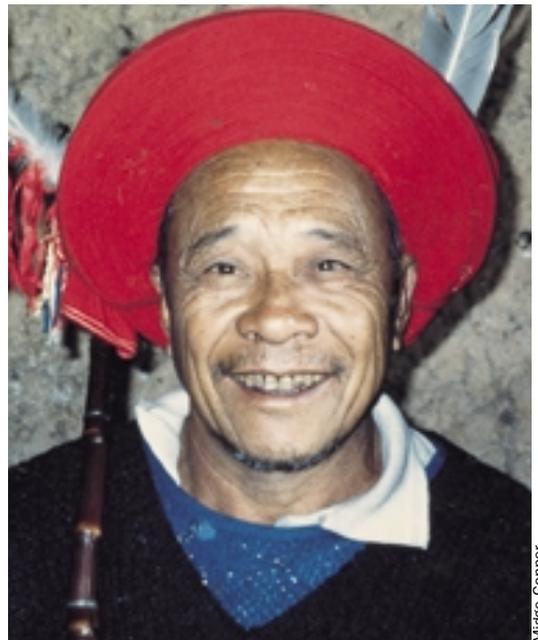
counties of China and into Southeast Asia.

Customs: It is the Zaomin women's job to collect firewood. Men say a quick way to find out whether a woman is industrious is to check the fuel piles outside her home. In the event of a divorce, couples share possession of the children. If there is only one child, the person who initiated the divorce loses custody.¹⁰

Religion: The Zaomin have a flood legend common among many Yao groups of how the Thunder god opened the "River of Heaven," causing a flood that drowned all of mankind except two people. With the help of the gods, from these two came all the peoples of the world.¹¹ One story, the *Narcissus Girl*, tells of a time long ago when there was no separation between the gods and humans. Both could go up and down to visit each other.¹² Today most Zaomin adhere to a

religious mixture that includes Daoist, animist, and Buddhist elements. The Zaomin believe that when they die their moral conduct will have to be accounted for. Numerous songs and chants record what they will be asked. Their answers determine whether their soul will be able to enter into rest or not.¹³

Christianity: The American Presbyterian missionary H. V. Noyes commenced work in Lianxian in 1872. His church and medical clinic were burned down and five people murdered during a riot in September 1905, caused by missionary interference at a local ghost festival.¹⁴ Some Zaomin in Lianxian have assumed leading positions in the local administration "because of education given to them by the church in the past."¹⁵ In recent years several Zaomin became Christians in Guangzhou. They returned to their village and led 60 teenagers to Christ.¹⁶



Midge Conner