

ROMAM

A mere 277 Romam individuals were reported in the 1989 Vietnam census. They inhabit one village, Le, which is part of the Mo Rai Commune in Sa Thay District in Kon Tum Province. Le Village today has only about ten extended-family houses, each containing up to 25 people from different generations of the same family.

Although today they are a tiny group on the verge of extinction, when French traveler Henri Maitre passed through the area in the early 1900s he listed 12 villages of Romam. Maitre mentioned the Romam in his 1912 book, *Les Jungles Moïs*. He also stated there was one village of Romam in Ratanakiri Province of Cambodia, but no record of Romam in Cambodia remains today.

The Romam have dwindled to their present endangered state because of assimilation and intermarriage with neighboring ethnic groups such as the Gie-Trieng, Bana, and Sedang. Today it is particularly difficult for outsiders to distinguish the Romam from the Gie-Trieng, who have intermarried with them, and even in Le Village the Romam now have sons and daughters-in-law from several different ethnic backgrounds.

Romam live in extended houses that are built on stilts. They are arranged in a square or rectangular pattern around the communal house. Inside their homes a corridor runs the length of the house. The different rooms are partitioned off by plaited bamboo. Guests are entertained in a central

room. Although grandparents, parents and children all live under the same roof, each family retains their own lifestyles. Each family eats by themselves, raises their own animals, and maintain their own fields and economic independence.

Romam women used to wear basic skirts made from coarse cloth that fell below their knees. There were no patterns or decorations on the skirts. In recent decades they have found it more practical to wear modern manufactured clothing. Another custom that has died is the habit of young Romam people filing four to six of their upper teeth.

Today Romam men like to wear loin-cloths and go naked from the waist up while they are working. Hunting and gathering food from the forest are the main responsibility of the men. They also go fishing with nets, spear or by using poison leaves. The poison spreads throughout the water and stupefies the fish, making them easy prey.

Romam women wear large, heavy ivory earrings that are inserted into a hole in their earlobes. In some cases their earlobes have stretched to 5-6 cm in diameter.



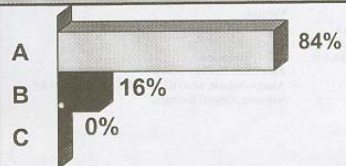
Population:
277 (1989)
340 (2000)
420 (2010)

Language:
Mon-Khmer

Religion:
Animism

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

The Romam get married after a time of engagement. In the past they only married people from their own tribe, but now because of their small population, they have been forced to intermarry with other ethnic groups.

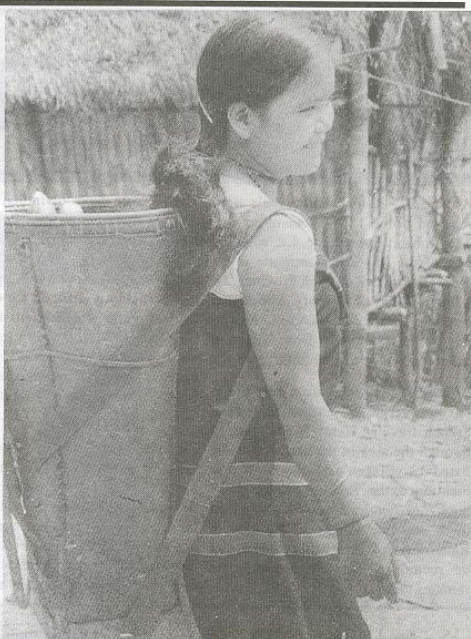
After the wedding the young couple move into the home of the wife's family for a period of four to five years. After that they move in with the husband's family for four to five years. The couple continues to alternate between their in-laws in this manner until the time their parents die.

In the days immediately following the wedding, a Romam couple are allowed to divorce if they find their partner is not what they expected them to be. Later, however, divorce is rare and only permitted if the couple is childless.

When a woman is giving birth she is placed in a room at the rear of the house. No one except the midwife is allowed to enter the room. As soon as the umbilical cord falls off, the baby is given a name. It is taboo for a baby to have the same name as anyone else living in the same village. The Romam believe the spirits will be confused and harm that was intended for one person may befall his namesake.

When a Romam person dies the corpse is left in the house for a few days. It is then taken to the cemetery, which is located west of the village. The corpse is always buried facing away from the village because the people believe the spirits of the dead could come into their village on the shadows that are cast by the sun's rays.

The small, hidden Romam people group have no known Christians in their midst. It is likely some have heard the Gospel from their neighbors. For now, most Romam have never been specifically targeted by the messengers of the Cross.



Pray for the Romam

- 1 Pray the Sedang and Bana Christians living near the Romam would take responsibility for winning the unreached Romam to Christ.
- 2 Ask the Lord to make the Romam people known for their Christ-likeness and dedication to God. Pray there would soon be an active church in their midst.
- 3 Pray that when they are approached with the Gospel, the Holy Spirit would help the Romam make a clear decision for Christ.

Overview of the Romam

Countries : Vietnam
Pronunciation : "Ro-muhm"
Other Names : Le-ro-nam
Population Source : 277 (1989 census)
Location : Kon Tum; Sa Thay District
Language : Austro-Asiatic, Mon-Khmer, Eastern Mon-Khmer, Bahnaric, Central Bahnaric
Dialects : 0

Subgroups : 0
Religion : Animism, Shamanism, Ancestor Worship
Christians : none known
Scripture : none
Jesus film : none
Gospel Recordings : none
Christian Radio : none
ROPAL code : ROH00