

Location: Chinese scholar Liang Min listed a 1990 population of only 300 to 400 Yerong in China.¹ In addition, about half of the members of the Buyang tribe (1,000 to 1,500 people) can also speak the Yerong language.² The Yerong are located in the Longhe and Pohe townships of Napo County in the southwest corner of Guangxi, just north of the juncture where Yunnan, Guangxi and Vietnam intersect.

Identity: The Yerong are also known to locals as the *Daban Yao*, or simply as *Daban*. Although there is a community of *Daban Yao* in Yunnan's Xishuangbanna Prefecture, the two groups are unrelated. The Yunnan Daban Yao speak the Lu Mien language. The Yerong are included as part of the Yao nationality in China, even though they speak their own, very different language. In 1945 the Yao were described as being made up of 39 different tribes.³ Among these tribes, however, are a staggering number and variety of subgroups. "There are thought to be as many as 300 such different appellations among the Yao in China, making research and classification ethnically an impossible task. Because many Yao groups "have different self-denominations... they are probably not of the same ethnic stock."⁴

Language: The Yerong language is a part of the so-called *Kadai* language group. Kadai is a generic name invented by linguists to group together languages that do not comfortably fit into the Tai language family or any

other linguistic affiliation.

History: In the past the numerous Yao groups in China were governed by a "tablet" system. The inhabitants of several villages banded together and erected a stone tablet, engraved in Chinese characters, containing the rules and regulations to be observed by members of the group. "Apparently a sort of social pact, this set of rules defined rights and prerogatives within the group; the social order, customs and practices to be maintained; and the sanctions imposed for infringement or violation of these rules."⁵

Customs: The Yerong, who wear their own distinctive dress, are renowned as an honest and hardworking people. The small population of the Yerong is the result of much intermarriage with other races and tribes. As more Yerong youth leave their home communities to marry and live with other people groups, the very existence of the Yerong is becoming increasingly endangered.

Religion: The Yerong are animists. They do not observe the custom of worshipping Pan Hu, as do most of the other Yao groups in Guangxi.



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Christianity: There are no known believers or churches among the Yerong. They are still waiting to hear the gospel for the first time in their history. Foreign missionaries will struggle to effectively penetrate the isolated Yerong by themselves. Believers from related minority groups or from Han Chinese churches are best suited for effective evangelism. Because of the strong ethnic unity of the clan system, one observer points out, "Cross-cultural missionaries would have a very marginal part in such a thrust, but would be needed for encouragement and counseling."⁶



Population in China:
 400 (1990)
 510 (2000)
 660 (2010)
Location: Guangxi
Religion: Animism
Christians: None Known

Overview of the Yerong

Countries: China
Pronunciation: "Yer-rong"
Other Names: Daban, Daban Yao, Yeyong
Population Source: 300 to 400 (1990 Liang Min); Out of a total Yao population of 2,134,013 (1990 census)
Location: SW Guangxi: Longhe and Pohe townships in Napo County

Status: Officially included under Yao
Language: Daic, Kadai, Bu Rong
Dialects: 0
Religion: Animism, Ancestor Worship
Christians: None known
Scripture: None
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: None
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: YRN00

