

## The Palaung of Myanmar

“What did the village diviner say?” asked Dang to his friend, Hlao. “Did he see any indications as to where Reang is and her condition?” Hlao shook his head miserably, saying, “He saw visions of a street with foreign writing and a girl standing alone by the road. It could be Reang. I fear very much for her. Supposed she’s being forced into prostitution in China or Thailand! We were planning to marry next year.” “Her parents are really terrible.. selling their daughter just to pay off their debts,” remarked Dang, shaking his head. “They will pay for their evil in the next life.”

Living in Myanmar’s Shan state, the 681,000-strong **Palaung** comprise three subgroups: the Shwe Palaung (‘Golden Palaung’), Pale Palaung (‘Silver Palaung’) and Rumai Palaung (‘Black Palaung’). ‘**Palaung**’ is the name given to them by outsiders; the **Palaung** call themselves ‘Ta-ang’ which means ‘The Rock People’. They are famous for their tea-cultivation. Some still live in traditional longhouse communities.

Like many of Myanmar’s minority groups, they have suffered from imposed high taxes and conscription of people for forced labour by the Myanmar military. It is not unusual for debt-ridden families to sell their girls and children to human traffickers.

Mainly Theravada Buddhists, the **Palaung** live in fear of Hell and the demonic forces believed to live in trees and rocks. Illnesses are attributed to evil spirits. Many children die from malaria. Only 0.2% of Palaung are Christians of any denomination.

- Pray for Christian linguists to translate Christian outreach materials and the Bible into the different **Palaung** languages.
- Pray for conviction of sin and an end to the trafficking of **Palaung** girls, women and children.
- Pray that God will use the Myanmar believers to draw the **Palaung** to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Commit the small Christian minority to God that they may be the beginnings of a strong, Christ-centred, culturally relevant **Palaung** Church.

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