



The Pal of Papua New Guinea

The Pal people speak a language called Pal and are spread out along the southeast end of the Adelbert mountain range in the Madang Province of Papua New Guinea. The bush trails linking the eleven Pal hamlets are steep, with the highest peak just under 5,000 feet. For generations the Pal people have been intimately acquainted with the skills needed to survive in a treacherous mountain region. They are experts at subsistence farming and as adept at hunting wild boar as they are at surviving massive mudslides, earthquakes, and the flash floods that pervade their tropical environment.

The Lutheran missionaries in the Madang Province introduced Christianity to the greater area in 1887. Later, national Lutheran missionaries were trained at remote stations and sent out to spread the Gospel to villages in the vicinity. For the Pal people, the Adelbert mountain range proved to be an obstacle that prevented national missionaries from coming for eighty-seven years.

Finally, in 1965 and 1966, the national missionaries from Wanuma Station braved the rugged mountain terrain to establish a church among the Pal people in the villages of Wambupu and Naburume. Within the last decade the Apostolic and Catholic Churches have also been established in the Pal area. However, the Lutheran Church remains the dominant church.

Two thirds of the Pal have membership in either the Apostolic, Catholic or Lutheran churches. Church workers in the area report that those who hold a church membership attend church regularly. But many in the community who call themselves Christians would be considered syncretistic, because they generally combine traditional religious practices with Christianity. To break this trend, it is critical that the Scriptures become available to the Pal people. Though they are a small people group, numbering only 1,159, they have expressed a need for God's Word in their own language. Please pray they will have God's Word in a language they truly understand.

Primary Religion:

Christian

Disciples (Matt 28.19):

30 - 40%

Churches:

8

Scripture Status (Matt 28.20):

None in their language

Population (date):

1,159 (2000)



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Item Name	Item Note	
Have They Heard The Gospel?		Profile Summary
Call Themselves Christian (%)	>95%	
Comment (Call Themselves Christian)	Christianity, for the vast majority, means being a member of a denomination.	
Believe In Jesus As God & Only Savior (%)	30 - 40%	
Prophet/Good Man, But Not God's Son (%)	10%	
Believe In The Local Traditional Religion (%)	80%	
Have Not Heard Who Jesus is (%)	0%	
Number Of Pastors	1	
Comment (Pastors)	It is reported there are 2 evangelists who are Pal.	
Number Of Missionaries Working	1	
Comment (Number Of Missionaries)	It is reported there is a Lutheran pastor from the neighboring Pamosu language group.	
Response To The Gospel	The Pal people have responded to the verbal presentation of the gospel but most do not seem to grasp deeper spiritual issues related to authentic Christian living. Christianity, for the vast majority, means being a member of a denomination.	
Number Of Communities	The Pal community consists of eleven hamlets: Metenuval, Kevelesuva, Wambupu, Luniewego and Pelukupie, which together constitute Abasakur 1 (384) Nabarume, also called Abasakur 2 (186) Avatamur (86) Kokomesak (156) Kawangaval (61) Mutuvav (120) Purusia (166)	
Number Of Churches	8	
Comment (Churches)	There is a Lutheran church in Mutuvav, one in Naburume, one in Pelukupie and one in Purusia. There are three Apostolic congregations: one in Kawangaval, one in Nabarume, and one in Purusia. There is only one Catholic Church in the Pal language area in the village of Kokomesak.	
Is The Word Of God Translated?	The Pal people do not have the Word of God translated into their mother tongue but they are experienced informal translators. For example, during church services, the Word of God is orally translated into Pal from Tok Pisin.	
Any Hinderance To Scripture Distribution?	Aside from the absence of Scripture in Pal, the lack of education is the main hindrance to Scripture distribution. The literacy rate is reported to be 2 % as per the 2000 census (NSO 2002), and mostly in Tok Pisin (one of the national languages). There are no schools in the Pal language area. The nearest schools are in Sevan and the Wanuma area, which are one to two days walk away. During the survey, Pal speakers reported 31 children out of 616 school-aged Pal children (NSO 2002) are currently attending school. Less than 5% of the total population has actually attended school.	
What Kind Of Missionaries Are Needed?	The Pal people have a definite need for a Bible translation. Since the level of education is quite low, they will need substantial training and other outside assistance in order to establish a Bible translation project.	
Population All Countries		Group Description
World Population For This People	1,159	
World Population (Date)	1,159 (2000 Census)	
World Population (Urban Percent)	0%	
Comment (World Population)	1,159 (2000 Census)	
Countries Where People Group Lives		Group Description
Country Name	Papua New Guinea	
Geography & Environment		Group Description
Location	Madang Province, SE slopes of the Adelbert Mountain Range, west of Josephstaal and north of Wanuma.	
Ecosystem Type	Tropical Forest	
Geological Type	Mountain, Slope	

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Item Name	Item Note	
Elevation	400-1600m	
Longitude	E 145° 12-16'	
Latitude	S 4° 43-47'	
Climate	Tropical	
Language & Linguistics		Group Description
Primary Language	Pal	
Alternate Language Names	Abasakur	
Attitude Towards Mother Tongue	Very receptive	
Comments (Related Languages)	Koguman (QKG) is reported to be a linguistically related language. However, the drop down 'Options – Select List' does not have Koguman as a selection.	
Neighboring Languages	Mum	
Neighboring Languages	Pamosu	
Neighboring Languages	Usan	
Comments (Neighbor Languages)	Koguman (QKG) is also reported to be a neighbor language. However, the drop down 'Options – Select List' does not have Koguman as a selection.	
Corrections To Ethnologue Entry	Change language name from 'Abasakur' to 'Pal'. The Pal speakers do not call themselves or their language Abasakur. It is a name used for some of the villages within the language area, particularly in matters having to do with government.	
Literacy		Group Description
Literacy Attitude	Very receptive	
Active Literacy Program	No	
Publications In Vernacular	None	
Comment (Literacy)	The Pal group would be greatly assisted by establishing an elementary and primary school within the language area. Using Scripture portions in their own language combined with a dynamic literacy program would give the literacy rate in the area a real boost.	
Economics		Group Description
Subsistence Type	Agriculturalists	
Comment (Subsistence Type)	This people group is reported as being 'Swidden Agriculturalists'.	
Society & Culture		Group Description
Family Structures	The Pal are patrilineal. Therefore, the wife moves to the husband's village and sons inherit land from their fathers.	
Neighbor Relations	In the past, at times they fought with the Pamosu, Kobil, and Mum, but since the arrival of Christianity the relations are generally good.	
Authority / Rule	Each ward, which includes one or more village, has a councilman and each village has one or more men who assist the councilman and represent him when he is not present. The church leaders and men who were village leaders before the institution of the current system of local level government are also influential and respected in their communities.	
Social Habits/Groupings	One or more clans live in a village. Families also have a house in their garden and often stay there.	
Cultural Change Pace	Slow	
Identification With National Culture	Similar	
Self Image	Neutral	
Comment (Self Image)	They seem to feel positive about themselves, but in interactions with other groups, such as the Pamosu or the coastal people, they are the less prestigious group, due to poor access to education, cash, and manufactured goods.	
Judicial / Punishment System	Most disputes are settled by the village leaders. Sometimes some type of compensation is given or gifts exchanged and then they may eat together.	

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Item Name	Item Note
Celebrations	Often villages will join together for Christmas services. New Year's Day and the opening of a new house or church building are also times of celebration. The Pal continue to hold singsings (traditional dance and singing), which are attended by other villages.
Recreations	In addition to the singsing held in the village of Avatamur, the villagers there also dance to the music of guitars and bamboo pipes, played by young men.
Media	None
Local Language Broadcasting	None
Attitude To Outsiders	Very receptive
Comment (Attitude To Outsiders)	They were curious about the survey team and asked us about our way of life. They also asked about rot bilong moni (the way to make money), hoping that we could provide instruction on how they could improve their economic situation, whether by physical or spiritual means.
Attitude To Change	Somewhat receptive
Youth	Group Description
Labor and tasks (6-12 year olds)	Children help in the garden. Boys learn to hunt and make weapons. Girls learn to make string bags and help their mothers around the house.
Youth Problems (Teens)	Those who have attended school, especially if they have gone to secondary school, often do not return to the village.
Youth Greatest Needs (teens)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Scripture translated into the Pal language. 2. A school with instruction in the Pal language. 3. Something meaningful to do in the village for those who have completed school (translation work, etc.)
Education	Group Description
Primary Schools	0
Comment (Primary Schools)	There are no schools in the Pal language area.
Primary School Enrollment	31
Comment (Primary School Enrollment)	The 31 enrolled in primary school attend schools outside the language area.
Secondary Schools	0 (None in language area.)
Secondary School Enrollment	0
Percent Of Eligible Students Enrolled	5%
Comment (Language Of Instruction)	It is reported that the language of instruction is in other vernaculars, Tok Pisin, and English.
Comment (Language Of Textbook)	Tok Pisin and English
Number Of Schools > 90% Homogeneous	0
Church Growth	Status of Christianity
Reached Status	Evaluated
Comment (Church Growth)	Christianity began in 1887 in the Madang area, but started in 1965 within the Pal language group.
Religion & Response	Status of Christianity
Religious Practices & Ceremonies	Christmas services, New Year's Day and the opening of a new house or church building are times of celebration. Also, the Pal continue to hold singsings (traditional dance and singing), which are attended by other villages.
Attitude To Christianity	Very receptive
Attitude To Religious Change	Indifferent
Resistance / Receptivity	They have welcomed the Church, but have not left behind all of the old ways.
Spiritual Climate And Openness	It is reported this people group does not show great interest in spiritual things.
Recommended Approaches	Trained Bible translators should be assigned to work with and train national translators in the Pal language group. (Since the level of education is quite low in the area, there is a greater need for formal instruction and training for the national mother tongue translators.)

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Item Name

Items For Prayer

Item Note

Bring His Word to the Pal people. Pray that a team would be assigned to work with and train national translators in the Pal language group. (Since the level of education is quite low in the area, there is a greater need for formal instruction and training for the national mother tongue translators.)

Help the Pal people establish schools in the area. The next generation of Pal speakers need to be educated, but there are no government funds to help establish schools in the area. In PNG, it is common for communities to start their own schools using the educated people in the village to teach the next generation. Pray that the Pal people would be proactive and establish schools within their own communities.

Break the strongholds associated with syncretistic practices. Pray that the Pal people would be whole-heartedly devoted to God, and would continue to seek Him and hunger for His Word daily. Pray also that God would reveal to the Pal people changes that need to be made in their daily lives so that they reflect Jesus more fully. In addition, that God would give the Pal people wisdom and understanding in breaking the spiritual strongholds associated with their syncretistic practices.

History Of Christianity In Group

Status of Christianity

Year Began

1887

By Whom

National Lutheran Council

Comments (History of Christianity)

Christianity among this people group was started by the National Lutheran missionaries from Wanuma Station in Madang.

Scripture

Status of Christianity

Translation Status

Definite

Comment (Form of Scripture Available)

It is reported the only form of translation for this people group is an informal oral translation during church services.

Comment (Scripture)

The Pal language community is interested in translating the Bible into their own mother tongue.

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Literature

No

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Recordings

No

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Film/Videos

No

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Radio

No

Missions and Churches

Status of Christianity

Organization Name

Lutheran

Main Ministry

Church Planting

Year Started

1965

Number Of Adherents

700

Number Of Congregations

4

Number Of Local Workers

3 (The report listed 'Workers' but did not indicate whether the workers were expatriate, local or national.)

Number Of Workers Using Local Language

Comment: The report indicated that preaching is usually done in Tok Pisin and then translated into Pal.

Organization Name

Roman Catholic Church

Main Ministry

Church Planting

Year Started

1992

Number Of Adherents

100

Number Of Congregations

1

Number Of Local Workers

0

Number Of Workers Using Local Language

Comment: It is reported that only announcements are made using the local language.

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Item Name	Item Note
Organization Name	Apostolic
Main Ministry	Church Planting
Year Started	1995
Number Of Adherents	50-100
Number Of Congregations	3
Number Of Local Workers	1 (The report does not indicate whether the worker is a local, expatriate, or national.)
Number Of Workers Using Local Language	Comment: The report indicates preaching is usually done in Tok Pisin and then translated into Pal.