A-Hmao 阿贸

**Location:** A 1995 Chinese study listed a 1990 figure of 300,000 A-Hmao people in southern China. They live in the mountains of northwest Guizhou Province and adjacent areas of northeast Yunnan. A group of A-Hmao live in Wuding and Luquan counties in northern Yunnan Province, having migrated there in the 1830s. A small number also live in the Panzhihua area in southern Sichuan.

**Identity:** The A-Hmao are one of “close to a hundred distinctive subgroups of Miao in China alone, each speaking a slightly different dialect and maintaining its own traditional customs.” These people call themselves A-Hmao. The Chinese and foreigners have traditionally called them Da Hua Miao (Big Flowery Miao). The “Big Flowery Miao” (A-Hmao) speak a completely different language from the “Small Flowery Miao” (Gha-Mu) who also live in Guizhou.

**Language:** The Chinese officially label A-Hmao the Diandongbei (Northeast Language: Mu) who also live in Guizhou from the “Small Flowery Miao” (Gha-Mu). A-Hmao in his diary, “After a fight, the warriors who are killed on either side are opened and their hearts removed... these are cooked and eaten.”

**Customs:** Before their mass conversion to Christianity, the A-Hmao were ensnared by a complex system of evil spirits they called bidiang. The people’s immorality was “so bad that they could hardly be worse.... There are no decent women among the Big Flowery Miao [A-Hmao].”

**Religion:** When missionary Samuel Pollard first arrived in 1904, he found the A-Hmao trapped in slavery to the Nosu and overwhelmed with poverty. Together with Francis Dymond he invented an alphabet for their language, and taught them to read and write. Although a severe famine in 1918 left many A-Hmao believers “disenchanted with Christianity,” Pollard baptized 10,000 A-Hmao believers, and before the mission was expelled from China, 80,000 had turned to Christ. Some estimate that as many as 80% of the A-Hmao today are Christians.

**Christianity:** After the departure of the missionaries, the A-Hmao church stayed steadfast to Christ, despite sinister plots during the Cultural Revolution aimed at destroying their faith. During the 1940s the church experienced “a very serious process of retrogression and decay, which if not soon arrested will... bring us back to our starting point again.” The A-Hmao New Testament was printed in 1917; 50,000 copies were reprinted and sold out between 1983 and 1988. In 1974 many A-Hmao believers were massacred by Chinese troops when they secretly met for prayer in a cave at Xinglongchang. Instead of destroying the church, the massacre caused a doubling in the number of Christians over a short time.