

Location: Approximately 50,000 Miao speak the Central Huishui Miao language as their mother tongue. They are located in the suburbs of Guiyang City, in the Baijin area of Huishui County, and in parts of adjacent Changshun County.¹ These two counties are located south of Guiyang City in Guizhou Province.

Identity: Central Huishui is one of four Huishui Miao languages — totaling more than 140,000 speakers. They, in turn, are considered part of the official Miao nationality by the Chinese government.

Language: Central Huishui Miao is “inherently unintelligible” with all other Miao languages in China. The Miao have no written script today — except for orthographies devised by missionaries. In 1683, however, traveler Lu Ciyun’s book *Dongqi-xianzhi* contained samples of Miao writing which he claims to have discovered on his travels through southern China. Lu wrote, “The Miao have writing, which is not like that on ancient bronze vessels, nor like the kedou script. One cannot find out who invented it.”² His claims are strengthened by the *Annals of Baoqing Prefecture* in 1740, which mentions an edict from the Qing authorities banning the use of Miao writing.³

History: Because they do not have a written language, Miao history is handed down by word of mouth and through songs. Miao legend tells how human life originated when a maple

tree metamorphosed into a butterfly. The butterfly then laid twelve eggs from which hatched Jiangyang, the ancestor of the Miao. The other eggs hatched, giving birth to Thunder, Centipede, Dragon, Elephant, Tiger, Snake, Rooster, Dog, Fish, and Water Buffalo.⁴

Customs: The lives of most Miao people in China have become more complicated in recent years as China’s economic condition has improved. Today, a prospective partner for marriage is often required to own a television, radio, and motorbike before being considered marriageable.

Religion: Most Central Huishui Miao are animists, living in fear of a host of different demons and deities. Miao shamans and sorcerers possess great demonic power. An early missionary described his experiences: “As a rule I don’t believe in devils but these wizards seem to have communications with a whole world of demons.”⁵ He went on to describe some of the supernatural things done by these men, such as putting white

hot chains around their necks without being harmed.

Christianity: There are small numbers of indigenous Miao and ethnically mixed Christian fellowships in the Central Huishui Miao region. Approximately one percent of Central Huishui Miao are Christians, although most members of this group have yet to receive an adequate presentation of the gospel. There are no Scriptures in their language, and the Miao language used for the *Jesus* film is not understood by the Central Huishui Miao. They are relatively open to change, but few evangelists or missionaries have ever specifically targeted the Central Huishui Miao.



Miao Messenger



Population in China:
 40,000 (1990)
 51,600 (2000)
 66,500 (2010)
Location: Guizhou
Religion: Animism
Christians: 300

Overview of the Central Huishui Miao

Countries: China
Pronunciation: “Hway-shway-Meow”
Other Names: Hmong; Central Huishui, Gaopo
Population Source: 40,000 (1995 Wang Fushi – 1990 figure); 30,000 (1985 Wang Fushi – 1982 figure); Out of a total Miao population of 7,398,035 (1990 census)
Location: *Guizhou:* Huishui and Changshun counties; *Guiyang Municipality*

Status: Officially included under Miao
Language: Hmong-Mien, Hmonic, Western Hmongic, Huishui
Dialects: 0
Religion: Animism, Shamanism, Polytheism, Christianity
Christians: 300
Scripture: None
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: None
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: HMC00

