

# CHAM

Approximately 120,000 Cham live in a long strip of provinces along southern Vietnam's coastline. The majority of Cham (195,000) live in Cambodia, while others live in countries as diverse as Malaysia, Thailand, USA, France, Saudi Arabia and Libya. The Cham Diaspora reflects their history as a great sea-faring people.

The Cham minority in Vietnam are actually divided into two distinct ethno-linguistic groups. The Western Cham are 100% Muslim, while the larger Eastern Cham practice a mixture of Brahmanism and Islam. Brahmanism is a sect of Hinduism that was imported to Vietnam from India many centuries ago.

The Cham are one of the most ancient

ethnic groups in Southeast Asia. When Marco Polo traveled through the area in 1285, he marveled at the riches of the Chamba Kingdom, which had only recently come under the authority of the Mongols. Polo reported that Chamba was... "a very rich region, having a king of its own. The people are idolaters and pay a yearly tribute to the Great Kaan, which consists of elephants and nothing but elephants.... It happened in the year of Christ 1278 that the Great Kaan sent a Baron of his called Sagatu with a great force of horse and foot against the King of Chamba, and this baron opened the war on a great scale against the King and his country.... You must know that in that kingdom no woman is allowed to marry until the King shall have seen her; if the woman pleases him then he

takes her to wife; if she does not, he gives her a dowry to get a husband withal.... At that time the King had, between sons and daughters, 326 children, of whom at least 150 were men fit to carry arms."<sup>8</sup>

The Cham had their own kingdom basically uninterrupted between the 2nd century AD until 1471, when it was overrun and destroyed by Vietnamese invaders from the north.

Only in recent years has the ancient matriarchal society among the Cham begun to disintegrate. Still today, however, women in many Cham communities are the head of the house. Daughters take their mother's family name and all inheritance rights are handed down through the female side of the family.

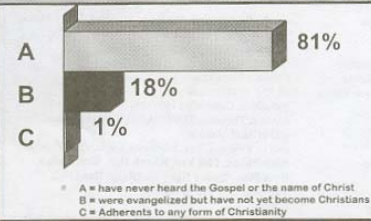
In the past the Cham arranged their villages with houses in alternate spots, so that from above it would look like the squares on a chess board. The houses always face toward the south or the west. Cham villages are usually quite large, with between 1,000 to 2,000 inhabitants.

The Cham language is part of the Malayo-Polynesian branch of the Austronesian language family.



<b>Population:</b>	98,971 (1989) 122,900 (2000) 149,900 (2010)
<b>Language:</b>	Malayo-Polynesian
<b>Religion:</b>	Brahmanism, Islam
<b>Christians:</b>	1,100

## Status of Evangelization (Awareness of Christ and the Gospel)



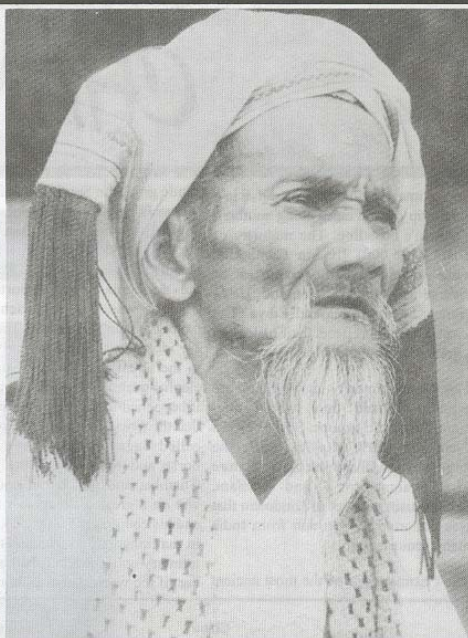
While all Western Cham are Muslims, the Eastern Cham are a complicated religious mix. Two-thirds of them (called *Cham Kaphia* or *Cham Chuh*) follow Brahmanism, a sect of Hinduism that venerates Siva. The other one-third of Eastern Cham are followers of Islam, but they have many influences from animism and Brahmanism. They worship the spirits of the mountains, thunder and lightning, water, and the spirits of rice, rats, and the earth.

The two different belief systems in operation among the Cham has led to a separate development of ethnicity and language that has also affected the attitudes each group has toward Christianity.

The Eastern Cham contain around 1,100 Christians. The Gospels of John and Mark, the Book of Acts and the Joseph story have been translated into the Eastern Cham language. Work is in progress to bring more of the Word of God to the Eastern Cham. *Far East Broadcasting* produces Gospel radio programs for the Eastern Cham, albeit only 15 minutes of air-time per week.

On the other hand, the Western Cham are fanatical Muslims without a single known Christian believer in their midst in Vietnam. There are known to be a handful of Western Cham who have converted to Christ in Canada and the United States. The Western Cham are strongly opposed to Christianity, although few have actually received a thorough explanation of the Gospel message and the Way to Salvation. Christian linguists have translated the Christmas story into Western Cham.

The religious beliefs of both Cham groups contributes to their history and identity as a people group. This has made it difficult for Cham individuals to embrace Christianity, as doing so would result in expulsion from the community.



## Pray for the Cham

- 1 Pray against the spiritual strongholds of Brahmanism and Islam that have blinded the eyes of the Cham and prevented them from accepting the Gospel.
- 2 Ask God to raise up a world-wide focus of prayer and ministry to the Cham. Pray Christians would live out, as well as speak, the Gospel before the Cham.
- 3 Pray strong indigenous and culturally-relevant churches would soon be established among both branches of the Cham people.

## Overview of the Cham

<b>Countries</b>	: Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, USA, France, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Libya, Indonesia, Canada, Australia	<b>Language</b>	: Austronesian, Malayo-Polynesian, Western Malayo-Polynesian; Sundic, Malayic, Achinese-Chamic, Chamic, South Coastal, Cham-Chru
<b>Pronunciation</b>	: "Chahm"	<b>Subgroups (4)</b>	: Cham Hroi, Cham Poong, Cha Va Ku, Cham Chau Doc
<b>Other Names</b>	: Chiem, Chiem Thanh, Hoi, Tjam	<b>Religion</b>	: Brahmanism, Islam, Animism, Christianity
<b>Population Source</b>	: 98,971 (1989 census) 195,000 in Cambodia; 10,000 in Malaysia; 4,000 in Thailand; 3,000 in USA; 1,000 in France; 100 in Saudi Arabia; also in Yemen, Libya, Indonesia, Canada and Australia	<b>Christians</b>	: 1,100 - all Eastern Cham
<b>Location</b>	: Ninh Thuan, Phu Yen, Khanh Hoa, Binh Thuan, Binh Dinh, Quang Ngai, An Giang, Dong Nai, Tay Ninh, Ho Chi Minh City	<b>Scripture</b>	: Parables 1973 (Eastern), work in progress (Western); John, Mark, Acts and Joseph story available in Eastern Cham; The Christmas story available in Western Cham; none
<b>Literacy</b>	: 60%	<b>Jesus film</b>	: none
		<b>Gospel Recordings</b>	: Cham (Kampuchea) #01024; Cham (Vietnam) #01194
		<b>Christian Radio</b>	: available in Eastern Cham (FEB-C) 15 minutes per week
		<b>ROPAL code</b>	: CJM00 (Eastern Cham); CJA00 (Western Cham)