

MANG

More than 2,200 Mang people were counted in Vietnam during the 1989 census. They inhabit a mountainous area between the Da and Nam Na rivers in northwest Vietnam's Lai Chau Province. The Mang live in the four districts of Sin Ho, Muong Te, Phong Tho and Muong Lay.

In 1997 a mere 408 Mang people lived in the remote and backward mountains of southern China. The little-known Mang inhabit thick forests and mountain slopes in the Mengla District of Jinping County, near the Vietnam border. Their homes are a two hour trek from the nearest road. The low population of the Mang is due to inbreeding, which has caused many Mang women to become sterile. Disease, malnutrition and poor

hygiene cause a high infant mortality rate.

The Mang on the Chinese side of the border are so isolated that they are not even aware of the existence of any members of their ethnic group in Vietnam, even though the two live less than 50km apart.

The Mang in Vietnam live in the same area as the Thai, Hani and Hmong. Despite being influenced by these groups for a long time, the Mang have retained their own culture. The neighbors of the Mang despise them and call them *Mang U*, which means 'cowardly Mang'.

Mang houses are built on stilts and have thatched straw roofs. On the top

of their roofs are fixed two carvings of dragons—common among Mon-Khmer speaking peoples. They believe these dragons can protect them from harm and disease.

In the past, at the onset of puberty, young Mang girls were tattooed around their mouths for adornment. This custom is still seen in more remote Mang settlements.

The Mang's diet consists primarily of rice and corn. They also raise pigs and hunt for rabbits, mice, and occasionally small deer. They hunt frequently because they have little food in their village.

On the day of a Mang wedding, friends and relatives of the groom arrive early at the bride's home and stage a mock kidnapping. They believe the struggle when they carry her away will ensure a better marriage for the couple.

When a Mang woman is about to give birth she is required to leave her home and live in a temporary hut in the forest. The Mang believe the village will be defiled if she gives birth in her home. She is required to cut the umbilical cord herself and to stay in

the hut for about three weeks, preparing her own meals. Only then is she allowed to return home.

Each Mang person has five or more family names. The names are derived from the names of sacred animals. Each lineage has its own totem. Chiefs, called *mon dam*, are assigned to each clan. The chief is responsible for all affairs of his clan, including the management of education, culture, economic and religious events.

The Mang language was unknown until ten years ago. Linguists have found it to be particularly interesting. Though they have determined it is a Mon-Khmer language, "Mang is included in the Palaungic [language group] by some and is a separate group of Mon-Khmer for others."³⁹ The Mang have a rich collection of poems, songs and traditional tales, including the *soong muang*—an epic that details the Mang's struggle to survive by slash-and-burn agriculture.

The Mang world is full of evil spirits who must be continually appeased to placate their anger. The Mang believe the universe and the human race were created by *Mon Ten*, the Creator God.

They believe the universe is divided into four strata. The uppermost level, which relates to the western concept of heaven, is called *Mon phinh*. The realm of spirits on the earth is *Mon lom*, under the earth is *Mon lo* (the realm of demons), and in the water is *Mon chang* (the realm of dragons).

Despite their belief in a Creator God, and a world-view that looks at the universe in a manner not too different from Christianity, there are no known Mang believers either in Vietnam or China.

Because of their remote location, no more than a handful of Mang are even aware of the existence of Christianity.



Pray for the Mang

- 1 Pray for the hidden Mang people of northern Vietnam and southern China. Pray God would raise up workers with a vision to penetrate their isolated villages with the Good News of Christ.
- 2 Ask God to open up the hearts of the Mang to the Gospel. Pray they would see Christ as the Creator God that they have yearned to know for many centuries.
- 3 Pray the deep fear the Mang have of neighboring ethnic groups would not be a barrier against them receiving the Gospel of Christianity.



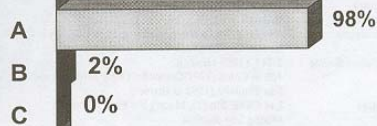
Population:
2,247 (1989)
2,790 (2000)
3,400 (2010)

Language:
Mon-Khmer

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

Overview of the Mang

Countries	: Vietnam, China, Thailand	Dialects	: 0
Pronunciation	: "Mung"	Subgroups (2)	: Mang Gung, Mang He
Other Names	: Xa Mang, Xa La Vang, Xa Cang Lai, Nieng O, Mang U, Xa Ban O, Mangbu, Ba'e, Xamang, Chaman	Religion	: Animism, Polytheism
Population Source	: 2,247 (1989 census); 408 in China (1997 Center for Oriental Ministries); 5 in Thailand (1992 B.Grimes)	Christians	: none known
Location	: Lai Chau: Sin Ho, Muong Te, Phong Tho and Muong Lay districts	Scripture	: none
Language	: Austro-Asiatic, Mon-Khmer, Northern Mon-Khmer, Palaungic-Khmuc, Mang	Jesus film	: none
		Gospel Recordings	: none
		Christian Radio	: none
		ROPAL code	: MGA00