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**Location:** According to Chinese linguist Zheng Guo-qiao, 2,000 speakers of a Gelao language called Gao live in Guizhou Province of southern China. They are primarily distributed in Dagouchang District of Pingba County, in Wanzizhai and Heizhai districts of Anshun County, in Wozi District of Puding County, in the Niudong District of Zhijin County, in Dongkou District of Shuicheng County, and in the Longga District of Luzhi City.<sup>1</sup> The Gao live in mountainous areas alongside Miao, Bouyei, Yi, and Han Chinese people.

**Identity:** Although only 2,000 speakers of this language are reported, the number of people who belong to the Gao ethnic group may be substantially larger than the number of people who can still speak their language. The Gao,

who also call themselves *Qau*, *Klao*, and *Klan*, are one of five subgroups of the official Gelao nationality in China.

**Language:** Chinese sources, which tend to describe many mutually unintelligible languages as “dialects” admit that there are great differences among the varieties of Gelao. One states, “Often Gelao people within the same county cannot understand each other.”<sup>2</sup> The Gao language is part of the Kadai branch of the Tai linguistic family. Even though it is a Tai language, Gao bears little resemblance to other Tai languages in southern China such as Zhuang and Bouyei. All Gao are bilingual in Chinese.

**History:** The different subgroups of the Gelao are usually recognized as the original inhabitants of

Guizhou Province by most other minority peoples. Samuel Clarke wrote, “These people claim, and rightly, we believe, to be the real aborigines [original inhabitants] of that region.... Where the Miao and Keh-lao [Gelao] occupy the same district, the Miao allow that the Keh-lao were there before themselves.”<sup>3</sup>

**Customs:** It is likely that most of the Gelao communities across this wide tract of land share few cultural or ethnic traits. Because of many centuries of separation from other groups of Gelao, the Gao have developed their own ethnic identity, customs, and language. Gao women no longer wear traditional dress, except for festivals and special occasions.

**Religion:** In the past century the Gao have adopted the religious beliefs of their neighbors, especially of the pervasive Han Chinese. The Gao worship their ancestors on several occasions throughout the year. Local spirits — such as the gods of the Water, Forest, Rice Field, and Village — are also appeased by the Gao. Many Gao youth are atheists with no religious persuasion.

**Christianity:** There are believed to be a small number of Gao Christians in southern China, mixed in with Han Chinese congregations. There is a smattering of believers in most of the areas where the Gao live. Luzhi City, for example, has 470,000 citizens, of which more than 2,800 are Christians who worship in 24 government-sanctioned churches and meeting points. In 1992, “three ministers, including

one woman, and 12 elders were ordained at the Luzhi Church to serve Christians in the area. At the same service, 42 new evangelists were also commissioned.”<sup>4</sup>



<b>Population in China:</b>
2,000 (1987)
2,750 (2000)
3,550 (2010)
<b>Location:</b> Guizhou
<b>Religion:</b> Ancestor Worship
<b>Christians:</b> 20

## Overview of the Gao

<b>Countries:</b> China
<b>Pronunciation:</b> “Gow”
<b>Other Names:</b> Qau, Gao Gelao, Qau Gelao, Klan, Klao, Klau
<b>Population Source:</b> 2,000 (1987 Zheng Guo-qiao); Out of a total Gelao population of 437,997 (1990 census)
<b>Location:</b> <i>Guizhou:</i> Pingba, Anshun, Puding, Zhijin, and Shuicheng counties; Also in Luzhi City
<b>Status:</b> Officially included under Gelao
<b>Language:</b> Daic, Kadai, Lati-Kelao
<b>Dialects:</b> 0
<b>Religion:</b> Ancestor Worship, Animism, No Religion, Christianity
<b>Christians:</b> 20
<b>Scripture:</b> None
<b>Jesus film:</b> None
<b>Gospel Recordings:</b> None
<b>Christian Broadcasting:</b> None
<b>ROPAL code:</b> KKFO1

