

# RAGLAI

More than 80,000 Raglai people live in the mountainous areas of four provinces (Ninh Thuan, Bin Thuan, Khanh Hoa and Lam Dong) in southern Vietnam.

According to linguists with the *Summer Institute of Linguistics*, there are three distinct languages spoken among the Raglai. Northern Raglai and Southern Raglai each boast more than 30,000 speakers, while a language called Caogia is spoken by only 2,000 to 3,000 Raglai people. It has been described as "considerably different from other Raglai dialects." The Caogia speakers live in communities northeast of Phan Rang. Northern Raglai is generally spoken in areas west and south of Nha Trang, with some in Dalat.

Raglai is a Malayo-Polynesian language, related on a larger scale to hundreds of languages in the Asia-Pacific region including Malaysian, Indonesian, Cham, and other geographically wide-spread varieties such as Maori in New Zealand and Hawaiian.

The Raglai call themselves *Orang-glai* which means 'Glai people'. Their homes are invariably built on stilts, and are set apart some distance from each other. The roof is made of thatch and the floor is raised three or four feet above the ground. This is to prevent rodents and snakes from entering the house, and also protects the house from floods.

In the past all Raglai were slash-and-

burn farmers. They were semi-nomadic, moving to new land every few years after they have exhausted the soil. According to Raglai oral tradition, they stumbled into wet-rice cultivation by accident one day after they had constructed irrigation ditches. The people decided to experiment to see if rice would grow in the water and when it did, they decided it was the way they would farm from that point on.

In addition to agriculture, the Raglai are skilled at basket-making, blacksmithing, hat making and weaving. These occupations not only provide for their own communities but are bring in extra income.

Raglai society is divided into eight ancient clans called *patek*. Each *patek* contains families of the same maternal bloodline. Each clan has a separate name, specific history and "house of origin" where ancestral property is maintained and used in ancestor worship rituals.

Marriage between men and women of the same *patek* is strictly forbidden. They believe such a union constitutes incest.

Before marriage the young man is



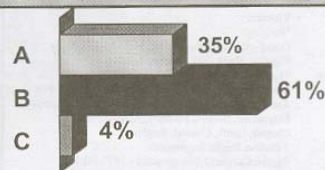
**Population:**  
71,696 (1989)  
89,050 (2000)  
108,600 (2010)

**Language:**  
Malayo-Polynesian

**Religion:**  
Animism

**Christians:**  
2,750

## 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

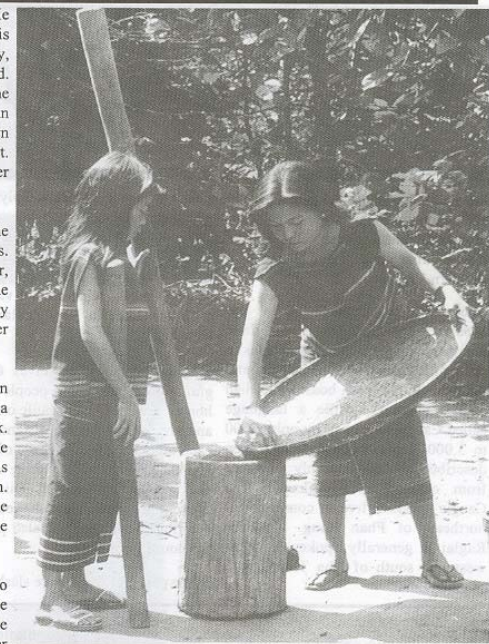
allowed to move in with his bride-to-be. He works for his future in-laws and displays his virtue for all to see. After the wedding ceremony, the couple settles at the bride's village for good. Unlike some other tribes in Vietnam where the husband must live with his wife's family for an extended period before establishing his own house, in Raglai society the move is permanent. If his wife should die at a young age, one of her unmarried cousins will take her place.

Raglai society remains strongly matriarchal. The oldest woman makes all family decisions. Children take the family name of their mother, and all inheritance is handed down to the daughters. The youngest daughter of the family is responsible for performing the worship of her parents.

When a Raglai person dies the body is dressed in new clothes, rolled in a shroud, and buried in a coffin that has been cut from a single tree trunk. A shaman is summoned to assist the soul to the afterlife. Images of the moon, sun, birds, animals and flowers are drawn on the side of the coffin. Several items of property that were owned by the deceased are placed in the coffin, then the grave is covered with a mound of dirt.

Later, at set times, age-old rituals are held to present offerings to the dead person's soul. These include the "recovery of the tomb" and the "abandoning the tomb" ceremonies. The latter ritual is considered the most important by the Raglai. It can be very expensive to conduct, and may plunge a family into heavy debt for years to come.

The number of Christians among the Raglai is uncertain. Workers among the Raglai claim there are 2,750, while one source states there as many as 20,000—mostly among the Northern Raglai. Missionaries translated part of the Scriptures into Northern Raglai in 1966.



## Pray for the Raglai

- 1 Pray against the spiritual blockages that have prevented the advance of the Gospel among all Raglai. Pray there would be a strong church located in every Raglai community.
- 2 Ask God to make the Raglai believers like flames of fire. Pray their witness would compel many unsaved Raglai to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3 Pray the Raglai church would become a missionary church, sending evangelists to the most unreached parts of Asia.

## Overview of the Raglai

Countries	: Vietnam	Literacy	: 25-50%
Pronunciation	: "Ra-glai"	Subgroups (2)	: Ra-krai, Noong
Other Names	: Orang-glai, Ro-glai, Ra-dlai, Moi, Roglai, Radlai, Adlai, Rayglai, Rang Glai, Nuong, La-oang	Religion	: Animism, Ancestor Worship, Christianity
Population Source	: 71,696 (1989 census)	Christians	: 2,750
Location	: <b>Ninh Thuan, Bin Thuan, Khanh Hoa, Lam Dong</b>	Scripture	: Portions 1966 (Northern Raglai) Acts, Galatians, OT stories, NT stories and hymnals are available
Language	: Austronesian, Malayo-Polynesian, Western Malayo-Polynesian, Sundic, Malayic, Achinese-Chamic, Chamc, South, Coastal, Roglai	Jesus film	: none
Dialects	: 3 distinct Raglai languages: Raglai, Caogia (2,000 speakers - 1973 SIL), Raglai, Northern (25,600 speakers - 1981 Wurm & Hattori), Raglai, Southern (20,000 speakers - 1981 Wurm & Hattori)	Gospel Recordings	: Raglai: Northern #00728, Roglai: Southern #01927
		Christian Radio	: available in Northern Raglai (FEBC) 15 minutes per week
		ROPAL code	: ROC00 (Raglai, Caogia), ROG00 (Raglai, Northern), RAI00 (Raglai, Southern)