



**Population in China:**  
 4,000 (1999)  
 4,090 (2000)  
 5,020 (2010)  
**Location:** Yunnan  
**Religion:** Animism  
**Christians:** None Known

## Overview of the Pana

**Countries:** China, Laos

**Pronunciation:** "Pa-nah"

**Other Names:**

Bana, Phana, Kai Pai

**Population Source:**

4,000 (1999 AMO);  
 Out of a total Hani population of  
 1,253,952 (1990 census);  
 350 in Laos (1995 L. Chazee)

**Location:** SW Yunnan: Mengla  
 County in Xishuangbanna  
 Prefecture

**Status:**

Officially included under Hani

**Language:** Sino-Tibetan,  
 Tibeto-Burman, Burmese-Lolo,  
 Lolo, Southern Lolo, Akha

**Dialects:** 0

**Religion:**

Animism, Ancestor Worship

**Christians:** None known

**Scripture:** None

**Jesus film:** None

**Gospel Recordings:** Bana #03121

**Christian Broadcasting:** None

**ROPAL code:** PHN00



Paul Hattaway

**Location:** Several thousand ethnic Pana, or Bana, live in the extreme southern part of China along the border with Laos. The Pana live in Mengla County within the Xishuangbanna Prefecture in southwest Yunnan Province. An additional 350 Pana inhabit three villages in northern Laos. Two villages, Bopiet and Namtoun, are located in the Luang Namtha District of Luang Namtha Province, while one Pana village is in the Houaxay District of Bokeo Province near the Golden Triangle.<sup>1</sup>

**Identity:** The Pana are an ethnic subgroup of the Akha who, in turn, have been officially placed under the Hani nationality in China. Because of this classification, few people know about the Pana, who view themselves as a distinct people group. In many areas today it has become difficult to tell the Pana apart from the Tai Lu.

**Language:** The Pana language is part of the Akha branch of the Tibeto-Burman family and is believed to be most closely related to the Sila language of Laos and Vietnam. In China the Pana have learned how to speak Akha, but their original tongue is quite different from standard Akha. Some Pana in Laos are also able to speak Tai Lu, Lao, and Khmu.

**History:** The Pana now living in Laos say they migrated from China eight generations ago, under the authority of a Chinese leader named Lateu Kouang. They first arrived in the Viangphoukha District of Laos before settling down in their present locations. In China the Pana came under the control of the Xishuangbanna Tai Lu rulers in the past, who extracted tax and tribute from them.

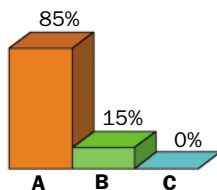
**Customs:** Traditionally the Pana settled in the remote mountains, where they lived peacefully without trouble from other ethnic groups. The past 35 years in Laos have seen a number of Pana migrate down to the plains and valleys, where they have learned to grow irrigated crops. Despite their small population, at least three separate clan divisions

exist among the Pana — each named after a sacred kind of bird, which the members of that clan are not allowed to kill. Most Pana no longer wear their traditional style of dress, except during festivals and other important occasions such as weddings and funerals.

**Religion:** Spirit worship and ancestor worship are practised by the Pana. In many respects the Pana rituals mirror those of their Akha neighbors and relatives, although it appears they do not follow the *Akhasang* system that is a dominant feature of the Akha throughout Southeast Asia.

**Christianity:** Although few outsiders have ever heard of the Pana ethnic group of southern China and northern Laos, the Christian ministry Gospel Recordings in 1967 produced a cassette tape message of the good news in the Pana language. Unfortunately, because of the relative obscurity of the Pana, few mission organizations have ever made use of this resource to take the gospel to the Pana in their own language. Today, there are no known Christians among the Pana in either China or Laos. There are very few believers among any of the ethnic groups in Mengla County.

### 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