



Martin Norris

Location: Although most sources do not mention the existence of the Hmong Daw (White Hmong) people in Myanmar, their small community of 800 people lives in eastern Shan State, in and around the village of Homein in Langkho District. Homein is located high in the mountains on the border with Thailand and is almost inaccessible, with no roads. There are more than two million Hmong Daw people globally, with most found in Vietnam (1.2 million), Laos (427,000), and China (304,000). Since the Vietnam War, large numbers of Hmong Daw have been welcomed as refugees in several Western nations, with 224,000 now residing in the United States,¹ especially in the states of California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.²

Identity: The Hmong Daw are one of two Hmong groups in Myanmar, but most sources only list the larger Hmong Njua group located further north along the Chinese border. Although their languages are related, the two groups have separate identities, and their women’s dress is completely different. The origins of the Hmong have left scholars baffled, as they do not share any of the ethnolinguistic characteristics of

other Asian peoples. Some have speculated that they may have first lived in Persia or Babylon before migrating to Siberia, Mongolia, and China. The Hmong have a legend of a homeland where “days and nights lasted six months, the water was frozen, and snow hid the ground. Only a few trees grew, and they were small. The people, too, were short and squat, clothed in furs.”³

Language: Hmong Daw is linguistically close to Hmong Njua, and speakers from the two groups are usually able to understand each other. The Hmong have several stories to explain why their language had no written form for many centuries. In one account, as they fled Chinese troops, “the Hmong fell asleep, and their horses ate up their texts. A second more ominous account claims that the Han, while driving the Hmong out of the valleys, took their texts and burned them all. The educated ones went to the mountains, and when they died, there was no more writing.”⁴

History: The Hmong Daw are scattered across a wide area of south China and Southeast Asia because of centuries of Chinese military oppression. The conventional method was to

besiege the Hmong from three sides. As a result, “They retreated through the hills, relying on their matchless climbing skills. This explains a Hmong inclination to describe the west as a desirable destination.”⁵ A traditional Hmong rhyme says, “Over the western mountains of ten thousand cloud-capped crags and over the cliff, will be a paradise; over the peaks will be flourishing life.”⁶

Customs: While Hmong Daw women are skilled embroiderers who teach their daughters these skills at an early age, there is a dark and sinister side to their lives in Myanmar. Their main location, Homein, was the hub for the notorious Chinese drug baron Khun Sa’s operations. Although he died in 2007, opium and other drugs continue to flow from the area, with the Hmong heavily involved in the process.

Religion: For centuries the Hmong Daw were animists, living in fear of the spirit world. In the past, Christian radio broadcasts proved highly effective for evangelizing them. In the mid-1950s, in a remarkable story of mass conversion, hundreds of Hmong Daw in Laos came to Christ as a result of the broadcasts.⁷ An even more powerful “radio revival” occurred among the Hmong Daw in Vietnam and China in the 1990s, resulting in tens of thousands of professing Christians.⁸ Most Hmong Daw people remain entrenched in Animism, however, and church leaders have found it difficult to effectively disciple new believers.

Christianity: The Hmong Daw are one of a few tribes in Myanmar today that have the full Bible, *Jesus* film, and other Christian resources in their language. Despite an estimated one in five Hmong Daw in Myanmar claiming to be Christian, a visiting missionary discovered that “The village is involved in drug production and trafficking to Thailand, even though it boasts a sizable Christian church. The believers don’t appear to have a problem with being involved in drug trafficking, despite being practicing Christians.”⁹



Population in Myanmar: 800 (2025)

Location: Shan State

Language Family: Hmong-Mien

Main Religion: Animism (80.0%)

Christians: 160 (20.0%)

OVERVIEW

Population: 800 in Myanmar (2025 Asia Harvest)

Other Countries: 1,205,000 in Vietnam 427,000 in Laos 304,000 in China 224,000 in USA 37,000 in Thailand¹

Other Names: Bai Hmong, Bai Miao, Hmong Dawb, Hmong Dleub, Meo Do, Meo Kao, Mong, Myangzi, White Hmong, White Meo, White Miao

Location: Shan State: Langkho Township in Langkho District

Language: Hmong Daw [mwv]

Dialects: 2

Scripture: Bible 1997 New Testament 1975 Portions 1922

Jesus film: Hmong Daw

Global Recordings: Hmong, White #491

People ID: 12112

