

Location: A study based on the 1990 Chinese census listed 820,000 speakers of the Western Ghaio-Xong language. Most live in six counties of northwestern Hunan Province.¹ Others are scattered far and wide, from Hubei Province in the north, to Guizhou and Sichuan in the west,² and to the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in the south.

Identity: The Western Ghaio-Xong have been called several different names in the past, including *Huayuan Miao*, *Red Miao*, and *West Hunan Miao*. They are part of the Miao nationality, but they speak a language different from all other Miao groups in China. Their dress and customs are also different. Most Miao in Hunan call themselves *Ghaio-Xong*, in contrast to other Miao groups such as the Hmong, Hmu, Gha-Mu, and A-Hmao.

Language: Western Ghaio-Xong — which is a member of the Northern Hmongic linguistic family — is divided into two dialects, Chiwei and Layiping. A Roman orthography, introduced by the government, is being taught among the Ghaio-Xong.³

History: The virtually inaccessible mountains where the provinces of Hunan, Sichuan, and Guizhou meet were the site of countless wars involving the Ghaio-Xong. The Qing Emperor Kangxi (1662–1722) issued an edict that “the rules governing them should be different from those enforced elsewhere in China.”⁴ It took the Chinese 18 years (1855–1872) to crush one rebellion. According to a

memorial, “When reaching a Miao village, the government troops slaughtered rebels and those who had surrendered.”⁵

Customs: The Ghaio-Xong celebrate the Siyueba Festival on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month. “Many centuries ago, there were Miao [Ghaio-Xong] people living by the River Longtang at the foot of the Fenghuang Mountains in Western Hunan. No longer able to bear the oppression they suffered under the rule of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), they rose in revolt under the leadership of two brothers, Yayi and Yanu.... Yayi was killed in battle. Yanu led the remnants of his forces into safety in Guizhou.... To commemorate their heroes the Miao [Ghaio-Xong] people gather to hold a ceremony at which they sing, dance and perform traditional rites.”⁶

Religion: The Ghaio-Xong (along with the She and Yao minorities) worship Pan Hu, the dragon-dog they claim as the forefather of their race. The Pan Hu myth was recorded as early as the fifth century AD in the *Chronicles of the Later Han Dynasty (Hou Han Shui)*.



Miao Messenger

Christianity: The work of the Catholic Passionist missionaries was hindered by their inability to speak either Ghaio-Xong or Chinese fluently. One missiologist remarks, “Little wonder then, that in Hunan there does not appear to be any large-scale turning of the Miao [Ghaio-Xong] people to Christ.”⁷ The western Hunan region was largely neglected by Protestant missionaries prior to 1949. Today, the majority of Ghaio-Xong have never heard the gospel. Despite their size, they have no Scriptures, *Jesus* film, or gospel recordings available in their language.



Population in China:
 820,000 (1990)
 1,057,800 (2000)
 1,364,500 (2010)
Location: Hunan, Guizhou, Guangxi, Hubei, Sichuan
Religion: Animism
Christians: 4,000

Overview of the Western Ghaio-Xong

Countries: China
Pronunciation: “Gaow-Shong”
Other Names: Hmong: Western Xiangxi, Huayuan Miao, Hsianghsi Miao, West Hunan Miao, Northern Miao, Red Miao, Meo Do, Western West Hunan Miao, Ghaio-Xong
Population Source:
 820,000 (1995 Wang Fushi – 1990 figure);
 700,000 (1985 Wang Fushi – 1982 figure);
 Out of a total Miao population of 7,398,035 (1990 census)

Location: NW Hunan; Guizhou; Guangxi; SW Hubei; SE Sichuan⁸
Status: Officially included under Miao
Language: Hmong-Mien, Hmongic, Northern Hmongic
Dialects (2): Chiwei; Layiping
Religion: Animism, Polytheism, Ancestor Worship, Christianity
Christians: 4,000
Scripture: None
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: None
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: MMR00

