

# Miao



## Quick Facts

**Population:** 2,600,000

China: 2,500,000

Vietnam: 65,000

**Language Group:** Hmongic

**Location:** Guizhou Province

**Religion:** Ethnic

**Believers:** 0.40%

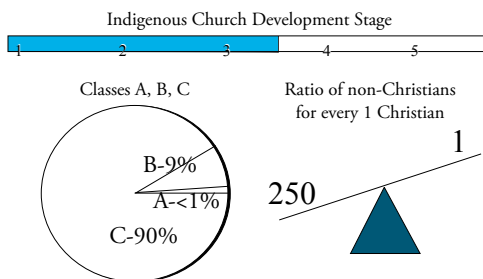
**Scriptures:** Portions

**Ministry Tools:** JR

**Church Status:** 3

**Mission Status:** 2

**MS Subgroups:** 22+



Class A- Are members of a Culturally Relevant Church  
 Class B- Have close access to a CRC, but have not yet joined  
 Class C- Have no reasonable or close access to a CRC

**Identity:** Anthropologists believe the Miao originated in Persia, before they began their migration through Mongolia, finally settling in Southern China. Over 70 tribes and 20 languages have been documented thus far among them. Many other tribes have been mis-classified as “Miao” by Chinese authorities, giving them an official population of 9.5 million.

**Lifestyle:** The Miao live in wooded, mountainous regions, and build their homes from locally produced timber of pine and fur. Where possible, homes are roofed with stone slabs. Their staple foods are maize, buckwheat, oats, rice and millet. Their cash crops include tobacco and cotton. Miao families and villages tend to be small. Clothing styles vary widely from village to village, but are almost always ornately decorated among women.

**Customs:** Miao women may walk for hours each day, up and down moun-

tain paths to fetch water. As a result, when considering a marriage proposal, a young Miao girl will often factor in how far away her prospective groom’s home is from the nearest stream or river before giving her answer.

**Religion:** The Miao are an animistic people whose shamans are reknown for their spiritual power. They are highly regarded as doctors and community leaders, resolving disputes and giving counsel. Though the Miao do not worship idols, every home has an altar and incense box for appeasing malevolent spirits. Numerous superstitions abound among them, and the smallest occurrence can be regarded as a bad omen. Changing one’s chopsticks, for example, during a meal forebods a divorce or even the death of one’s spouse. If a guest turns his bowl over after a meal his host will be cursed with barrenness.

**Christian Outreach:** Of the 22 missiologically significant subgroups identified

thus far among the Miao, ten are without any known believers. Those groups with believers, such as the Chuan and Guiyang are the result of missionary work from a century ago and have since ceased to grow evangelistically. The strongest and most dynamic fellowships are among the Southern Guiyang where believers make up 9% of the population.

## How to Pray:

✞ The ethnic, linguistic, and geographic diversity among the Miao has hindered church growth for over a century. Pray for effective strategies to build on what God has done and initiate disciple-making movements among every Miao sub-group and village.

✞ The Enshi Miao have adopted the Sichuan Mandarin dialect, yet over 80% have yet to hear the gospel. Pray for Chinese believers in Chongqing city to catch a vision for reaching this nearby unreached people.

✞ Bible translation, as well as the development of other discipleship resources, is a daunting task among the Miao, who speak at least 12 mutually unintelligible dialects. Pray for God’s wisdom and blessing on those working to meet this challenge.

**Every year 23,000 Miao die without Christ.**

## 22 Miao Sub-groups

People, Population, % Evangelical

Hua	710,000	0.17%	Central Huishui	61,000	0.00%
Enshi	610,000	0.06%	Lupanshui	61,000	0.00%
Chuan	180,000	1.50%	Northern Mashan	54,000	0.00%
Northern Guiyang	130,000	0.90%	Southern Guiyang	42,000	9.00%
Central Mashan	110,000	0.25%	Eastern Huishui	21,000	0.28%
Guiyang	110,000	2.40%	Western Mashan	21,000	0.00%
Northern Huishui	110,000	0.06%	Changshu	19,000	0.00%
Luobohe	92,000	0.00%	Baishi	15,000	0.00%
Huishui	86,000	0.00%	Southern Mashan	15,000	0.00%
Horned Miao	75,000	0.00%	Guiyang	9,000	0.00%
Northern Hua	62,000	0.50%	South Guiyang	5,000	0.00%

**Hua-** The Hua Miao are widely scattered and may number over 1.1 million, including those in Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. In China they are distributed accorss Yunnan, Sichuan and Ghuizhou provinces in 15 geographically separate groupings. This wide separation came about during a period of persecution in the 14th century by the Qing dynasty. They have numerous self-appellations, dress patterns, and tribal divisions, but are united by a common language. The Hua Miao outside of China have been without contact with other Miao groups for at least 150 years, and are being influenced by the national cultures of the countries where they now reside. Although there is yet no established church among them, there are unconfirmed reports of scattered believers.

**Enshi-** The Enshi Miao, so designated by their proximity to Enshi county in Hubei province, are the northernmost Miao group, and thus have been the most influenced by Chinese culture. Almost all have adopted the Sichuan dialect of Mandarin as their mother-tongue. Previously their language was close to that spoken by the Ghao Xong. Elderly Enshi Miao continue to practice their traditional religion, especially with regard to observing annual ancestral rites. Young people have almost all become secularized, in addition to losing their culture, and no longer celebrate the traditional Miao festivals, but choose rather to observe Chinese Spring and New Year festivals.

**Chuan-** The Chuan Miao language has nine tones and is believed to have once had a script of its own. When missionaries arrived with the Bible in 1915, the Chuan thought they had come to restore the words of God to their tribe which they once possessed but lost. Due to the Chuan's fondness for singing, missionaries developed evangelistic songs in their langauge to introduce them to the gospel. The response was at first very encouraging, and hundreds were baptized. Unfortunately, the Bible was never completely translated, and following the deportation of the missionaries under the Communists, the indigenous church has ceased to be an evangelistic community.

**Guiyang-** There are five major Miao Guiyang subgroups, each with their own distinct language (or mutually unintelligible dialect), totalling 270,000 people. Their designation comes from their proximity to Guiyang municipality of Ghuizhou province. They were one of the first Miao sub-groups which missionar-ies attempted to reach, beginning in 1899, and today the strongest Miao churches exist among them.