

BRU - VAN KIEU

Approximately 50,000 people belong to the Bru-Van Kieu minority group in Vietnam. The name of this group was created by the government by combining the names of the Bru and Van Kieu tribes. Three other smaller tribes—the *Mang Coong*, *Tri* and *Khua*—were also added to this artificially-constructed classification. *Bru* simply means 'mountain people'. The majority live in the mountains of Quang Tri, Quang Binh and Thua Thien Hue provinces in central Vietnam. A small number of Bru-Van Kieu are also found in Dac Lac Province much further to the south of the main Bru-Van Kieu concentration.

The majority of Bru people (64,000) live in eastern Laos. The *So* tribe in Laos also call themselves *Bru*.

The Bru-Van Kieu language is part of the Eastern Mon-Khmer linguistic branch. Although the Bru-Van Kieu consists of five tribes, it is believed each group can understand each other without too many difficulties.

The Bru-Van Kieu language is only partially intelligible with the Western Bru language of Thailand. It is believed they were once the same people, but over the course of many centuries their customs and language evolved separately so that today the two groups do not consider themselves to be of the same ethnic stock.

Until recently the Bru-Van Kieu made all their clothes by dyeing fibers made from crushed bark. Today there is a

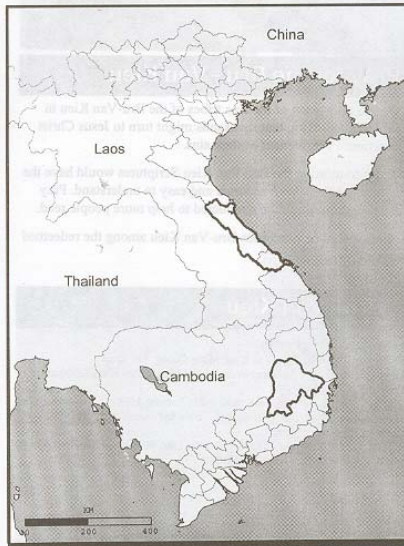
growing tendency to wear normal Western attire.

The Bru-Van Kieu observe age-old customs of painting their teeth and tattooing their faces. In some areas, Bru-Van Kieu women love to chew belet-nut, which stains their teeth black. This is considered a mark of beauty among the Bru-Van Kieu.

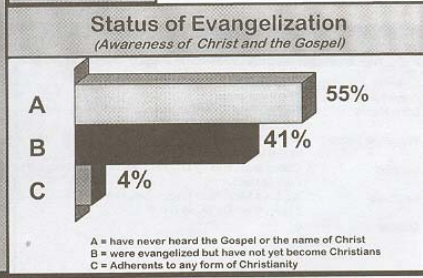
All Bru-Van Kieu women wear their hair in a knot. For single women and girls the knot is always positioned on the left side of their head, while married women wear it on the right side. This serves as an immediate sign of a woman's marital status.

Bru-Van Kieu villages, called *vil*, consist of one or two clans, with every member having the same family name. People are forbidden to marry within their own clan or to marry their first cousins.

After engagement, a young Bru-Van Kieu man must meet many difficult and expensive requirements of his future bride's dowry. The family of the groom also help meet the bride-price, which may result in them going into heavy debt for years to come. Although they are generally an



Population:	40,132 (1989) 49,800 (2000) 60,800 (2010)
Language:	Mon-Khmer
Religion:	Ancestor Worship
Christians:	1,700



impoverished people, the Bru-Van Kieu consider a wedding to be the greatest of occasions and no expense is spared. At the wedding it is traditional for the family of the groom to give the bride a sword.

The dominant religious belief among the Bru-Van Kieu is ancestor worship. Every family has its own altar, while each clan shares a common ancestral altar. Each clan also has a specific totem, which may be a sacred animal of plant such as a squirrel or banana palm flower.

During their religious rituals, the Bru-Van Kieu place objects such as fragments of a bowl, fragments of a cooking pot, a portion of rice, and a container of water before the ancestral altar. These items are believed to be able to nourish the souls of their dead ancestors. The Bru-Van Kieu also worship a host of locality spirits, especially the spirits of the mountains, trees, fire and earth.

The Bru-Van Kieu possess a rich collection of art and literature. Folk singing is also popular. Men and women sing alternate lines of romantic words (called *pro-giong*) and tales of great heroes and past struggles. They also have legends (*cha chap*) telling of the origins of mankind.

Some Bru-Van Kieu have converted to Buddhism, while about 1,700 profess to be Christians. Portions of the Bible were first translated into Bru in 1968. The Bru New Testament was completed in 1981. Today, the New Testament, Old Testament stories and hymns are available in the Bru language. The Christian mission *Gospel Recordings* has produced audio recordings of the Gospel in the dialects of three different Bru-Van Kieu tribes.

The 64,000 Bru living in Laos are completely unreached, with no known believers.



Pray for the Bru - Van Kieu

- 1 Ask God to draw each of the five tribes of the Bru-Van Kieu in Vietnam to know Him, that thousands might turn to Jesus Christ and experience forgiveness of their sins.
- 2 Pray those translating the Bru-Van Kieu Scriptures would have the ability to make them both accurate and easy to understand. Pray literacy programs would be conducted to help more people read.
- 3 Pray there would be numerous Bru-Van Kieu among the redeemed in heaven.

Overview of the Bru - Van Kieu

Countries	: Laos, Vietnam	Literacy	: 15-25%
Pronunciation	: "Broo-Van-keeuu"	Subgroups (5)	: Bru, Van Kieu, Mang Coong, Tri, Khua
Other Names	: So, Bru, Brou, Kalo, Calo, Galler, Van Kieu, Quang Tri, Bru, Eastern Bru	Religion	: Ancestor Worship, Animism, Buddhism, Christianity
Population Source	: 40,132 (1989 census) 64,000 in Laos (1993)	Christians	: 1,700
Location	: Quang Binh, Quang Tri, Thua Thien Hue, a few in Dac Lac	Scripture	: New Testament 1981; Portions 1968 NT, Genesis, OT stories and hymns are available
Language	: Austro-Asiatic, Mon-Khmer, Eastern Mon-Khmer, Katiue, West Katiue, So-Bru	Jesus film	: none
Dialects	: 0	Gospel Recordings	: Bru #03339; Bru: Khe Sanh #01930; Galler #01017
		Christian Radio	: available (FEBC)
		ROPAL code	: BRU00