



**Population in China:**

12,226 (1995)  
14,000 (2000)  
18,050 (2010)

**Location:** Yunnan

**Religion:** Animism

**Christians:** 400

## Overview of the Laopang

**Countries:** Myanmar, China

**Pronunciation:** “Laow-pung”

**Other Names:** Laopa

**Population Source:**  
12,226 (1995 GEM);  
Also in Myanmar

**Location:** *W Yunnan*

**Status:** Probably officially included under Lahu

**Language:** Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Burmese-Lolo, Lolo, Unclassified

**Dialects:** 0

**Religion:** Animism, Christianity

**Christians:** 400

**Scripture:** None

**Jesus film:** None

**Gospel Recordings:** None

**Christian Broadcasting:** None

**ROPAL code:** LBG00

**Location:** The population of the Laopang tribe in southern China numbered just over 12,000 in 1995.<sup>1</sup> Additional communities of Laopang live in northern Myanmar. The only location ever given for the Laopang in China was in 1945, after missionary John Kuhn conducted a detailed survey of the tribes in Yunnan. Kuhn listed the Laopang as living at “Yungpeh.”<sup>2</sup> Yungpeh is the old spelling for what today would be Yongbei, but Yongbei has not been located on any map of Yunnan. Today the Laopang may be located at Yongde or Yongkang — two towns located near the Lahu areas in the western part of Yunnan Province.

to prevent the Chinese from ever hearing the gospel properly.<sup>4</sup> In the early 1900s missionary Luella Miner expressed her frustrations with her lack of progress in the Chinese language: “I have been in China more than a year and a half and have labored under the delusion hitherto that I both understood and could speak a little of the vernacular. But the jargon which these country-women, speaking a slightly different dialect, poured into my ears fairly started the cold sweat, and it was equally appalling to see the vacant stare with which my supposedly choice Pekinese was received by many of the women.... My umbrella now

and then proved more interesting than the difference between the true God and temple idols.”<sup>5</sup>

**History:** The Laopang are probably considered a branch of the Lahu minority. A legend says that long ago, people from different nationalities shared a tiger they had hunted together. They ate the meat in different ways. “Because the way the Lahus ate their share was most characteristic... they were given the nickname, ‘brave tiger-hunting people’.”<sup>6</sup>

**Customs:** Today there are few tigers left in the western Yunnan area. The Laopang have turned to rice cultivation as their main source of food production. They also grow vegetables, corn, and maize.



Dwayne Graybill

**Identity:** Little is known about the Laopang people group or language. They may have been included under the Lahu nationality. The Laopang language has been described as “possibly the same as a group of Lahu near the Lao-Thai border.”<sup>3</sup>

**Religion:** The majority of Laopang people are animists who worship various spirits.

**Christianity:** The Laopang are part of the Lahu minority, which contains 50,000 Christians in China,<sup>7</sup> mostly concentrated in Banli, Mujia, Gengma, and Menglian.<sup>8</sup> At least several hundred of these are believed to be Laopang people. The gospel was excitedly accepted by the Lahu groups because of a legend of a foreigner who would come and bring them the true religion they had lost. By 1906 American missionary William Young had baptized 6,000 Lahu converts, including some Laopang.<sup>9</sup>

**Language:** The Laopang language belongs to the so-called Lolo (Yi-Hani) branch of the Tibeto-Burman language family. Foreigners — whether businessmen, missionaries, or diplomats — have long struggled to come to terms with learning Chinese languages. The famous British missionary C. T. Studd once jokingly stated that he believed the Chinese language was invented by the devil

