

Approximately 10,000 Tai He live in Borikhamxai Province in central Laos. They are concentrated in the Viangthong and Khamkeut districts, while smaller numbers of Tai He inhabit the Pakkading and Pakxan districts.<sup>1</sup> The area inhabited by the Tai He is well-watered and hilly. Numerous small and distinct ethnic groups live in central Laos. Despite the fact that the Tai He view themselves as a distinct people group, the Tai He remained unknown until Laurent Chazee, the French ethnographer, first listed them in 1995 as one of his 119 ethnic groups in Laos.<sup>2</sup>

days . . . by ordinary travel it will take from five to seven weeks to cover it, according to the stage of the water.<sup>3</sup>

The Tai He practise a mixture of Buddhism and animism. In some villages, the Buddhist monks double as spirit priests, or shamans. Their role is to mediate between the spiritual world and the Tai He community. Because of this, the people greatly fear the shaman-monks. Sometimes the more respected monks take on even more roles in the community, such as those of counsellor and village advisor.



**Population:**  
9,000 (2000)  
11,350 (2010)  
14,300 (2020)  
**Countries:** Laos  
**Buddhism:** Theravada  
**Christians:** none known



Xenyo Graphics

An early missionary summarized the effects that shamanism had on the common people: 'This belief in witchcraft is often caused by the ruling

Today visitors can easily reach Borikhamxai Province by mini-bus from the capital city Vientiane, which in turn is a short flight from Bangkok. Missionaries in the past experienced much more difficult ordeals travelling to areas of Laos. Lillian Johnson Curtis, a missionary in the late 1800s and early 1900s, described her travel from Bangkok to Laos: 'There is but one way of reaching the land of the Laos, unless, indeed, you may wish to go to Burma and take the tedious and expensive overland trip either by pony or elephant. If you follow in the footsteps of those who have gone before, you will go to Bangkok and there take passage in one of the unique Laos boats that come down to trade each year on the high water. The upper reaches of the river are exceedingly dangerous, as many rapids and narrow rocky gorges are found in the mountain-passes. . . . The journey can be cut in time to some eighteen or twenty

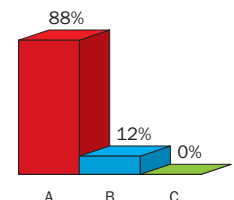
class to forward selfish interests or to wreak their vengeance upon an offending family, thus taking an unfair advantage through the aid of a superstition that they themselves believe in. The awful shadow cast over Laos life by these superstitions is simply indescribable. The people are religiously like frightened children in the dark. They call and cry to one another, but are only the more frightened by the sounds and echoes of one another's voices, and in their gropings they start and scream as they touch one another, deeming it a devil instead of a friend. They stumble, they reel to and fro, they fall and cry out in a death agony that they would rather abide in the present unknown evil than to be launched into the future unknown.<sup>4</sup>

There are no known churches or Christians among the unreached Tai He people group. They are still waiting to hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

## Overview of the Tai He

**Other Names:** He  
**Population Sources:** 8,000 in Laos (1995, Asian Minorities Outreach)  
**Language:** Tai-Kadai, Kam-Tai, Unclassified  
**Dialects:** 0  
**Professing Buddhists:** 60%  
**Practising Buddhists:** 35%  
**Christians:** 0%  
**Scripture:** none  
**Jesus film:** none  
**Gospel Recordings:** none  
**Christian Broadcasting:** none  
**ROPAL code:** none

## Status of Evangelization



**A** = Have never heard the gospel  
**B** = Have heard the gospel but have not become Christians  
**C** = Are adherents to some form of Christianity