Overview of the Diao

Countries: China
Pronunciation: “Dee-ow”
Other Names: Diaozu, Diaoren
Population Source: 2,000 (1999 AMO);
Out of a total Dong population of 2,514,014 (1990 census)
Location: SE Guizhou
Status: Officially included under Dong since 1985; Previously included in a list of Undetermined Minorities
Language: Unidentified
Dialects: 0
Religion: Animism, Ancestor Worship, Daoism
Christians: None known
Jesus Film: None
Gospel Recordings: None
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: None

Population in China:
2,000 (1999)
2,050 (2000)
2,650 (2010)

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

A 93%
B 7%
C 0%

Location: More than 2,000 members of the Diao ethnic group live in an unspecified location in the southeastern part of Guizhou Province in southern China. All that is known of the location of the Diao is that they live among the Dong people. The Dong in Guizhou are concentrated in Rongjiang, Congjiang, and Liping counties. The whole of southeast Guizhou is mountainous with abundant rainfall.

Identity: The Diao applied for recognition as a distinct minority group in the 1950s, but their application, along with 90% of the more than 400 groups who applied, was rejected. The official classification of the Diao remained in limbo for more than 30 years. In the 1982 census they were included in a list of Undetermined Minorities. After scholars visited them to further investigate their application, the Diao were incorporated into the official Dong nationality in 1985.

History: After the蒙古ians took control of China in the thirteenth century, great ethnic upheavals took place in southern China as people groups moved about in all directions seeking to avoid the fierce Mongol armies. At this time many of the small people groups in Guizhou, possibly including the Diao, formed separate identities.

Customs: Among minority peoples in Guizhou, the making of her traditional dress continues to play an important part in a woman’s life. Each tribe’s dress has its own background story which reflect that group’s customs, history, and beliefs. Cultural identity is therefore maintained by the making and wearing of the garments.

Religion: The Diao are animists. They worship the spirit of the bull, which they believe to possess supernatural strength. The Diao participate in the annual Dong bullfights.

Christianity: It is not known if Christianity has made any impact among the Diao people, but the large Dong nationality among whom they live has received little exposure to the gospel throughout their history. It can safely be assumed that most Diao have no comprehension of the name of Jesus Christ.