


Population in China:

159,328 (1990)

205,500 (2000)

265,100 (2010)

Location: Guangxi, Guizhou

Religion: Ancestor Worship

Christians: 1,600

Overview of the Mulao

Countries: China

Pronunciation: "Moo-laow"

Other Names: Mulam, Molao, Morlao, Mu, Abo, Muluo, Ayo, Mulao Miao

Population Source:

159,328 (1990 census);

90,426 (1982 census);

52,819 (1964 census)

Location: *N Guangxi:* Luocheng, Yishan, Liucheng, Xincheng, and Du'an counties; Liuzhou City; Guizhou: Kaili and Majiang counties

Status:

An official minority of China

Language: Daic, Kam-Sui

Literacy: 65%

Dialects: 0

Religion: Ancestor Worship, Daoism, No Religion, Christianity

Christians: 1,600

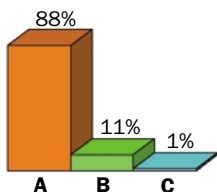
Scripture: None

Jesus film: None

Gospel Recordings: Mulao

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: MLM00

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: More than 159,000 Mulao were counted in the 1990 Chinese census. The majority live in the Luocheng Mulao Autonomous County in the northern part of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.¹ A few villages of Mulao are located in central Guizhou Province. The people there refer to themselves as *Mu*. Guangxi contains some of the most spectacular scenery in the world. The landscape is dotted with many jagged limestone peaks that stretch hundreds of feet in the air, resembling sharp knives.

Identity: The Mulao are one of China's officially recognized minority groups. Some Mulao living in Luocheng refer to themselves as *Kyam*.² In 1945 the Mulao were described as being a part of the Lao race in China, which also included the Gelao and Tulao tribes.³

Language: Mulao is a part of the Dong-Shui branch of the Daic linguistic family. It has ten tones, and shares 65% lexical similarity with Southern Dong and 53% with Northern Zhuang.⁴ Although Mulao is spoken by most members of the Mulao nationality, many are bilingual or multilingual in Chinese, Zhuang, and Dong. The Mulao have used the Chinese orthography for reading and writing since the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644).⁵

History: The Mulao, also known as *Mulam*, are the descendants of the ancient Liao and Ling tribes of the Jin Dynasty (AD 265–420). For centuries the Mulao have struggled to prevent

their ethnic identity from being swallowed up by the dominant Han Chinese, Zhuang, Miao, and Dong groups. Today in the main center of Mulao civilization, Luocheng County, the Mulao no longer wear their traditional clothing. In addition, many Mulao youth now speak Mandarin as their mother tongue.

Customs: Guangxi is home to some of the most exotic food in China. In addition to the normal helpings of dog and cat that are available throughout Southern China, mouthwatering dishes that appear on local menus include snake-vile soup, bamboo rat, mutjac-horned pheasant, short-tailed monkey brain, gem-faced civet, ants, fruit-eating fox, and last but not least, armadillo face. Mulao who bear the surname of Luo or Wu, however, are not allowed to eat dog meat or the internal organs of animals.⁶

Religion: The Mulao used to be polytheists, but now religion does not play a large part in their everyday lives. In the past they observed the Yifan Festival. Pigs and sheep were sacrificed, lion and dragon dances were performed, and Mulao shamans chanted incantations.

Christianity: Several Christian research organizations list a figure of 1,600 Mulao believers in China,⁷ but one recent visitor reported, "Nobody I spoke with had ever met a Christian before, and most did not even know what the word *Christian* meant."⁸ There are no reports of missionaries prior to 1949 specifically targeting the Mulao. A 1997 article mentions a mud-brick and tile church building needing repair at Qiaoshan Village in Luocheng County, but it does not mention whether the members of this church are Han Chinese or Mulao.⁹



Paul Hattaway