



Population in China:
 200,000 (1991)
 252,200 (2000)
 325,300 (2010)
Location: Hunan, Guangxi
Religion: Animism
Christians: 200

Overview of the Aoka

Countries: China

Pronunciation: "Aow-kha"

Other Names:

Mao, Maojia, Qingyi Miao

Population Source:

200,000 (1991 *EDCL*);
 Out of a total Miao population of 7,398,035 (1990 census)

Location:

SW Hunan: Chengbu County;
 NE Guangxi: Ziyun District of Longsheng County

Status:

Officially included under Miao

Language: Chinese, Qingyi

Dialects: 0

Religion: Animism,
 Ancestor Worship, Christianity

Christians: 200

Scripture: None

Jesus film: None

Gospel Recordings: None

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: None



Paul Hattaway

Location: The 1991 *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Chinese Linguistics* lists 200,000 Aoka people who speak the Maojia language, also known as *Qingyi Miao*.¹ They are located in the mountains of Chengbu County in southwestern Hunan Province; and also in the Ziyun District of Longsheng County in the northeastern part of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

Identity: Although they are officially part of the Miao nationality, the Aoka speak a unique Chinese language — a fact they apparently refuse to accept. When linguists visited them and told them that they spoke a form of Chinese, "they claimed that they spoke Miao, because their speech was very different from that of the surrounding Chinese population, and because they wore Miao clothes instead of Chinese clothes."²

Language: The Aoka's language — which has seven tones — has been classified as a distinct Chinese language. "In pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar it is close to Chinese."³ It is not, however, intelligible with any other Chinese varieties in China. After many centuries of contact between the two groups, the Aoka appear to have combined their original Miao tongue with Chinese.

History: In the aftermath of Chinese wars against them, the ancestors of the Aoka

were launched into an era of migration. Tired of being harassed, they fled across mountain ranges in hope of finding an isolated place where they could be left alone to live their lives. Many of the ethnic groups now known as the Hmu also traveled into Hunan and Guangxi.⁴ They may be the ancestors of the Aoka. After centuries of living beside the all-powerful Han Chinese, the Aoka have lost their language and are being speedily assimilated to the Han Chinese language and culture.

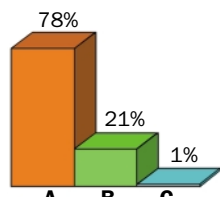
Customs: Aoka communities work together as one to design and build homes for each other. During a crisis, all the people come together to find a solution. In many

villages, the Aoka believe the stove is the center of their home and they are afraid to offend the "spirit of the stove". They are forbidden to place their feet or shoes on the stove, and at night they must remove all pots and pans from it: not to do so is believed to bring a curse to the family.

Religion: Some Aoka believe there was once a ladder connecting heaven to the earth. A long time ago the ladder was broken and no people have been able to visit heaven since. Today the majority of Aoka are animists, living under the influence of demons and evil spirits. Many have also adopted the ancestor worship belief systems of their Han Chinese neighbors.

Christianity: More than three-quarters of Aoka people have yet to hear the gospel for the first time. No widespread mission effort was undertaken in their area before missionaries were expelled from China in the early 1950s. There are few Miao or Han Chinese Christian communities in that part of China today. Hunan remains one of the most unreached provinces in China. Although they have their own spoken language, the Aoka use the Chinese script for writing. Few Aoka, however, are literate enough to read the Chinese Bible or other evangelistic literature.

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