

# STIENG

More than 60,000 Stiang live in southern Vietnam. They are divided into two distinct groups, the *Bulo* Stiang (who live in the mountains) and the *Budeh* Stiang (who live in the lowlands). The geographical separation of these two groups has caused two distinct languages to evolve over the centuries.

The Stiang (officially spelt *Xitieng* by the Vietnamese authorities), live in the Phuoc Long, Binh Long and Dong Phu districts of Song Be Province, and also in parts of Lam Dong, Dong Nai and Tay Ninh provinces. More than 3,000 Stiang have spilled across the border into neighboring Cambodia.

The Stiang are recognized as the original inhabitants of the area where

they live. Their language and culture is very similar to the Mnong, which suggests the Stiang and Mnong were once the same group.

Stiang houses have a unique appearance. The outside walls are covered with horizontal strips of reeds. From a distance the houses look like a large cage. Stiang homes are built flat on the ground, not on stilts like most other Mon-Khmer peoples. Several families of the same lineage live under the same roof in houses often measuring 40 meters in length.

Stiang men go around naked from the waist up, wearing only loin-cloths. Women cover their torsos with a vest that is slipped on over their head like

a pullover.

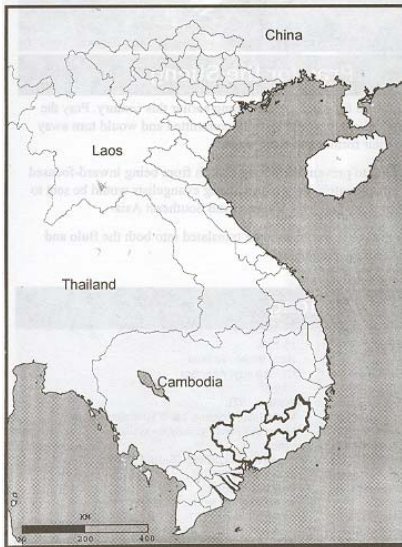
The Stiang grow a large variety of crops including corn, melons, gourds, pumpkins, sweet potatoes and beans. The Stiang are great fishermen. They use knives or sharp sticks to spear fish, or bows with poisoned arrows, traps, and snares.

The Stiang love to drink alcohol. They brew and ferment their own in huge earthen-ware jars. No festival or gathering takes place without the consumption of great amounts of beer, wine and whisky.

Stiang men practice teeth filing. Those with teeth filed down as low as the gums signify a person's nobility and high standing. Stiang women, in a similar manner, stretch their earlobes as far as they can. Earlobes that stretch down to the shoulder distinguish the woman as virtuous and wise.

Earlier this century the Stiang captured their enemies and purchased slaves whose lives had been forfeited because of debts they could not repay. Prisoners of war were also taken as the result of inter-tribal and inter-clan warfare.

Each Stiang village has a leader



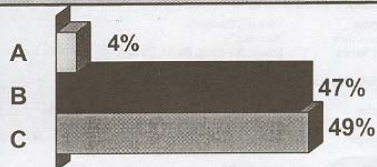
**Population:**  
50,194 (1989)  
62,300 (2000)  
76,050 (2010)

**Language:**  
Mon-Khmer

**Religion:**  
Christianity

**Christians:**  
30,000

## 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

called a *tom-bon*, who is elected by the heads of each house. Each village has a designated area that includes fields, forests, mountains, streams and swamps. The members of other hamlets are not allowed to encroach on Stiang land.

After marriage, a Stiang bride returns to live in her husband's home. Marriage usually occurs between the age of 19-20 for men and 15-16 for women. When a man dies, his wife is given to one of her brother-in-laws but never to the oldest. If the brothers are already married, the woman becomes a concubine to the youngest one.

The Stiang have been animists since time immemorial. Only in the last sixty years have their beliefs started to change as many have embraced Christianity. In the past, all Stiang worshipped a guardian spirit called *Neak Ta*. Wooden effigies of this deity are still seen in temples located outside the village or in the forests.

The non-Christians among the Stiang believe the forces of nature control their very existence. They worship the gods of thunder, lightning, the moon, sun and stars. White bird-feathers are considered sacred reminders of the power of the spirits.

Missionaries started targeting the Stiang in the early 1900s. Gradually, as understanding of Christ started to penetrate the Stiang's consciousness, thousands turned to God and repented of their sins. A survey in the mid-1990s found there to be 26,994 Stiang Christians. Although some Stiang believers still observe animistic rituals, many others have completely broken away from their former religion.

The two Stiang languages are different enough that separate Bible translations are required in Bulo and Budeh Stiang. Scripture portions were translated in 1971.



## Pray for the Stiang

- 1 Thank God for reaching the Stiang earlier this century. Pray the Stiang believers would be fully committed and would turn away from their former animistic ways.
- 2 Ask God to prevent the Stiang church from being inward-focused and ethno-centric. Pray many Stiang evangelists would be sent to the unreached all over Vietnam and Southeast Asia.
- 3 Pray the Bible would soon be translated into both the Bulo and Budeh Stiang languages.

## Overview of the Stiang

Countries	: Vietnam, Cambodia	Literacy	: 15-25%
Pronunciation	: "Stee-eng"	Subgroups (3)	: Bulo, Budeh, Ta Mun
Other Names	: Xtieng, Xu-dieng, Ba Ra, Bu Dip, Ray, Bu Lanh, Mol, Rangah	Religion	: Christianity, Animism
Population Source	: 50,194 (1989 census); 3,600 in Cambodia (1993 P Johnstone)	Christians	: 30,000
Location	: Song Be: Phuoc Long, Binh Long and Dong Phu districts; Dong Nai, Lam Dong, Tay Ninh	Scripture	: Portions 1971 Mark, John, Romans, I & II Thessalonians, Luke 15, Moses story and hymnals are available
Language	: Austro-Asiatic, Mon-Khmer, Eastern Mon-Khmer, Bahnaric, South Bahnaric, Stiang-Chrau	Jesus film	: none
Dialects (2)	: Bulo, Budeh	Gospel Recordings	: Stiang #03172, Stiang: Budeh #03169, Stiang: Budo #00766
		Christian Radio	: available (FEBC) 30 minutes per week
		ROPAL code	: ST100