

**Location:** About 2,000 people belonging to the little-known Youmai ethnic group live in an unspecified part of southern Guizhou Province in southern China.<sup>1</sup> Although no location for the Youmai has ever been given, the few members of the Yao nationality — under which the Youmai were included — in Guizhou Province live in a few pockets along the southeast and southern parts of the province.

**Identity:** When the Chinese authorities first surveyed the ethnolinguistic composition of Guizhou Province in the 1950s, they found the Youmai people group so distinct that they were unable to place them under any of the officially recognized nationalities that had been created. By the time of the 1982 census, the Youmai were still unclassified and were placed in a generic list of *Undetermined Minorities*. The status for this small group changed in 1985 when the Youmai were included as part of the Yao nationality.<sup>2</sup> This classification has not been appreciated by the Youmai, who see themselves as a completely distinct group with no relationship to other minorities in southern China. Living in a nation where governmental decisions are not open to debate, the Youmai have little choice but to accept their bureaucratic identity. The people living near them, however, recognize them as a distinct ethnic group.

**Language:** The Youmai language has never been studied before. Because

of their inclusion in the Yao minority group, the Youmai probably speak a Mienic language, although there are other Yao groups in China who speak languages belonging to the Tai and Hmongic language groups. More research needs to be conducted to find the linguistic relationship the Youmai share with other groups.

**History:** The Youmai may be related to the various Bunu people groups in Guizhou, who are culturally Yao but linguistically Hmong people. After more than a thousand years of living near the Yao, these groups have absorbed many of their customs and habits.

**Customs:** The Youmai observe several key festivals throughout the year, including the Zhuzhu Festival. The date set for the festival is believed to be the birthday of their foremother, Miluotuo, in the fifth month of the lunar calendar. The Huiqi Festival is held at the same time as the Autumn Festival in other parts of China. Traditional singing contests are held, and people from the countryside crowd into the village which has been chosen as the sponsor for that year. Hosts entertain guests with sumptuous food. No festival or

celebration is conducted by the Youmai without copious amounts of rice wine and whiskey being served.

**Religion:** Spirit worship, ancestor worship, and Daoism are the three most prevalent religious beliefs among the Youmai.

**Christianity:** Because researchers have yet to find the exact location of the Youmai in Guizhou Province, nothing is known of the status of Christianity among them. Few people groups in this part of China, however, have ever heard the gospel.



Paul Hattaway



#### Population in China:

2,000 (1999)  
2,055 (2000)  
2,650 (2010)

**Location:** Guizhou

**Religion:** Animism

**Christians:** None Known

## Overview of the Youmai

**Countries:** China

**Pronunciation:** "You-my"

**Other Names:** Youmairen

#### Population Source:

2,000 (1999 AMO);  
Out of a total Yao population of 2,134,013 (1990 census)

**Location:** S Guizhou

**Status:** Officially included under Yao since 1985; Previously included in a list of *Undetermined Minorities*

**Language:** Hmong-Mien, Mienic

**Dialects:** 0

**Religion:** Animism, Ancestor Worship, Daoism

**Christians:** None known

**Scripture:** None

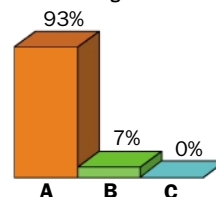
**Jesus film:** None

**Gospel Recordings:** None

**Christian Broadcasting:** None

**ROPAL code:** None

#### 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