

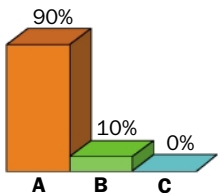


Population in China:
 7,000 (1987)
 9,630 (2000)
 12,400 (2010)
Location: Hunan
Religion: Polytheism
Christians: None Known

Overview of the Wunai

- Countries:** China
- Pronunciation:** "Woo-nai"
- Other Names:** Ngnai, Bunu; Wunai, Hmnai, Hm Nai, Huayi Yao, Flowery Shirt Yao
- Population Source:** 7,000 (1987 D. Bradley); 3,980 (1982 census); Out of a total Yao population of 2,134,013 (1990 census)
- Location:** *W Hunan:* Chengbu, Xinning, Tongdao, Longhui, Dongkou, and Chenxi counties
- Status:** Officially included under Yao
- Language:** Hmong-Mien, Hmongic, Bunuic, Bahengic
- Dialects:** 0
- Religion:** Polytheism, Animism, Ancestor Worship, Shamanism
- Christians:** None known
- Scripture:** None
- Jesus film:** None
- Gospel Recordings:** None
- Christian Broadcasting:** None
- ROPAL code:** BWN00

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

Location: A 1987 report listed 7,000 speakers of the Wunai language.¹ The Wunai are widely distributed in Chengbu, Xinning, Tongdao, Chenxi, Longhui, and Dongkou counties in the mountainous western part of Hunan Province. The 1982 census listed a figure of only 3,980 Wunai people.

Identity: The Wunai are officially considered part of the Bunu branch of the Yao nationality in China. The term *Bunu* is a generic name and does not refer to a specific people group or language; it simply means "us people." The Wunai do not refer to themselves as *Bunu* but use the self-name *Hm Nai*, which has been transcribed *Wunai* by the Chinese. The Han also call them by the nickname *Huayi* (Flowery Shirt) Yao.

Language: Although they have absorbed aspects of Yao culture, the Wunai speak a language related to Miao. It is unintelligible with any of the other Bunu languages in China. The differences between the Bunu languages "are mainly lexical. There is a large number of non-cognate words and a number of discrepancies of usage which impede intelligibility among dialects."² Wunai is not a written language. They use the Chinese script for everyday purposes.

History: The various "Bunu" groups are believed to be the descendants of the "savage Wuling tribes" who lived about 2,000 years ago. During the Song Dynasty (960–1279), agricultural skills developed among the ancestors of today's Wunai. They made "forged knives, indigo-dyed

cloth and crossbow weaving machines."³

Customs: The Zhuzhu Festival is a grand occasion among the Wunai. *Zhuzhu* means "to remember forever." The people remember and make offerings to Miluotuo who is considered the mother of their race. The Wunai are hard workers. In the evenings, after dinner, it is customary for the males of the house to gather around the fireplace to drink and discuss the day's activities.

Religion: The Wunai are worshipers of Pan Hu, who they believe to be the progenitor of their race. When a person dies, a shaman is quickly summoned to chant the "opening of the way" over the corpse. The chant helps the soul of the deceased find its way back through many obstacles and paths to the village where their ancestors have gone. The Wunai believe after dwelling there for a time the dead

will be reincarnated and come back to the earth. In the past, Wunai communities were controlled by shamans, but this practice has been driven underground since the Cultural Revolution. One of the spirits Wunai shamans call up is the god of Archery. At the beginning of time, the Wunai believed there were nine suns encircling the earth that inflicted great discomfort on the people and caused the waters to evaporate. The god of Archery came and shot eight of the suns out of the sky with his bow.

Christianity: The founder of Wycliffe Bible Translators, Cameron Townsend, once stated, "The greatest missionary is the Bible in the mother tongue. It never needs a furlough, is never considered a foreigner."⁴ The Wunai do not have the Word of God in their language. They are an unreached people group with no known Christians in their midst.



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