



Paul Hattaway

Location: The *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Chinese Linguistics* listed a 1991 figure of 60,000 speakers of the Mjuniang language.¹ They live at the juncture of three southern provinces: Guangxi, Hunan, and Guizhou. In Guizhou they are located in Liping County; in Hunan they live in Tongdao County; and in Guangxi they are found in Sanjiang County. Liping County, which also contains many members of the Dong nationality, was captured by the Communists during the Long March in December 1934. Zhou En Lai chaired a meeting there at a shop belonging to a merchant named Xu. Today a small museum in Liping commemorates the Communist visit.

Identity: Although they have been officially included as members of the large Miao nationality in China, the

Mjuniang speak a language closely related to Dong. The name *Mjuniang* is the autonomy of this group. The Chinese invariably call them by the nickname *Cao Miao*, meaning “grass Miao.” All the peoples in the area call the Mjuniang *Cao Miao*.

Language: Despite being ethnically and historically descended from the Miao ethnic group, the Mjuniang have been influenced by the Dong for centuries and have lost the use of their original language. Mjuniang may best be described as a dialect of Northern Dong. The Mjuniang language — which has six tones — is used in everyday communication. When the Mjuniang sing, however, they prefer to use Chinese.²

History: The Eurasian ancestry of the Miao (including the Mjuniang) was still apparent as recently as

the nineteenth century. One visitor remarked, “They ate with spoons rather than chopsticks.... Even more odd were the many red or blond-haired Miao with light skin, and some with blue eyes.”³ For thousands of years the Han Chinese called themselves *Li-min*, which is generally translated “black-haired people.” One writer asks, “Why, then, did they designate themselves the Black or Dark people? Did they at one time live in the neighbourhood of people who were fair-haired and of lighter complexion than themselves?”⁴

Customs: To accommodate their terrain, some Mjuniang villages consist of *hanging houses*. “These three-story wooden homes are built on stakes against the mountain slope. The top story is used to store the grain, the middle for bedrooms and living room, and the bottom for cattle, sheep and poultry.”⁵

Religion: For centuries, Mjuniang shamans and sorcerers have possessed great demonic power. Since the advent of Communism in China, however, their influence has been diminished. In many locations shamans continue to operate in secret.

Christianity: The Lutherans worked in Liping until the 1930s, when they were forced to leave China. The church property was confiscated by the Communists. Today there are no known believers among the unreached Mjuniang. Most of the present generation have never heard of Christ, nor have they ever met a Christian.



Population in China:
60,000 (1991)
75,600 (2000)
97,600 (2010)
Location: Guizhou, Hunan, Guangxi
Religion: Animism
Christians: None Known

Overview of the Mjuniang

Countries: China
Pronunciation: “Jooh-nee-ah”
Other Names: Cao Miao, Grass Miao, Cao, Miao; Cao
Population Source: 60,000 (1991 *EDCL*); Out of a total Miao population of 7,398,035 (1990 census)
Location: SE Guizhou: Liping County; SW Hunan: Tongdao County; N Guangxi: Sanjiang County
Status: Officially included under Miao
Language: Daic, Kam-Sui
Dialects: 0
Religion: Animism, Shamanism, Ancestor Worship
Christians: None known
Scripture: None
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: None
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: COVOO

