

Location: Approximately 13,000 Miao people living in the Baishi District of Tianzhu County in the eastern part of Guizhou Province comprise their own ethnolinguistic group.¹ The area is mountainous, as is 97% of the total land in Guizhou Province. For centuries the Baishi Miao have grown crops in the poor, rocky soil. The Baishi Miao are only one branch of several distinct Miao ethnolinguistic groups who live in the region.

Identity: The Miao of Baishi have been counted as part of the Miao nationality in China, which contained approximately 7.4 million people in 1990. The Baishi Miao qualify as a distinct people group because of their language, which is not understood by any other Miao people.

Language: The Baishi Miao have lost the use of their original Miao language. They are recorded as speaking a variety of Chinese by linguists who have studied their speech, but it is not intelligible with any other Chinese varieties in China. This is probably due to a linguistic fusion of Chinese and the retention of Miao words from the past, which have survived intact in the Baishi Miao vocabulary. Most Baishi Miao cannot read Chinese well, although education is taking a more prominent role in their society; more youth are attending high school than in the past. Even though they now speak a Chinese language, the Baishi Miao believe they speak a unique Miao language. They are proud to be Miao people and have

no desire to be recognized as Chinese speakers.

History: Although they are officially acknowledged as part of the Miao nationality, the Hmu and Ghao-Xong living in eastern Guizhou do not consider themselves to be related to the Baishi Miao. The Baishi Miao probably migrated into the area relatively recently (i.e. in the last 500 years) and brought with them different customs, traditional dress, and language.

Customs: The Baishi Miao faced opposition from other Miao groups in the past. When they migrated to Baishi they were forced to live on the worst land. In the last few decades they have been allowed to intermarry with other ethnic groups in the area. Weddings are elaborate affairs which often cost the groom's family the equivalent of two years' wages.

Religion: The Baishi Miao worship their ancestors. Elements of animism are also present in their religious rituals. The Baishi Miao believe that when a person dies, the soul remains in the village for a time before



Paul Hattaway

departing to the abode of ancestors. Offerings of paper money, food, and drink are made to the soul of the deceased, in a bid to provide for its needs in the next world.

Christianity: There is practically no Christian presence of any kind in the Baishi District of Guizhou Province. There are no known believers among the Baishi Miao and no ministries known to be targeting them for church planting. Few Baishi Miao have any awareness of Jesus Christ.



Population in China:
 10,000 (1990)
 12,900 (2000)
 16,600 (2010)
Location: Guizhou
Religion: Ancestor Worship
Christians: None Known

Overview of the Baishi Miao

Countries: China
Pronunciation: "Bai-shi-Meow"
Other Names:
Population Source:
 10,000 (1990 AMO);
 Out of a total Miao population of
 7,398,035 (1990 census)
Location: *E Guizhou:* Baishi
 District in Tianzhu County

Status:
 Officially included under Miao
Language: Chinese
Dialects: 0
Religion: Ancestor Worship,
 No Religion, Animism
Christians: None known
Scripture: None
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: None
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: None

