

Location: Approximately four million speakers of Southern Zhuang live in the southwestern part of Guangxi and the adjoining areas of southeastern Yunnan Province, of which 770,000 live in Wenshan Prefecture.¹

Technically, there are also speakers of Southern Zhuang varieties in Vietnam and Laos, but they are known by different names in different places. The Chinese officially classify several groups as Southern Zhuang, which include the Giay, Tho, Nung, Cao Lan, and Buyang. In *Operation China* they are profiled separately.

Identity: The Southern Zhuang are a collection of related Central Tai language groups which have been combined with the Northern Zhuang — a collection of Northern Tai language groups — to form China's official Zhuang nationality. There are many tribes, clans, and self-designations among the Southern Zhuang. Names such as *Debao* and *Heiyi* frequently appear in Chinese linguistic research.

Language: There are numerous dialects spoken among the Southern Zhuang, many of which may be distinct languages. Many Southern Zhuang can speak Northern Zhuang as a second language.²

History: During the Qin Dynasty (221–207 BC), half a million Han convicts were exiled by Emperor Qin Shihuang to the Lingnan region in southern China (now Guangxi and Guangdong). There they intermingled with the various branches of the Bai

Yue nationality.³ The Zhuang today, especially the Southern Zhuang, are thought to be the descendants of the Bai Yue. Historically, the Zhuang were called *Tuliao* or *Sharen*.

Customs: Because they are primarily engaged in agriculture, the Zhuang are also locally known as the *T'u* or "People of the Soil." Their homes are usually built on stilts. A newly married woman stays with her parents until after the birth of the first child. Only then does she go to live with her husband in his village.

Religion: The Southern Zhuang are a superstitious people. They are careful not to offend the spirit world that surrounds them. They believe in the spirits of the water, forest, mountain, village, etc.

Christianity: The first Protestant missionary to the Zhuang was R. H. Graves, a Southern Baptist, who arrived in Guangxi in 1862. In 1895 the Christian & Missionary Alliance commenced work in Guangxi. They established 65 churches over a 50-year period. Most of these churches were attended by Han Chinese, but



Paul Hattaway

small numbers of Southern Zhuang also attended. Today there are far fewer Southern Zhuang Christians than there are Northern Zhuang believers. The Southern Zhuang, because of their linguistic diversity, have no Scriptures, recordings, or *Jesus* film. Little has changed since this 1922 report describing Guangxi: "There are 58 cities, 700 market towns, and over 17,000 villages, all teeming with human lives for whom no effort whatever is being put forth."⁴



Population in China:
 3,515,000 (1990)
 4,203,900 (2000)
 5,027,900 (2010)
Location: Guangxi, Yunnan
Religion: Animism
Christians: 6,000

Overview of the Southern Zhuang

Countries: China, Vietnam
Pronunciation: "Zhoo-ung"
Other Names: Pu Nong, Pu To, Kun To, Longming, Lungming, Bou Rau, Bou Lau, Bou Baan, Bu Maan
Population Source: 4,000,000 (1990 J.-O. Svantesson)⁵; Out of a total Zhuang population of 15,489,630 (1990 census); Southern Zhuang varieties are also spoken in Vietnam.
Location: SW Guangxi; SE Yunnan
Status: Officially included under Zhuang

Language: Daic, Tai, Central Tai
Dialects (10+): Zuojiang (1,384,000), Yongnan (1,360,000), Dejing (1,025,898), Wenma (100,000), Yanguang, Wenshan, Maguan, Debao, Yongning, Daxin
Religion: Animism, Ancestor Worship, Daoism, Christianity
Christians: 6,000
Scripture: None
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: Zhuang: Southern #04979
 Zhuang: Jingxi #04981
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: CCY00

