

KHANG

The Khang minority group recorded a population of 3,921 people in the 1989 Vietnam census. Surprisingly for such a small population, the Khang are divided into seven subgroups, each with its own name. They also live in a very widespread area, which suggests the Khang may be a collection of people groups and clans rather than a group with a single ethnicity.

The Khang inhabit the Thuan Chau, Quynh Nhai and Muong La districts of Son La Province and the Phong Tho, Muong Lay, Muong Te and Tuan Giao districts of Lai Chau Province. These areas are situated near Vietnam's borders with both Laos and China.

The northwestern part of Vietnam was ruled by the Thai peoples before the

Communist revolution in 1945. The Khang found themselves subordinates of the Thai. Except for village chiefs and shamans, the people were extremely poor and lived in abject misery.

The Khang are sometimes known as the *Khao*. Most of the inhabitants of the area call them *Xa Khao*, which means 'savages with horns'. Because of the derogatory connotations of this name, the government has officially called them *Khang*.

Today life has improved for the Khang. They depend largely on fishing in the Ma River for their livelihood. The Khang's diet consists of many different kinds of fish, vegetables, spices and sauces.

The Khang's homes are built on stilts, with an area under the floorboards to allow the family's pigs, chickens and goats to roam. Inside the house are several bedrooms and two kitchens, one for preparing food to eat, the other for preparing food and drink to place before the family's ancestors.

Although the Khang now believe they are a unique tribe, there seems little doubt that the Khang were once part of the great Khmu race of Laos. The Khmu are acknowledged as being the original inhabitants of Laos before they were driven off the best land by Lao invaders from southern China around 1000 AD. Today the Khang language is related to Khmu, Puoc and Pong in Laos. These languages are all part of the Northern Mon-Khmer language branch of the Austro-Asiatic family.

Although the Khang grow cotton in some areas, they are not familiar with producing clothing. Khang women take their raw materials to the Thai and ask them to produce garments for them. Possibly because of this, today the Khang's clothing is almost identical to the Black Thai.

Married Khang women tie their hair

into a knot. Many men grow their hair long and let it fall down to their shoulders.

Although most Khang customs are patriarchal, there are also influences of a former matriarchal society. Khang children usually take the name of their mother. After marriage the husband must come to live with his wife's family for eight to twelve years. Only then is he free to build his own home.

The main religious stronghold among the Khang is ancestor worship. When a person dies the body is wrapped in a mat and placed in a coffin. The deceased's personal items, such as his rice basket, bowls, chopsticks and pipe are buried with him so that he will not be without them in the next life. At the front of the grave a long pole, 4-5 meters (13-16 feet) long, is driven into the ground. On the top of the pole a wooden bird is carved and a shirt belonging to the deceased is hung.

The Khang believe each person has five souls. The main soul is located in the person's head and the others in the limbs. After death the main soul remains in his family's house to watch over and protect the family. The soul that was in the right arm becomes a spirit of the land, the soul from the left arm becomes the spirit of the tree that was cut down to make the coffin, the soul of the left foot becomes a spirit that flies off to the sky, and the soul from the right foot remains in the graveyard to watch over the funeral house.

These beliefs have caused a hindrance to the Khang receiving the Gospel, although very few have ever heard the Name of Jesus Christ before. It is difficult for the Khang to follow Christ because such a radical change will be perceived as an insult to their ancestors that went before them. There are no known Christians among the Khang, and no Scriptures or evangelistic material in their language.



Pray for the Khang

- 1 Pray the Khang would be released from their bondage to ancestor worship and animism. Pray the Holy Spirit would expose many Khang to the Gospel.
- 2 Ask the Lord of the Harvest to raise up laborers to take the Gospel of Peace to the Khang, who have been despised and oppressed for many generations.
- 3 Pray there would soon be a strong church planting movement among the Khang people in northwest Vietnam.



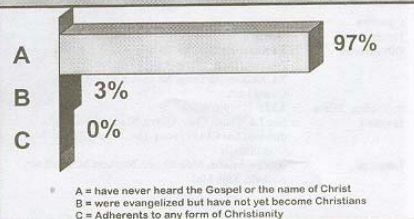
Population:
3,921 (1989)
4,870 (2000)
5,940 (2010)

Language:
Mon-Khmer

Religion:
Ancestor Worship

Christians:
none known

Status of Evangelization (Awareness of Christ and the Gospel)



Overview of the Khang

Countries	: Vietnam	Dialects (2)	: Khang Chu, Khang Ai
Pronunciation	: "Kung"	Subgroups (7)	: Khang Dang, Khang Hoc, Khang Don, Khang Xua, Khang Ai, Khang Bung, Khang Quang Lam
Other Names	: Xa Khao, Xa Don, Xa Tu-lang, Khaang, Tayhay, Pouteng, Teng, Theng Hang, Bren, Ksakautenh, Puteh, Xa, Xa Xua, Xa Dang, Xa Hoi, Xa Ai, Xa Bung, Quang Lam	Religion	: Ancestor Worship, Animism
Population Source	: 3,921 (1989 census)	Christians	: none known
Location	: Son La: Thuan Chau, Quynh Nhai and Muong La districts; Lai Chau: Phong Tho, Muong Te and Tuan Giao districts	Scripture	: none
Language	: Austro-Asiatic, Mon-Khmer, Northern Mon-Khmer, Khmuic, Xinh Mui	Jesus film	: none
		Gospel Recordings	: none
		Christian Radio	: none
		ROPAL code	: KJM00