



Population in China:

6,000 (1987)
8,260 (2000)
10,650 (2010)

Location: Yunnan
Religion: Buddhism
Christians: 10

Overview of the Pale De'ang

Countries: Myanmar, China, Thailand

Pronunciation: "Deh-ung-Pah-lay"

Other Names: Ngwe Palaung, Silver Palaung, Pale, Palay, Benglong, Bonglung, Bonglong, Penglung, Punglung, Darang, Manton, Nam Hsan, Ta-ang, Bulei, Palaung Pale

Population Source: 6,000 (1987 D. Bradley); Out of a total De'ang population of 15,462 (1990 census); 200,000 to 300,000 in Myanmar; 5,000 in Thailand

Location: *W Yunnan:* Dehong Prefecture: Luxi County

Status: Officially included under De'ang

Language: Austro-Asiatic, Mon-Khmer, Northern Mon-Khmer, Palaungic, Eastern Palaungic, Palaung

Dialects (2): Bulei, Raojin

Religion: Theravada Buddhism, Animism

Christians: 10

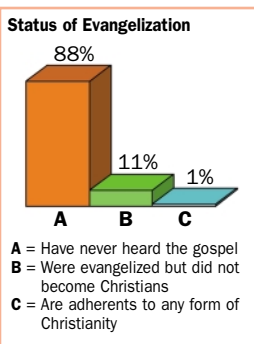
Scripture: Work in progress

Jesus film: Available

Gospel Recordings: Pale #03501

Christian Broadcasting: Available (FEBC)

ROPAL code: PCE00



Location: A 1987 survey listed 6,000 speakers of the De'ang Pale language in China.¹ They are located in Luxi County in the western part of Yunnan Province, close to the Myanmar border. The Pale area is just east of the Rumai. In addition, between 200,000 and 300,000 Pale live in northern Myanmar. More than 5,000 also live near Fang in northwest Thailand. They were war refugees from Myanmar in the early 1980s.

Identity: The Pale De'ang are one of four distinct groups that have been combined to form the official De'ang nationality in China. In Myanmar, they are called *Palaung*. Palaung is a Burmese word. The Chinese authorities originally named this minority the *Benglong* — a Chinese transliteration of *Palaung* — but after consultation in 1982 they changed their name to *De'ang*.

Language: De'ang is a member of the Mon-Khmer language family. It is related to Bulang and Wa. Pale is the only one of the four De'ang languages that is not tonal. In Myanmar the Pale language is quite uniform despite its large geographical dispersion.

History: The De'ang were originally part of one great Austro-Asiatic race. It appears the De'ang and Wa shared a common identity in the past but split off from each other when the De'ang embraced Buddhism. The Wa remained animists.

Customs: Most De'ang are employed in agriculture, farming, and logging. Work tasks are assigned

according to age and sex. The men perform demanding tasks such as plowing, while the women plant seeds and fetch water. The De'ang have been culturally influenced by their Dai neighbors and celebrate many of the same festivals.

Religion: Many centuries ago the De'ang converted to Theravada Buddhism. Their Buddhist practices are mixed with numerous animistic beliefs and rituals. Shamans, or witch doctors, are powerful figures in De'ang society. No important event is undertaken without first consulting a shaman. He goes into a trance to determine whether or not an event should occur and when the most auspicious date and time would be.

Christianity: The De'ang are considered relatively resistant to Christianity. The majority are trapped in fear

of demons and shamans. Few missionaries in the past have tried to reach the De'ang in China. In 1945 work among them was described as "completely virgin soil."² A handful of De'ang families in western Yunnan were converted before foreign missionaries were expelled from China in the early 1950s.³ Today, approximately one out of every thousand De'ang in Myanmar is a Christian. The few minor breakthroughs that have occurred among the Pale De'ang in Myanmar have often resulted in violent persecution and martyrdom.⁴ The Pale De'ang are the only one of the four distinct De'ang languages to have gospel radio broadcasts and the *Jesus* film in their language. Although the broadcasts are targeted at Myanmar, it is believed listeners are also able to receive the shortwave signal in China.



Paul Hattaway