



**Population in China:**  
 307 (1990)  
 385 (2000)  
 480 (2010)  
**Location:** Yunnan  
**Religion:** Animism  
**Christians:** None Known

## Overview of the Pubiao

**Countries:** Vietnam, China

**Pronunciation:** "Piu-bee-ow"

**Other Names:** Laqua, Pupeo, Ka Beo, Ka Bao, Ka Biao, Bendi Lolo, Man Laqua, Kubiao

**Population Source:**  
 307 (1990 Zhang Junru);  
 Out of a total Yi population of 6,572,173 (1990 census);  
 382 in Vietnam (1994 Hoang Luong)

**Location:** *SE Yunnan:* Malipo County in Wenshan Prefecture: Tiechang, Matong, Punong, Pucha, and Pialong villages

**Status:**  
 Officially included under Yi

**Language:** Daic, Kadai, Li-Laqua

**Dialects:** 0

**Religion:** Animism, Polytheism, Ancestor Worship

**Christians:** None known

**Scripture:** None

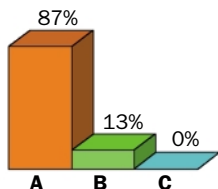
**Jesus film:** None

**Gospel Recordings:** None

**Christian Broadcasting:** None

**ROPAL code:** LAQ00

### Status of Evangelization



**A** = Have never heard the gospel  
**B** = Were evangelized but did not become Christians  
**C** = Are adherents to any form of Christianity

**Location:** The Pubiao people are evenly distributed on both sides of the China-Vietnam border. In 1990 the Pubiao numbered 307 people in southern China, while 382 were located in northern Vietnam where they are an official minority.<sup>1</sup> The Pubiao in China live near the Vietnam border in the Tiechang, Matong, Punong, Pucha, and Pufeng villages of Malipo County in the Wenshan Zhuang-Miao Prefecture of Yunnan Province. The Vietnam Pubiao are located in seven communes of Dong Van District in Ha Giang Province.

**Identity:** The Pubiao call themselves *Ka Biao*. In China the Pubiao have been officially included under the Yi nationality. The Chinese commonly call the Pubiao *Bendi Lolo*, which means "indigenous Lolo."<sup>2</sup>

**Language:** The language of the Pubiao, called *Laqua*, is nearing extinction. Only 50 elderly speakers were reported in 1991.<sup>3</sup> A Chinese linguist notes that although all Pubiao in China can speak Mandarin, "those who can still speak their own language are not numerous."<sup>4</sup> Laqua is "very similar to Laha in north-western Vietnam."<sup>5</sup> Every linguist who has studied Pubiao seems to have come to a different conclusion regarding which linguistic subgroup of Tai it belongs to. It has been variously described as "Zhuang-Dong,"<sup>6</sup> "Kadai,"<sup>7</sup> and "Daic."<sup>8</sup> The Pubiao living at Pialong can also speak Nung, while those at Matong are bilingual in Miao.<sup>9</sup>

**History:** For centuries Pubiao society has been

monogamous. Today it is strictly forbidden for people of different generations to marry.

**Customs:** Until recently, Pubiao women wore two vests, in addition to 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 which are similar to those adorning the costumes of the Gay. Pubiao women commonly draw their hair forward and hold it in place with a comb.

**Religion:** The Pubiao are animists. They believe a person has eight souls and nine spirits. These souls and spirits govern their existence and guide their activities. These beliefs shape the entire life and worldview of the Pubiao. The most revered place in a

Pubiao home is the 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 enable the ancestors to recognize their descendants.

**Christianity:** 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. 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 who hid in a giant hollowed-out pumpkin.<sup>10</sup> This may be one key to introducing the gospel message to the unreached Pubiao.



Paul Hattaway