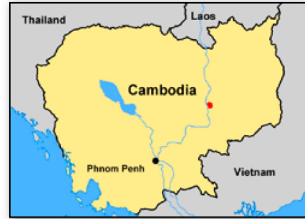


Mel



Population	3,000
Major Religion	Animism
Language	Mel
Percent Christian	0%
Bible Translation	None



Who are the Mel?

The Mel people live in the Northern Kracheh province. They number about 3,000 people in the entire tribe. They live in an area which is down river from the Krol people along the Krieng River. The Mel mostly live on the most accessible side of the Krieng River with a simple dirt track as their road to the main town of Kracheh some 100 km away. The Mel people are often the “middle men” for the remote jungle tribes and the Khmers who wish to buy their products. The remote tribes of the Krol and T’moan will gather jungle products like resin and small animals and will sell it to the Mel people who in turn sell it to the Khmers for a profit. There are many comparatively wealthy people among the Mel and those who have military connections bring in Khmer loggers and traffic larger wildlife such as tigers and sun bears.

What are their lives like?

Most of the Mel are rice farmers and they raise cows which are sold to Khmer every year. The cows are left to graze in the jungles during the day and the brought back into the villages at night. The Mel are more assimilated to the Khmer lifestyle than other more remote tribes. The new houses which are built in the Mel areas all reflect Khmer architecture and village layout, and most Mel children no longer speak Mel. There are numerous and large schools among the Mel villages as well as health centers and government offices. Some work has begun on a road into the main Mel village of “Ralouh” which when completed will bring in more and more Khmers, and increase the assimilation to the Khmer lifestyle as well as bring more development to the area.

What do they believe?

There are a few Mel Christians in scattered villages and no organized church has been started, though work is continuing. Most Mel will claim to be Buddhist, and in the main town of Ralouh, most probably are, but in the outlying Mel villages there are few if any Buddhists. They all follow the animistic religion of their traditions.

In the main villages, when Buddhism replaced Animism, many of the outside pressures have crept in. Karaoke parlors and prostitution are common place in the main village of Ralouh.

In the outlying villages, the Mel remain traditional animists. They hold annual sacrifices where they can slaughter several water buffalo or cows as sacrifices, and more regularly for sicknesses or spells they will offer chickens and pigs for sacrifices.

What are their needs?

Though the Mel are in close proximity to the Krol people, most development has taken place only among the Mel people. Probably because of their assimilation to the Khmer way of life, outsiders find it easier to work among the Mel than the Krol. The condition of the villages is still much worse than most Khmer villages. Only the main village has access to any well water. Because of remoteness everything is expensive for them including fuel for plows, canned goods and tools.