

PUBIAO

The Pubiao are one of the tiniest of Vietnam's official minorities. At the time of the 1989 census they numbered only 382 people in Vietnam. They live in the Dong Van, Yen Minh and Meo Vac districts of Ha Giang Province, very close to Vietnam's northern border with China.

In 1990 Chinese linguist Zhang Junru listed a figure of 307 Pubiao living in China. In China they Pubiao have not been recognized as a distinct group, but have been lumped under the huge Yi minority, which contains more than 7 million people. The Pubiao share many cultural similarities with other Yi groups, but they speak a language from the Tai language group (related to Gelao, Lati and Laha), whereas Yi is a collection of Tibeto-Burman varieties.

The language of the Pubiao, called *Laqua*, is nearing extinction. Only 50 elderly speakers in China were reported in 1991. Only five Pubiao were still able to sing their traditional songs, which tell of their culture and beliefs.

Because many Pubiao live in mixed villages with the Han Chinese, they are bilingual in Mandarin. Those Pubiao who live near the Nung can speak their language. A few Pubiao can also speak the language of their Hmong neighbors.

The Pubiao call themselves *Ka Biao*. In Vietnam the government has transliterated their name as *Pu Peo*.

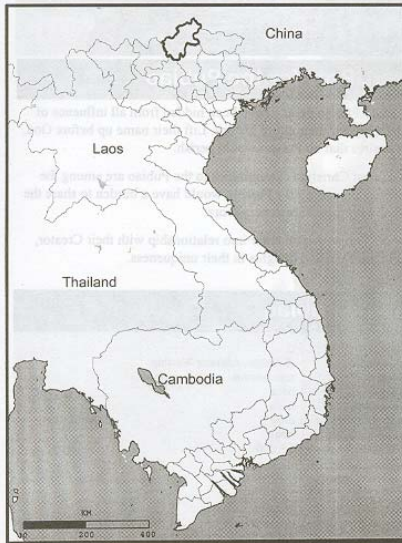
Pubiao women wear two vests at one

time, and ankle-length skirts. Lately they have abandoned wearing the outer vest and have only retained the inner one. This vest, called *bok tam*, has five panels and buttons under the right armpit. At the hems and around the neck and sleeves, bands of colored cloth are sewn similar to those adorning the costumes of the Nhang. Pubiao women commonly draw their hair forward and hold it in place with a comb.

Many Pubiao men are skilled carpenters. They hire themselves out to other communities. They also make and sell goods made from wood, rattan and bamboo. The Pubiao used to live in stilted wooden houses, but a few decades ago they changed and now dwell in clay houses that sit on the ground. The Pubiao bake their own bricks and tiles for their homes and to sell in the local markets.

The staple food of the Pubiao is steam-cooked corn flour. Their crops include maize, rice, rye and beans. The Pubiao have relatively advanced agriculture, including the use of fertilizer and insecticide.

Many Pubiao families own buffaloes and oxen, which are mainly used to



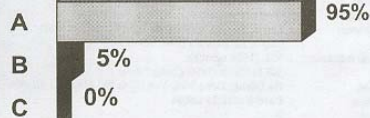
Population:
382 (1989)
470 (2000)
580 (2010)

Language:
Tai

Religion:
Animism

Christians:
none known

Status of Evangelization (Awareness of Christ and the Gospel)



A = have never heard the Gospel or the name of Christ
B = were evangelized but have not yet become Christians
C = Adherents to any form of Christianity

plow the fields and are rarely killed for food.

The Pubiao are animists. They believe a person has eight souls and nine spirits. These souls and spirits govern their existence, guide their activities, and shape the entire lives and world-view of the Pubiao. Ceremonies are held to pray for peace and to ask the spirits to bless the harvest. Rituals are scheduled at the start of the New Year and during the 5th and 6th Lunar Month Festival.

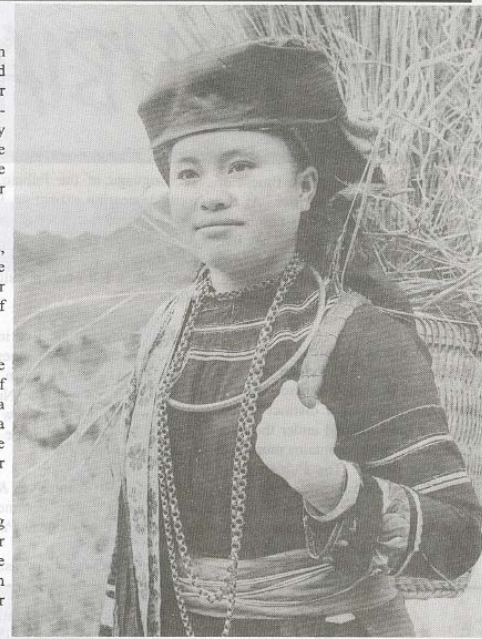
The Pubiao have their own unique instruments, including a set of copper drums. They believe drums are either male or female. The drummer places each kind of drum on either side of himself when he performs.

The most revered place in a Pubiao home is the ancestral altar, reserved for three generations of ancestors. Each generation is symbolized by a small sandstone jar. A dried pumpkin and a bundle of ox-tail hair attached to a stick are believed to help the ancestors recognize their descendants.

Many Pubiao customs are directed at preserving their unique culture, which makes it difficult for the Gospel to penetrate their minds with the message of the Savior. There are no known Christians today among the Pubiao in either Vietnam or China.

At funerals the Pubiao offer prayers to the soul of the dead person. Texts are read reflecting the Pubiao concept of the Universe, of mankind and of their community. Some legends include a great flood in the past; the only survivors were a few people who hid in a giant hollowed-out pumpkin. This may be one key to introducing the Gospel to the unreached Pubiao.

Very few Pubiao people have ever heard the Gospel or the Name of Jesus Christ.



Pray for the Pubiao

- 1 The small Pubiao people have been hidden from all influence of Christianity for their entire history. Lift their name up before God, who desires that no Pubiao would perish.
- 2 The nearest Christian communities to the Pubiao are among the Hmong people. Pray the Hmong would have a burden to share the Gospel with their Pubiao neighbors.
- 3 Pray the Pubiao would enter into relationship with their Creator, who loves them and delights in their uniqueness.

Overview of the Pubiao

Countries : Vietnam, China
Pronunciation : "Poo-pee-ew"
Other Names : Laqua, La Qua, Pu Peo, Ka Beo, Pen Ti Lolo, Man Laqua, Ka Bao, Ka Blao, Bendi Lolo
Population Source : 382 (1989 census), 307 in China (1990 Zhang Junru)
Location : Ha Giang: Dong Van, Yen Minh and Meo Vac districts
Language : Daie, Kadai, Li-Laqua
Dialects : 0

Subgroups : 0
Religions : Animism, Ancestor Worship
Christians : none known
Scripture : none
Jesus film : none
Gospel Recordings : none
Christian Radio : none
ROPAL code : LAQ00