



**Population in China:**  
 950 (1999)  
 970 (2000)  
 1,220 (2010)  
**Location:** Yunnan  
**Religion:** Polytheism  
**Christians:** None Known

## Overview of the Xiuba

**Countries:** China

**Pronunciation:** "Shoo-ba"

**Other Names:** Xiuba Yi, Xiupo

**Population Source:**  
 950 (1999 J. Pelkey);  
 Out of a total Yi population of  
 6,572,173 (1990 census)

**Location:** *S Yunnan:* Three villages  
 (Upper Feizuke, Lower Feizuke,  
 and Poutai) in Xinhua District of  
 Pingbian County in the Honghe  
 Prefecture

**Status:**  
 Officially included under Yi

**Language:** Sino-Tibetan,  
 Tibeto-Burman, Burmic,  
 Burmese-Lolo, Lolo,  
 Northern Lolo, Yi, Southern Yi

**Dialects:** 0

**Religion:**  
 Polytheism, Animism, Shamanism

**Christians:** None known

**Scripture:** None

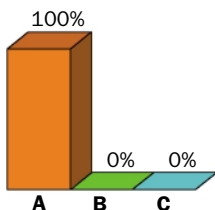
**Jesus film:** None

**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

**Location:** The Xiuba are a small group of about 950 people<sup>1</sup> living in three remote mountain villages in the northern part of Xinhua District in Pingbian County, in southern Yunnan Province. Feizuke Village contains 300 people in 67 households.<sup>2</sup> There are no Xiuba communities in any other part of China.

**Identity:** Although they are one of many subgroups of the large Yi nationality, the Xiuba have their own unique customs, language, and traditional dress. The Xiuba have little contact with the outside world; they have separated themselves from all other nationalities by dwelling in these remote mountains. Pingbian is an autonomous county of the Miao minority, who live in villages surrounding the Xiuba.

**Language:** Little is known about the Xiuba language except that it is a member of the Southern Yi linguistic group.<sup>3</sup> All Xiuba children speak their language at home.

**History:** The origins of the small Xiuba tribe are uncertain, but it seems that they have been living in the same region of China for many generations. They claim to have first moved to Pingbian from Jianshui, farther to the northwest of their present location.<sup>4</sup> Xiuba history has been one of isolation and hardship, struggling to survive from one harvest to the next.

**Customs:** Bad soil and lack of access to the outside world have resulted in the Xiuba continuing their traditional slash-and-burn agricultural practices. The

Xiuba are described as "an honest and warm hearted people."<sup>5</sup> When eating a meal, the Xiuba always honor the eldest guest by giving him the chicken's head. Xiuba women wear boots, colored belts and bow-shaped hats with two strings of chained tassels dangling from the ends. One researcher notes, "Xiuba women's headdresses are the most visible distinction of this resilient people: from a decorated cap, the headdresses rise into a magnificent arching display of silver-colored beads and balls of red yarn."<sup>6</sup> The Xiuba love to sing and especially love to perform the *Sanbuxian*, a traditional Xiuba dance.

**Religion:** A mix of polytheism and spirit appeasement forms the religious worldview of the Xiuba. They believe large mountains, trees, rivers, and even rocks have a spirit living in them. The Xiuba

seek to live in harmony with nature and are trapped in a cycle of fear to evil spirits. Atheistic education has somewhat eroded the superstitions of the current generation of Xiuba, but many continue to conduct their lives with an acute realization of the spiritual realm that surrounds them. Much of the Xiuba's material poverty is caused by their practice of sacrificing valuable cows and poultry in obedience to the demands of the village shamans.

**Christianity:** The Xiuba are completely untouched by Christianity. There are small pockets of Miao Christians near the Xiuba in Pingbian County, but the various ethnic groups there have almost no contact with each other. The Xiuba were a completely undocumented people group prior to 1991 and have never appeared on Christian mission research lists.



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