

LATI

The 1989 Vietnam census listed 7,863 Lati people living in 300 households in northern Vietnam. The official Vietnamese name for the Lati is *La Chi*. They are found in the Ban Phung, Ban Diu, Ban Pang and Ban May communes in Xin Man District of Ha Giang Province, and in the Muong Khuong and Bac Ha districts of Lao Cai Province. In the 1970s many Lati who were living in Ban Phuang commune in Ha Giang were relocated by the government to Bac Quang district in the south of Ha Giang.

More than 1,600 Lati also live across the border in southern China, where they have been officially included under the Yi nationality, even though they share no linguistic or ethnic relationship with other Yi groups.

The Lati language is part of the Kadai branch of the Tai family. Although about 70% of the Lati in China are still able to speak their language, in Vietnam the language is quickly becoming extinct. Because the areas inhabited by the Lati are multi-ethnic, bi-lingualism and multi-lingualism is wide-spread. In many Lati villages only a few old people are still able to speak their language. The linguistic mix of Lati is reflected in a study which found it shares 36% lexical similarity with Gelao, 33% with Pubiao, and 28% with Northern Zhuang.²⁷

Most Lati homes are built on mountain-slopes. Because of the high population density, the Lati have been forced to construct fields at sharp

angles on the hillsides. Their homes are built on stilts. A single ladder leads up into the home.

Lati women are skilled weavers. Their traditional outfit consists of a four-paneled buttonless dress. Men are excellent blacksmiths and carpenters. They hire themselves out for work at different times of the year between harvest seasons.

The history of the Lati has been one of hardship and persecution. They claim two historical founders of their race, Hoang Din Thung and Pu Lo To. They are reputed to have created different species and to have educated the people how to live and farm.

According to Lati folklore, their ancestors first migrated to the China-Vietnam borderland to escape famine and oppression. After a time many Lati moved into Vietnam because of a dispute. Another story says they came to Vietnam in two different waves of migration. The second group could not find the trail markers on the banana trees and were separated. Today there are two quite distinct Lati groups in Vietnam: the Black Lati and the Long-Haired Lati. The two groups have very different customs, dress and

languages. In China, despite their small population, there are an additional four Lati dialect groups. The autonym of the Lati is *Lipu*, which suggests they may be related to the Lipo tribe in China's northern Yunnan and southern Sichuan.

Before the Communists took control of north Vietnam, the Lati were forced to render tribute to the powerful Tay chiefs. Because of past conflict and warfare, the Lati today build large clay walls around their homes, almost as high as the house itself.

At Lati weddings the groom's family must pay an amount of money to the bride's family as a way to reimburse the expenses incurred during the girl's upbringing.

The Lati are polytheists. They worship and appease a large number of deities, ghosts and disembodied spirits. In each village a communal house holds the remains of buffalo and ox skulls that were used in ritual sacrifices in the past. Annual ceremonies are held to make peace with the spirits. Objects such as bronze drums and ox-hide drums are used. The ceremony is presided over by the *po mia nhu*, who represents the entire Lati clan. Other traditional musical instruments of the Lati include the *dan tinh* (zither) and a harp-like instrument.

The Lati hold regular rituals determined by the lunar calendar. They pray for seeds before they plant them, believing each seed has a soul. They invoke the spirits to watch over the harvest, to ensure plenty of food for the entire village.

There is not even a single known Christian believer or church among the Lati in Vietnam. They are a distinct and unique people group without any Gospel witness and without any knowledge of the Name of Jesus Christ.



Pray for the Lati

- 1 Thank God for His sure promise that the Lati will have representatives in heaven among the world's tribes, languages and nations.
- 2 Ask the Lord to raise up laborers to take the Gospel to the Lati. Pray their message would be embraced by those Lati who are searching for spiritual Truth.
- 3 Intercede to break down the demonic powers and strongholds that have kept the Lati bound in darkness for centuries.



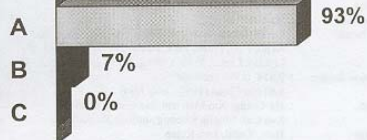
Population:
7,863 (1989)
9,760 (2000)
11,900 (2010)

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 Lati

Countries : Vietnam, China
Pronunciation : "Lah-tee"
Other Names : Cu Te, Lachi, Tho Dem, Black Tho, Man La, Chi, Xia Aiku, Pula, Phula, Fula, Foola, Tai Lati, Lachi, Laji, Lipulio, Laqua, Y Pi, Y Pong, White Lati, Lipapo
Population Source : 9,614 (1989 census); 1,634 in China (1990 Liang Min)
Location : Ha Giang, Xin Man and Bac Quang districts; Lao Cai, Muong Khuong and Bac Ha districts
Language : Dale, Kadai, Lati-Kclao
Dialects (2) : Liputio (Black Lati), Lipupi (Long-Haired Lati)

Subgroups (2) : Liputio (Black Lati), Lipupi (Long-Haired Lati)
Religion : Polytheism, Animism
Christians : none known
Scripture : none
Jesus film : none
Gospel Recordings : none
Christian Radio : none
ROPAL code : LBT00 and LWH00