ISO 639-3 Registration Authority
Request for New Language Code Element in ISO 639-3

This form is to be used in conjunction with a “Request for Change to ISO 639-3 Language Code” form

Date: 2007-8-27

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Names, affiliations and email addresses of additional supporters of this request:

Associated Change request number : 2007-188   (completed by Registration Authority)
Tentative assignment of new identifier : sfm   (completed by Registration Authority)

PLEASE NOTE: This completed form will become part of the public record of this change request and the history of the ISO 639-3 code set. Use Shift-Enter to insert a new line in a form field (where allowed).

1. NAMES and IDENTIFICATION

a) Preferred name of language for code element denotation:
Small Flowery Miao

b) Autonym (self-name) for this language:
Gha-Mu.

c) Common alternate names and spellings of language, and any established abbreviations:
The Small Flowery Miao are also called Gha-Mu, Ghab-Mvb Ghab-Svd, Ghuab-Hmongb
Ghuab-Soud, Xiao Hua Miao and Hsiao Hwa Miao.
If I have understood Chinese linguistics articles and discussions with Chinese Miao
scholars correctly, this variety belongs to the category called by Chinese linguists 苗语川
滇方言 川黔次方言 第二个土语. Translated into English this would be “the second local
dialect belonging to the Chuanqiandian sub-dialect of the Chuanqiandian dialect of the
Miao language.”

d) Reason for preferred name:
This language group is best known as the Small Flowery Miao (a translation of Chinese
“Xiao Hua Miao”) in Chinese literature and English historical records.
“‘Small’ probably refers to the finer embroidered pattern and smaller size of the shoulder
pads of the long jacket worn by Gha-Mu men and women. In comparison the shawl worn
by the A-Hmao (‘Big Flowery Miao’) group is very broad and uses large bold patterns.”
(Michael Johnson 1998, p.10)
Why not use the term “Hmong”? The term “Miao” is not derogatory in China as the terms
“Miao” or “Meo” sometimes are in southeast Asia. Furthermore, over-use in English of the
term “Hmong” is not appropriate in a Chinese context, as it may be interpreted as failing to
contribute to the nation’s efforts to unify the various Miao subgroups and to encourage the
various ethnic groups to live in harmony. And finally, while speakers of many other
Farwestern Miao lects do refer to themselves as “Hmong,” speakers of the Small Flowery
Miao lect use a different autonym, Gha-Mu, so it would not be accurate to list this entry as
“Hmong.”
c) Name and approximate population of ethnic group or community who use this language:
Total for Chuanqiandian sub-dialect second local dialect: 84,000 (Wang Fushi 1995, p. 6)
Small Flowery Miao: 70,000-100,000 (Xu Zhisen, Nayong Shuicheng Hezhang Jierang Didai Miaoyu Chutan, p. 389).

f) Preferred three letter identifier, if available: sfm
Your suggestion will be taken into account, but the Registration Authority will determine the identifier to be proposed. The identifiers is not intended to be an abbreviation for a name of the language, but to serve as a device to identify a given language uniquely. With thousands of languages, many sets of which have similar names, it is not possible to provide identifiers that resemble a language name in every case.

2. TEMPORAL DESCRIPTION and LOCATION

a) Is this a
- ☒ Living language
- □ Nearly extinct/secondary use only (includes languages in revival)
- □ Recently extinct language
- □ Historical language
- □ Ancient language
- □ Artificially constructed language
- □ Macrolanguage

(Select one. See explanations of these types at http://www.sil.org/iso639-3/types.asp)

b) Countries where used:
China

c) Region within each country: towns, districts, states or provinces where used. Include GPS coordinates of the approximate center of the language, if possible:
Primarily in Nayong and Hezhang counties and Liupanshui municipality in Guizhou province (Wang Fushi 1995, p. 6)
Primarily in Nayong, Shuicheng and Hezhang counties, but also in Bijie, Weining, Guanling, Zhenning, Zhijin, Puding and Ziyun counties of western Guizhou province (Xu Zhisen, Nayong Shuicheng Hezhang Jierang Didai Miaoyu Chutan, p. 389)

d) For an ancient or historical language, give approximate time frame; for a recently extinct language, give the approximate date of the last known user’s death

3. MODALITY AND LINGUISTIC AFFILIATION

a) This language is:
- □ Signed
- ☒ Spoken
- □ Attested only in writings

b) Language family, if classified; origin, if artificially constructed:
Hmong-Mien, Hmongic, Chuanqiandian

c) Closest language linguistically. For signed language, note influence from other signed or spoken languages:
One lect of Small Flowery Miao is very close to Large Flowery Miao (personal
Unpublished article by Michael Johnson, 1998, "Farwestern Hmongic," describes Gha-Mu (Small Flowery Miao) as "an intermediate dialect between A-Hmao and the Core Farwestern Hmongic group. For practical purposes Gha-Mu and A-Hmao are mutually unintelligible, however if speakers talk slowly and carefully a certain amount can be communicated. Moreover it should be comparatively easy for Gha-Mu and A-Hmao to learn each other's language. A similar situation holds between Gha-Mu and Core Farwestern which are unintelligible for practical purposes but yet very close." (page 11) Horned Miao and Sinicized Miao are closely related to Small Flowery Miao (7 July 2007, personal communication from a researcher who has traveled in Miao areas in western Guizhou)

4. LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND USE

a) What written literature, inscriptions or recordings exist in this language? Are there newspapers, radio or television broadcasts, etc.?:
     do not know

b) Is this language officially recognized by any level of government? Is it used in any levels of formal education as a language of instruction (for other subjects)? Is it taught in schools?:
   Mentioned and described in Chinese linguistics articles
   Considered by Chinese linguists to be the second local dialect under the Chuanqiandian sub-dialect of the Chuanqiandian Miao dialect (Wang Fushi 1995, p. 6)
   Probably used as a medium of instruction in the initial grades of primary school in Small Flowery Miao villages, as an aid for transition to Mandarin Chinese.

c) Comment on factors of ethnolinguistic identity and informal domains of use:
   Speakers of various Miao lects in western Guizhou consider themselves part of the Miao nationality in China but unique in culture and language from other Miao groups (Xian Songkui, p. 749). The mother tongue is used in the home, community and market by speakers of all ages when speaking with other Miao, but a local dialect of Chinese or standard Mandarin is used when speaking with non-Miao people. The mother tongue is being passed on to the younger generation.

5. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

You do not need to repeat sources previously identified in the form, “Request for Change to ISO 639-3 Language Code”

a) First-hand knowledge. Describe:

b) Knowledge through personal communication. Describe:
   A colleague has heard a report from Sinicized Miao speakers that they are unable to use
In personal communication a Chinese Miao scholar (24 August 2007) and a foreign colleague (18 May 2007), both in Guizhou, report that speakers of Small Flowery Miao ARE able to carry on conversations, at least at a simple level, with speakers of Chuanqiandian Cluster Miao.

c) Knowledge from published sources. Include known dictionaries, grammars, etc. (please give complete bibliographical references):
Hattaway states that Gha-Mu (Small Flowery Miao) is a separate variety from Chuanqiandian Cluster Miao lects and not mutually intelligible with them, as well as having a distinct cultural identity. Hattaway, Paul. 2000. Operation China, p. 155.

Xian Songkui, in speaking of branches of the Miao nationality in the Zhijin area of western Guizhou, writes: 不同的支系不但表现在语言、服饰及头饰方面的不同，而且不同的支系还不互相通婚。我们承认苗族内部有不同的支系，这并不影响苗族内部的团结，“正如一个家庭共分为几支或几房一样。”(Xian Songkui. 织金苗语方言记略 [Zhijin Miaoyu Fangyan Jilue], in Guizhou Minzu Diaocha, Guizhou Sheng Minzu Yanjiusuo, p. 749) [Rough translation to English: Different branches of the Miao not only exhibit different languages, clothing styles and head ornamentation styles, but they also do not intermarry. We acknowledge that there are different branches among the Miao, but this does not at all affect the unity among them, "just as one family may be found in several branches or several houses."]


Please return this form to:
ISO 639-3 Registrar
SIL International, Office of Language Information Systems
7500 West Camp Wisdom Road
Dallas, Texas 75236 USA
Email: iso639-3@sil.org
An email attachment of this completed form is preferred.

Further information:
If your request for a new language code element is supported by the Registration Authority as a formal proposal, you may be contacted separately by researchers working with the Ethnologue or with LinguistList asking you to provide additional information.
Sources of documentation for ISO 639-3 identifiers:

