

LOLO

The 1989 Vietnam census listed a figure of 3,134 members of the Lolo minority group in northern Vietnam. This classification has caused confusion among ethno-linguistic researchers. Because the Lolo language has yet to be thoroughly studied, the authoritative *Ethnologue* does not list the Lolo. Consequently, Christian ministries are also unaware of the existence of this small, mysterious group in Vietnam.

We believe the Lolo are probably the same group as the 65,000 *Pu* tribe who live in adjacent areas in China. The *Pu* have been included under the official Yi nationality by the Chinese authorities, which contains more than 90 loosely-related tribes and sub-groups who speak more than 30

distinct languages.

Another possibility is that the official Lolo minority group is a generic collection of small Tibeto-Burman speaking peoples who have migrated to Vietnam at different times.

In China the name *Lolo* is considered derogatory. It was used prior to 1950 to refer to the small baskets the Yi people carried around, which they believed contained the souls of their dead ancestors. The Lolo in Vietnam are also called *Pen Ti Lolo*, a derogatory term meaning 'decapitated Lolo'.

Alternatively, the name *Lolo* may be a Vietnamese transliteration of *Luoluo*, which means 'tiger tiger' and is the name of a large group in central Yunnan Province.

The Lolo should probably be considered two different groups—the *Lolo Den* ('Black Lolo') and the *Lolo Hoa* ('Variegated Lolo'). According to the Vietnamese, the Lolo migrated to Vietnam in two different waves, one in the 15th century and the other in the 18th century. Today the two groups have very different customs, dress, rituals and (presumably) languages.

The Lolo language is part of the Tibeto-Burman family. The Lolo used to have a pictographic script, which was used solely for religious rituals and was only known to the shamans. The script has been forgotten by the Lolo in recent years and is now only used among the Nosu people in China.

The Lolo are a very religious people. Even their homes are arranged to reflect this. The altar to the 'spirit of the house' stands against the back wall. A room on the right-side contains a bedroom with a fireplace, and the room on the left-side contains the kitchen and the ancestral altar. The oldest surviving member of each family is responsible for maintaining the altar and to faithfully execute all the ancestral ceremonies and rituals.

Each Lolo clan contains several

family names. Because they worship the same ancestors, clan members are very close to each other, even if they live far apart. The Lolo differentiate between "close ancestors" and "distant ancestors." Close ancestors are the dead going back five generations, while the distant ancestors are those who died six or more generations ago.

Until recently the Lolo married at the age of 13 or 14. The Lolo believe in monogamous families and adultery is frowned upon and punished. Inheritance rights belong to the sons, although a daughter inherits her mother's jewelry and receives a dowry when she gets married.

When a Lolo dies, his relatives organize a 'dance of the spirits'. They believe this dance will help the soul of the deceased find its way back to the resting place of its ancestors. The son-in-law plays an important role in ancestral ceremonies. At the dance he carries a bag on his shoulders. Inside the bag is a cloth ball which represents the head of the deceased person. The son-in-law is also required to carry one end of the coffin during the funeral procession.

In addition to their intricate system of ancestor worship, the Lolo believe in two gods who created the world, *Mit Do* and *Ket Do*. *Ket Do* created the entire universe and mankind, while *Mit Do* governs the earth and watches over the Lolo.

The Lolo also have a legend of an ancient flood that destroyed the whole world. Only one family survived by hiding out in a wooden boat. Three sons were born to this family, who were the progenitors of all the races of mankind.

Despite their fascinating history and culture, the Lolo remain completely ignorant of Christianity and have never before heard the Gospel.



Pray for the Lolo

- 1 Pray the Lolo would soon hear the Gospel in a language and manner they can easily understand. Pray God would raise up evangelists and church planters willing to work among the Lolo.
- 2 Ask the Holy Spirit to put a deep yearning for the Truth in the hearts of many Lolo. Pray they would be dissatisfied until they find the Life of Jesus Christ.
- 3 Break down the powerful ancestor worship that pervades every aspect of Lolo life and which may be a barrier against the Gospel.



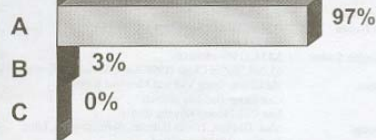
Population:
3,134 (1989)
3,890 (2000)
4,750 (2010)

Language:
Sino-Tibetan

Religion:
Ancestor Worship

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 Lolo

Countries	: China, Vietnam	Dialects	: 0
Pronunciation	: "Loh-loh"	Subgroups (2)	: Quang Lam (Black Lolo), Lao Thanh (Variegated Lolo)
Other Names	: O Man, Lu Loc Man, Qua La, Man Di, Mun Di, Laia, Pen Ti Lolo, Pu	Religion	: Ancestor Worship, Polytheism, Animism
Population Source	: 3,134 (1989 census); 65,000 "Pu" in China (1998 Asian Minorities Outreach)	Christians	: none known
Location	: Ha Giang: Dong Van and Meo Vac districts; Cao Bang: Bao Lac district; Lao Cai: Muong Khuong district	Scripture	: none
Language	: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Burmese-Lolo, Lolo, Northern, Yi, Unclassified	Jesus film	: none
		Gospel Recordings	: none
		Christian Radio	: none
		ROPAL code	: none