

# MA

More than 30,000 people of the Ma minority are concentrated in Lam Dong Province in southern Vietnam. A few Ma have settled in neighboring Cat Tien District, Dong Nai Province.

The Ma are comprised of five main subgroups, the Ngan, Xop, To, Krung and Hoang. When the Ma from different locations meet, the first thing they find out is to which group and clan of Ma they are derived from.

Today Ma villages (called *bon*) are usually very small, containing no more than 5-10 families. The leader of a *bon* is called the *quang bon*.

At the beginning of the 20th century the Ma were famous for their incredible long-houses. As families

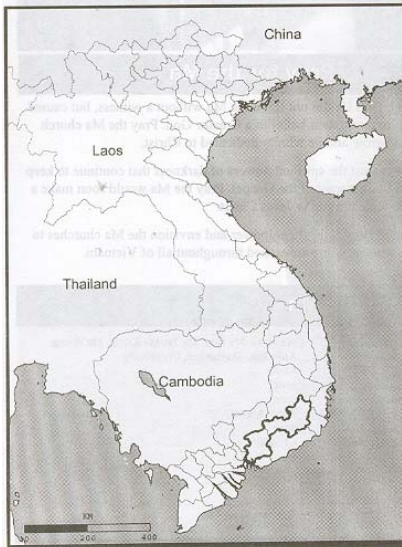
from the same lineage grew, the Ma believed it was important to continue to live under the one roof. Extra rooms were continually constructed until some homes were several hundred meters in length! Today the longest Ma homes are 30-40 meters long.

Ma men and women dress in a manner very similar to their neighbors, the Mnong and Koho. Men do not wear shirts, but cover their torsos with a blanket during the colder months. Ma women traditionally have stretched ear-lobes. They are pierced when they are babies and after years of wearing objects such as pieces of ivory or bamboo in them, they sometimes stretch down as far as their shoulder. They also like to adorn their wrists and ankles with copper rings.

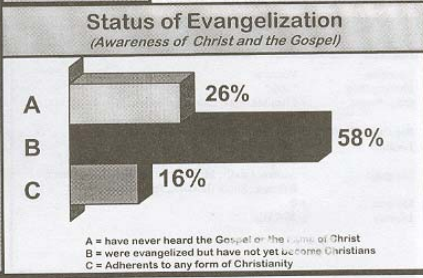
Most Ma practice a very crude form of agriculture, similar to how they have lived for many centuries. They often release their livestock to roam into the forests. When they have need of them, such as for food or for trampling a field, they find them and bring them back. Instead of using plows, the hooves of the animals break up the soil as they walk around the field. After that they scatter seed into the holes and gaps and the planting is finished.

The Ma are not afraid of their animals being stolen, as punishment for such an act is severe. The Ma never clear certain primitive parts of the forest, which they consider to be sacred. They believe these areas are the home of a powerful spirit called *K'bon*, the creator of vegetation.

The Ma living in the Cat Tien District of Dong Nai Province are more settled. They have learned the art of cultivating rice in irrigated fields from other ethnic groups. Each Ma house contains a garden which grows crops such as tobacco, papaya, jack-fruit, coffee, tea, cotton and mulberry. In the main fields the Ma grow corn, melons, chili, pumpkins and other crops.



<b>Population:</b>	25,436 (1989) 31,600 (2000) 38,500 (2010)
<b>Language:</b>	Mon-Khmer
<b>Religion:</b>	Animism
<b>Christians:</b>	5,000



In Dong Nai Province the Ma are skilled at making boats from tree trunks. They use them for fishing and transportation along the river systems in the area.

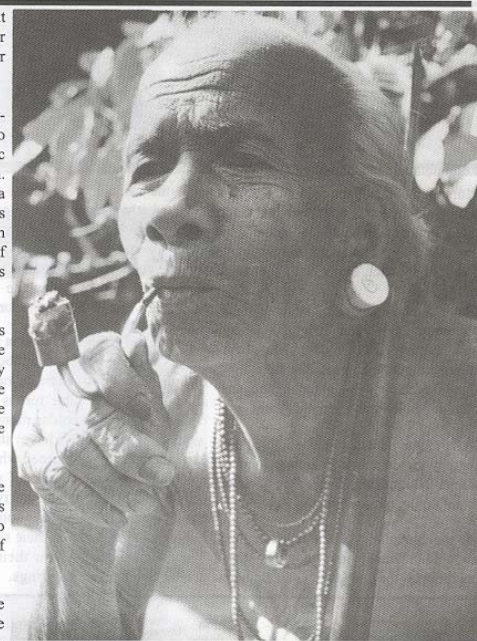
The Ma language is part of the Eastern Mon-Khmer branch. Many linguists consider it to simply be a dialect of Koho. Specific information about the Ma is difficult to obtain. The situation is also clouded because the Ma intermarry and often live in mixed communities with the Koho, Mnong and Vietnamese. Between 50-75% of Ma are able to read. They have one of the highest literacy rates among Vietnam's minority groups.

The Ma have many legends, folk-songs, epics and poems that have been handed down from one generation to another. These stories are mostly about romance, faithfulness and loyalty, and the creation of the world. The Ma love to sing to the accompaniment of copper gongs, three-hole flutes, drums, pan-pipes and bamboo zithers.

Ma children are given names that rhyme with the names of a dead relative from the previous generation. The names of Ma males are chosen to rhyme with each other, while the names of females also rhyme with each other.

Most Ma are animists. They participate in the annual month-long water buffalo sacrifice ceremony. They also worship the spirits of fire, mountains and rice.

There are a significant number of professing Christians among the Ma, although again the exact number is difficult to ascertain because of the Ma's similarity to the Koho. Many Ma Christians are able to read the Koho Bible. The Ma who were evangelized did not find the Gospel too different from the beliefs they already held. For centuries the Ma had worshipped *Yang* (the spirit of Heaven) and the Creator God.



## Pray for the Ma

- 1 Thank God He did not leave the Ma without a witness, but caused them to retain their belief in a Creator God. Pray the Ma church would grow and be wholly dedicated to Christ.
- 2 Pray against the spiritual powers of darkness that continue to keep most Ma ignorant of the Gospel. Pray the Ma would soon make a large-scale turning to Jesus Christ.
- 3 Ask the Holy Spirit to empower and envision the Ma churches to be a witness to the unreached throughout all of Vietnam.

## Overview of the Ma

Countries	: Vietnam	Subgroups (5)	: Ma Ngan, Ma Xop, Ma To, Ma Krung, Ma Hoang
Pronunciation	: "Mai"	Religion	: Animism, Shamanism, Christianity
Other Names	: Chau Ma, Maa, Cho Ma, Che Ma, Moi, Maoq, Ma Ngan, Ma Xop, Ma To, Ma Krung	Christians	: 5,000
Population Source	: 25,436 (1989 census)	Scripture	: none
Location	: Lam Dong, Dong Nai: Cat Tien District	Jesus film	: none
Language	: Austro-Asiatic, Mon-Khmer, Eastern Mon-Khmer, Bahnaric, South Bahnaric, Sre-Mnong, Sre	Gospel Recordings	: Koho: Ma #00791
Dialects	: 0	Christian Radio	: none
Literacy	: 50-75%	ROPAL code	: CMA00