



Population in Myanmar:
600 (2026)

Location:
Shan State

Language Family:
Hmong-Mien

Main Religion:
Daoism (95.0%)

Christians:
30 (5.0%)

OVERVIEW

Population:
600 in Myanmar (2026 Asia Harvest)
120 (1931 census)
201 (1921 census)

Other Countries:
1,282,000 in China
286,000 in Vietnam
46,000 in Thailand
37,000 in Laos
19,000 in USA
8,400 in Denmark
2,000 in France
400 in Canada
also in Taiwan, Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand

Other Names:
Dao, Highland Yao, Iu Mienh, Man, Mian, Mien, Mienh, Pan Yao, Yao, Yao Mien, Yao Mienh, Yaung, Yiu Mien, Youmian

Location:
Shan State: Tachileik Township in Tachileik District

Language: Iu Mien [ium]

Dialects:

Scripture:
Bible 2007
New Testament 1975
Portions 1932

Jesus film: Iu Mien

Global Recordings: Iu Mien #417

People ID: 12289



Religious adherence



Andi Erik

Location: Although they are spread across south China and Southeast Asia, few people are aware that the large ethnic group known as the Iu Mien also dwell in Myanmar. A modest number of between 400 and 600 people live in Tachileik Township in Shan State, near the Thai border. They probably came to Myanmar from Chiang Rai Province in Thailand (where 46,000 Iu Mien live), or from northwest Laos, which is home to 37,000 Iu Mien people. North of the border, nearly 1.3 million Iu Mien are distributed across six provinces of south China. Vietnam is home to 286,000 Iu Mien people, while migrant communities are now found in many western countries, with sources listing between 17,000 and 60,000 in the United States,¹ and 8,400 in Denmark.

Identity: The Iu Mien are the largest of the groups that form the official Yao nationality in China. Although no other Christian ministries list the Iu Mien in Myanmar today, they have appeared in official records for over a century. The 1921 census of Burma returned 201 “Yao” people, which decreased to 120 in 1931. Since then, mentions of the Iu Mien in Myanmar

have occasionally surfaced. A 1997 book said they dwelt “in a few remote areas in Burma’s borderlands,”² while an article on the ethnic composition of Myanmar said, “A few communities exist in the Shan State of the Yao (or Man or Mien) people.”³

Language: The Iu Mien language is remarkably uniform considering the wide dispersion of its speakers across Asia. It is surprising that SIL’s *Ethnologue* does not mention the Iu Mien language in Myanmar, even though the Australian linguist David Bradley of LaTrobe University confirmed their existence in a 2016 report he wrote for UNICEF: “Iu Mien is spoken by the Yaung ethnic group...of the eastern Shan State. Yaung is the Myanmar language form of Yao, the Chinese collective term for a wide range of groups, including the Iu Mien, the name the group in Myanmar use to refer to themselves.”⁴

History: The Chinese call the Iu Mien “Pan Yao” after their mythical ancestor, Pan Hu, who can be traced in recorded Chinese histories for almost 4,500 years. The *Hou Han Shu* (Chronicles of the Later Han Dynasty) “tells the

story of Pan Hu, the pet dog of Emperor Gao Xin (2435–2365 BC), who killed his lord’s arch-enemy, General Wu. The dog was rewarded by marrying a young princess.”⁵ Their descendants, known as “the race of Pan Hu,” became the forefathers of the Iu Mien. The Imperial Court later issued *The King Ping’s Charter*, which was designed to reward the Yao by perpetually releasing them from taxes.⁶

Customs: The Iu Mien have a long history of fleeing oppression, which gave them the nickname “Guoshan” (Crossing the Mountains) Yao. The Iu Mien have been profoundly influenced by Chinese culture after millennia of contact. Perhaps the most significant influence “has been the evolution and preservation of Daoist rituals written in Chinese characters.... The Iu Mien have therefore possessed for several centuries what many other Asian peoples only dream of—an extensive written literature.”⁷

Religion: The Iu Mien are the only group in Myanmar to have Daoism as their main religion, although the Hakka and Cantonese-speaking Chinese also contain significant numbers of Daoists. The Iu Mien also worship their ancestors and their mythical progenitor Pan Hu, whom they credit with creating the heavens and the earth. After the death of King Pan, “the feudal court allowed his descendants to worship and make a picture of him with human features.”⁸

Christianity: The status of Christianity among the Iu Mien in Myanmar is unknown, although a remnant of Iu Mien Christians is found in all the countries where they reside. Dedicated missionaries have spent decades sowing the Gospel among the Iu Mien, including the late C. W. Callaway, who, along with his wife Lois, invested more than half a century reaching the Iu Mien. Callaway translated their Bible and countless other Christian resources before going to his eternal reward in 2023, aged 103.⁹