

GIAY

The Giay (pronounced "Zay") minority, which numbered 38,000 people in the 1989 Vietnam census, is located in the three provinces of the Red River Valley that border China. Some of the Vietnamese Giay became refugees after the American War, resulting in small Giay communities in France and southern California. Approximately a quarter of a million Giay are located in southern China, where they are part of the official Zhuang minority.

The Giay speak basically the same language as the Bouyei. According to one linguist, "Giay...a Northern Tai language, appears, for all intents and purposes, to be the same linguistic group as Bouyei...although they are classified ethnographically distinct."¹³

The name *Giay* is an autonym. Neighboring Tay and Thai people call them *Giang*, while the Vietnamese call them *Nhang*.

The majority of Giay live in the Bat Xat, Bao Thang and Muong Khuong districts of Lao Cai Province, Yen Ninh and Dong Van districts of Ha Giang Province, and Phong Tho and Muong Te districts of Lai Chau Province.

There is one distinct subgroup of Giay, who call themselves *Pu Na*. They numbered 1,687 people in the 1974 census, have been included in the Giay figures after that time. The name *Pu Na* means 'people who do farming' in their language.

About 200 years ago a number of Giay

families left China, fleeing into Vietnam to escape persecution and harassment. At about the same time the Black and Yellow Flag Wars commenced in China, which may have expedited their departure.

The Giay are ethnically related to the Zhuang, Bouyei and other Tai-speaking groups in southern China.

The traditional dress worn by Giay women includes a knee-length skirt. Giay families are dominated by the males. Wives must obey their husbands, unmarried women must obey their fathers, and widows must obey their sons. Giay women prefer to give birth in a squatting position in a room where an altar has been erected to ensure the spirits oversee a favorable birth. The placenta is later buried beneath the woman's bed. When the baby is a month old the parents call for a ceremony to inform the ancestors of the birth and to name the baby.

When a baby is one month old the Giay consult horoscopes to determine the fate of the child. A sorcerer writes down on a piece of paper an 'age concordance', predicting when the person will be married, and the predicted day and the time of his or

her death.

The Giay have enjoyed relatively good relations with their neighbors in northern Vietnam. The area's population has markedly increased (after a large influx of Vietnamese) and the region's natural resources have been strained to the limit.

The Giay are polytheists. They also practice ancestor worship. Some of the current generation of youth are non-religious, having received an atheistic education under the Communist system.

Each Giay village has a 'forbidden forest' called a *doong xia* where the biggest tree is considered sacred. Twice a year worship of the spirit of the village is celebrated at the foot of the tree. Whenever these rituals take place, outsiders and visitors are strictly forbidden to enter the village. Bamboo is cut down and planted at the entrance of the village to bar access to all strangers. Parts of sacrificed animals are then hung from the tree; ears of pigs or buffaloes, chicken's feet, and tufts of animal hair are commonly used.

The Giay believe the universe is comprised of three separate levels. The upper level is the abode of spirits and the souls of the deceased. The middle strata contains humans, animals and this world, while the lowest level is situated under the earth.

Few Giay have heard that Jesus Christ died for them. They are trapped in superstition and fear of evil spirits. There are no strong Christian communities near the Giay. The southern tip of China and northern Vietnam are two large unreached areas. A small number of Catholics do live among the Giay in China, but there are no known believers among the Giay in Vietnam. There are no Scriptures in the Giay language, even though they are one of a relatively small number of groups in Vietnam who possess a traditional orthography.



Pray for the Giay

- 1 Ask God to release the Giay from their fear of spirits and their bondage to superstition. Pray He would create in them a dissatisfaction that can only be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.
- 2 Pray that the Holy Spirit would fan a people movement to Christ among the Giay on both sides of the Vietnam-China border.
- 3 Pray there would soon be a strong, worshipping and evangelizing Christian community among the Giay.



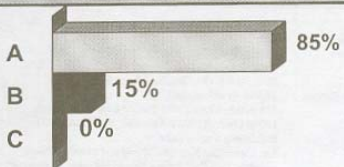
Population:
37,964 (1989)
47,100 (2000)
57,500 (2010)

Language:
Tai

Religion:
Polytheism

Christians:
none known

Status of Evangelization (Awareness of Christ and the Gospel)



A = have never heard the Gospel or the name of Christ
B = were evangelized but have not yet become Christians
C = Adherents to any form of Christianity

Overview of the Giay

Countries	: China, Vietnam, Laos, France, USA	Language	: Daic, Tai; Northern
Pronunciation	: "Zay"	Dialects	: 0
Other Names	: Nhang, Dang, Sa Nhan, Pu-Nam, Chungcha, Sa, Pau Thin, Giang, Nhang, Njang, Yai, Yay, Giay, Giang, Droi, Pu Na, Chi Chu, Xa Chung Cha	Subgroups (2)	: Pu-Na, Giay
Population Source	: 37,964 (1989 census); 223,000 in China (1981 Pacific Language Atlas); 100 in France (192 B.Grimes); 5 in USA (1992 B.Grimes), also in Laos	Religion	: Polytheism, Ancestor Worship, Animism
Location	: Lai Chau: Bat Xat, Bao Thang and Muong Khuong districts; Lao Cai: Phong Tho and Muong Te districts; Ha Giang: Yen Ninh and Dong Van districts; Cao Bang	Christians	: none known
		Scripture	: none
		Jesus film	: none
		Gospel Recordings	: none
		Christian Radio	: none
		ROPAL-code	: NHA00