



Waygoer

Location: With a compact population of 5,700 people, the Danau tribe inhabits villages in northern Myanmar. Their villages lie within Kalaw Township, in the Taunggyi District of Shan State. Specifically, they are found in the Aungpan area northwest of Inle Lake, spread along the road between Kalaw and Heho. The names of three of their villages are Naung In, Thitpin Taung, and Heho. Inle is the second largest lake in Myanmar, containing 35 species of native fish. It is very shallow, with an average depth of just 7 feet (2.1 meters) in the dry months and 12 feet (3.6m) in the rainy season. Much of the lake is covered by floating plants. The 1901 census of Burma returned 635 Danau people, which increased to 1,157 three decades later in 1931. Of those, just two people were Christians and the rest Buddhists.

Identity: Over the years, much confusion has existed after several books and researchers mixed up the Danau and the much-larger Danu tribe.¹ Both groups live in Taunggyi District, with most Danu people located 32 miles (50 km) further north in Pindaya. The Danau and Danu are very different people groups despite their similar names, and their languages do not even belong to the same linguistic family. Danau is an Austro-Asiatic

language, while Danu is part of the Tibeto-Burman family.

Language: In 2007, linguist David Bradley classified Danau as “threatened” after finding that only 2,000 of the 5,000 Danau people could speak their language. All adults still used Danau, but many young people now speak Pa-O.² The United Nations subsequently described Danau as “critically endangered.”³ Danau is part of the Mon-Khmer branch of the Austro-Asiatic family and is reportedly similar to Riang Lai, which is spoken more than 200 miles (324 km) further north, near the Chinese border.

History: Little is known of the origins of the Danau people, but they are probably an offshoot from the larger Palaung cluster. The name the Danau people call themselves, “K’naw,” means, “the people who like to live peacefully.” It is claimed that crime is virtually non-existent among them, and they keep to themselves to such an extent that many Danau have never even been to Taunggyi Township, just 40 miles (65 km) away. Since ancient times the Danau have relied heavily on bamboo for many things. They “eat together out of a big round bamboo platter and most of their household utensils are made of bamboo. Rice is wrapped in bamboo leaves, and even Buddha images are woven

out of split bamboo.”⁴

Customs: Being the near neighbors of Pa-O and Danu communities, the Danau have absorbed some of their customs. Their clothing style is similar to the Pa-O, which makes it more difficult for visitors to identify them as a distinct group. Almost all Danau are engaged in agriculture, and one tradition unique to this tribe is that “they do not borrow any money or wash their hair, nor do they do any kind of planting on market days.”⁵

Religion: Traditionally the Danau people were animists, appealing an array of spirits and making sacrifices in a bid to secure their blessings and prosperity. The Danau converted to Theravada Buddhism centuries ago, although they have retained many elements of animism in their rituals.

Christianity: As theirs is an unwritten language, no Scripture has ever been translated into Danau, nor has the Jesus film been produced. The only known Christian resource available in their language is an audio message produced by Global Recordings. Just a few dozen Christians are known to exist among the Danau, but most members of this tribe have never heard a clear presentation of the Gospel in a way they can easily understand.



Population
in Myanmar:
5,700 (2024)

Location:
Shan State

Language Family:
Austro-Asiatic

Main Religion:
Buddhism (95.0%)

Christians:
25 (0.5%)

OVERVIEW

Population:
5,700 in Myanmar
(2024 Joshua Project)
5,000 (2007 D. Bradley)
1,157 (1931 census)

Other Countries:

Other Names:
Danaw, Htanaw, K’naw

Location:
Shan State: Kalaw Township
in Taunggyi District

Language:
Danau [dnu]

Dialects: 0

Scripture:
None

Jesus film:
None

Global Recordings:
Danau #9103

People ID: 11488

