



Yao Update

**Location:** A total of 439,000 Bunu people, scattered throughout Guangxi and Yunnan provinces, were counted in the 1982 Chinese census. Since that time, new information has confirmed that 11 subgroups of the Bunu are distinct ethnolinguistic groups. After subtracting the populations of these 11 groups, there are still more than 300,000 Bunu unaccounted for in China today. This Profile treats those who can no longer speak their mother tongue and those Bunu groups who have yet to be assigned to a subgroup by the Chinese. Bunu villages are customarily built in out-of-the-way places; this results in little contact with the outside world.

**Identity:** The Bunu were counted separately in the 1982 census before being

included under the Yao nationality in China. The name *Bunu* is a generic term, simply meaning “us people.”<sup>1</sup>

**Language:** About 100,000 people, who do not fit into any of the recognized subgroups of Bunu, speak Zhuang as their mother tongue.<sup>2</sup> One linguist notes, “The classification of the Bunu languages and dialects is very complicated. The Bunu people are actually regarded either by themselves and/or by the Chinese as Yao ethnically. However, the languages spoken by the Bunu are actually dialects of Hmong [Miao].”<sup>3</sup>

**History:** Over many centuries the Bunu were forced to migrate south to their present location. The Chinese and Zhuang often seized Bunu land and

slaughtered entire communities.

**Customs:** Bunu women rule over their families. “If the couple do not get along well, the husband may go back to his own home and the wife may find another man. The husband has no right to claim any property belonging to the wife’s family.... In such a marriage arrangement it is the husband who takes orders from his wife.”<sup>4</sup>

**Religion:** The Bunu worship Pan Hu who they believe created the universe. “In ancient times, the world was a chaos, Heaven and earth were still inanimate, with no sun or moon, no Yin and Yang, no day and night. At that time our holy King Pan Hu was first born to the world, he built the heavens and created the earth, he installed mountains and rivers, made the sun, moon and stars, and set up the 10,000 countries and the nine territories.”<sup>5</sup> They also have a legend of a great flood which destroyed the earth. At thanksgiving rituals in honor of King Pan, the Bunu still sing: “All the people in the world had been drowned by a flood.... We brother and sister got married... the flower entered her body.”<sup>6</sup>

**Christianity:** The Bunu are one of the largest people groups in China without a single known church. There are believed to be only a small number of scattered Bunu believers. The Bunu’s complex ethnolinguistic diversity has kept them from hearing the gospel. “They consist of people from many language groups. Because of these language distinctions, it creates

certain difficulties for evangelizing them. This means that different sets of scriptures will need to be translated... different languages of the *Jesus* film translated, and so forth.”<sup>7</sup>

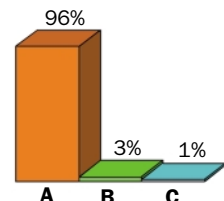


**Population in China:**  
165,500 (1982)  
324,500 (2000)  
418,600 (2010)  
**Location:** Guangxi, Yunnan  
**Religion:** Polytheism  
**Christians:** 100

## Overview of the Bunu

**Countries:** China  
**Pronunciation:** “Boo-noo”  
**Other Names:** Punu  
**Population Source:** 439,000 (1982 census);<sup>8</sup> Including 11 distinct groups with a combined population of 273,500; Out of a total Yao population of 2,134,013 (1990 census)  
**Location:** W Guangxi, SE Yunnan  
**Status:** Officially included under Yao  
**Language:** Hmong-Mien, Hmongic, Bunu  
**Dialects:** 0  
**Religion:** Polytheism, Animism, Daoism, Ancestor Worship  
**Christians:** 100  
**Scripture:** None  
**Jesus film:** None  
**Gospel Recordings:** None  
**Christian Broadcasting:** None  
**ROPAL code:** BWX00

### 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