

KATU

More than 40,000 Katu people live in the Truong Son mountain range in central Vietnam near the border with Laos. Members of this ethnic group are also located within Laos, where they may be known as the *Phuong*.

In Vietnam the Katu inhabit the Hien and Giang districts of Quang Nam-Da Nang Province, and the A Luoi and Nam Dong districts of Thua Thien-Hue Province.

Katu houses are built on stilts and arranged in a semi-circular pattern around the *rong*—a communal house situated in the middle of the village. The *rong* is a magnificent building that towers over all other homes. All gatherings of the community, social activities, religious ceremonies and

weddings and funerals take place there. Each house is surrounded by a large hedge that has two gates. The hedge is designed to protect the occupants from wild beasts that still roam the isolated mountains and forests.

Most Katu practice slash-and-burn agriculture. They clear land by burning it, then use it for several years until it is exhausted. They customarily let the land lie for a few years before they again try to plant crops. This technique has yielded poor harvests for the Katu, and famine has been a major problem in the past.

The Katu living in Hieng and Giang districts number about 12,000. They have settled down and practice rice-

cultivation. They grow corn, beans, sweet potatoes, cassava, melons and bananas. They also raise animals such as water buffaloes, pigs and chickens.

Traditionally the Katu are renowned for their skills as hunters. They use crossbows with poisoned arrows, spears, and rifles to kill animals. Often the men of the village leave on large-scale hunting expeditions for several days at a time. Until recently the Katu bartered for goods with the members of other ethnic groups, but now they use money.

Most Katu families are monogamous, but some wealthy men have taken several wives. They choose the youngest and most beautiful women, and offer the girl's family many possessions and enticements for allowing them to give up their daughters. Some young ladies, distressed at the prospect of becoming one of the wives of an old man who they have no love for, have committed suicide in protest. Others run off with their young boyfriends.

In Katu society, every family lineage (called a *ca bu*) has a different name. Each person with that name is required to observe certain taboos. For

example, they may be required to never touch a certain kind of plant or animal as long as they live. The Katu with the same family name are tightly-bound to each other, even if they live in different areas and have never met before. Because they share the same ancestors, they believe they are spiritually related because of the particular totem or taboos they share.

The majority of Katu are animists. They believe in a hierarchy of spirit-beings who must be placated and appeased in order for the community to experience peace and prosperity. The most important place in their religion is reserved for the "worship of the soul of the rice". They believe that each stalk of rice contains a soul. They offer sacrifices of water buffaloes, pigs and chickens so that the spirits will be pleased and will allow a good harvest.

Until the 1950s the Katu are reported to have carried out human sacrifice to the gods.²¹ Strangers who stumbled across a Katu village were often taken captive and killed.

Today there are believed to be only about 400 Christians among the Katu. They have proved more resistant to the Gospel message than many of the other tribes in central Vietnam. Their close-knit communities have created barriers to the penetration of the Gospel.

Work on translating the Katu New Testament was commenced by missionaries prior to their expulsion from Vietnam in 1975. The work was continued outside the country and completed in 1978.

Today Gospel Recordings are available in five different Katu varieties. It is uncertain if these represent five different dialects, or were recordings made of Katu in five different locations. Gospel radio broadcasts are available in Katu, albeit for only 15 minutes per week.



Pray for the Katu

- 1 Pray the Spirit of God would move on the Katu people, causing them to forsake their devotion and fear of the spirit world through repentance and turning to Christ for protection and strength.
- 2 Ask God to strengthen the Katu Christians, that they would be faithful in spreading the Gospel to the rest of their tribe. Pray the message would not appear culturally irrelevant.
- 3 Pray against centuries-old strife and prejudice that exists between Katu clans and between the Katu and other tribes.

Overview of the Katu

Countries	: Vietnam, Laos	Subgroups (2)	: Phuong, Kantua
Pronunciation	: "Kah-too"	Religion	: Animism, Christianity, Non-Religious
Other Names	: Co-Tu, Ca Tu, Cao, Ha, Ca-tang, Moi, Attouat, Atouat, Kado, Cao, Kao, Thap, Teu, Khat, Kotu, Phueng, Phuang.	Christians	: 400
Population Source	: 36,967 (1989 census); also in Laos	Scripture	: New Testament 1978; Portions 1969; NT and OT stories are available
Location	: Quang Nam-Da Nang: Hien and Giang districts; Thua Thien Hue: A Luoi and Nam Dong districts	Jesus film	: none
Language	: Austro-Asiatic, Mon-Khmer, Eastern Mon-Khmer, Kantue, East Kantue, Kato-Thap	Gospel Recordings	: Katu #01929; Katu: Ban Aling #01800; Katu: Ban Atak #01818; Katu: Pflu #01801; Katu: Quang Nam #03167 available (EBC)
Dialects	: 0	Christian Radio	: 15 minutes per week
Literacy	: 5-15%	ROPAL code	: KTV00 (Katu); PHG00 (Phuang)



Population:
36,967 (1989)
45,900 (2000)
56,000 (2010)

Language:
Mon-Khmer

Religion:
Animism

Christians:
400

Status of Evangelization

(Awareness of Christ and the Gospel)

