

T'moan



Population	700
Major Religion	Christian
Language	T'moan
Percent Christian	More than 50%
Bible Translation	None



Who are the T'moan?

The T'moan people are one of the most remote tribes in all of Cambodia, located in Northern parts of Kratie and Mondolkiri provinces. There are approximately 650 to 700 T'moan people living in five different villages which are centered around their extended families. They are governed by the male tribal elders.

They have very little contact with Khmer and as such very few can speak Khmer, but they do have limited contact with the Mel, Kraol, Bunong and most significantly the Jarai. Their language is more closely related to the Kraol people.

There are no roads to the villages and most of their villages are not listed on any Cambodian Government map. There are no schools, health centers or government offices among any of the T'moan tribal villages.

What are their lives like?

The T'moan people were formally semi-nomadic but stayed generally in the remote forests of the northern Kratie province. They were nomadic not because of following wildlife or moving their fields, but because of spirits which would cause problems or sicknesses in the village. When the jungle spirits were offended, they would burn the village and move to a new location to start a new village. The T'moan do not cut timber, living in bamboo houses made without nails.

The T'moan divide the responsibilities of life by gender and age. Old men work in the deep jungles looking for food and farming, women care for the young children and young men stay together in a special house in the center of the village where they will live until they find a wife to marry. During courtship, the young men try and sneak into a

girl's house at night. A young man is successful in "courtship" when the girl accepts him into the house. If he is caught he must pay a fine to the village and is often required to be married.

The T'moan live in bamboo houses on stilts which are organized in a circle or long rectangle. As they have no access to modern medical care there are many sick people and malnutrition is common. All sicknesses are handled through village "spirit doctors". Death from sickness is very common.

What do they believe?

Until recently the T'moan were purely animistic. They are still uninfluenced by Buddhism. Traditionally, being animistic and fearing the spirits, they hold annual sacrifices where they might slaughter several water buffalo or cows. For sicknesses or spells they will frequently sacrifice chickens and pigs.

In 2006 two villages totaling some 400 people was said to have recieved Christ. Currently the T'moan are more than 50% Christian, with the other villages still to be reached.

What are their needs?

Minorities in Cambodia are often treated very poorly unless their village becomes assimilated to the Khmer way of life, including religion and language. The T'moan people consider themselves the "minority of minorities". There are no roads to the villages, no schools and no access to clean water. They desire to be educated so that they may be more a part of the Cambodian society. Because of their remoteness and lack of education, outsiders often take advantage of them and their ignorance.