

TA OI

More than 30,000 people belonging to the Ta Oi minority group live in central Vietnam's A Luoi District in Thua Thien Hue Province and the Huong Hoa District of Quang Tri Province. The Ta Oi are also located in Laos, and a small number of refugees now live in the Stockton, California area in the United States.

The Ta Oi consist of three subgroups: *Pacoh*, *Kantua* and *Ba-hi*. The Pacoh language (spoken by about 15,000 people) is considered distinct from the two other varieties. Speakers of Pacoh cannot understand the speech of the Ta Oi living in lowland areas "until speakers have had at least two weeks contact."⁴¹

Some customs also vary among the

different groups. The Kantua are the only group adept at the art of weaving. They make their own clothes, while the Pacoh and Ba-hi must buy theirs. The Ba-hi are the only group who grow rice in irrigated fields; the others practice slash-and-burn agriculture.

For mission purposes, there is no doubt the Pacoh, Kantua and Ba-hi should each be viewed as distinct people groups. The Vietnamese authorities, perhaps conscious of the need to keep the number of minority groups down to manageable proportions, combined numerous tribes who are at best, only partially related.

The Ta Oi languages are part of the Eastern Mon-Khmer linguistic branch.

About 70% of Ta Oi are mono-lingual, meaning they cannot speak any other language except their own. The Ta Oi also have one of the lowest literacy rates among Vietnam's minorities. Only between 5 to 15% of the Ta Oi can read.

The Ta Oi live in stilted houses in groups of ten homes, called *vel*. The land owned by each village is clearly marked by stumps, rocks and markers. Each village has a communal house where social activities take place. Men go there to drink, receive guests, and boast about their hunting achievements. Until recently the Ta Oi were skilled at training elephants to do logging and other work. They have now abandoned that practice.

Today most Ta Oi live more settled lives than in the past. They grow rice, corn, cassava, tobacco, hemp and sweet potato.

After a long day in the field, the Ta Oi love to come together and relax with singing and dancing. Traditional songs, called *oat*, express the joys and sorrows of the Ta Oi. They sing of the struggles their forefathers endured and the oppression and hostility they have faced from other ethnic groups who



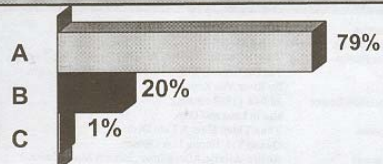
Population:
26,044 (1989)
32,350 (2000)
39,500 (2010)

Language:
Mon-Khmer

Religion:
Animism

Christians:
100

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

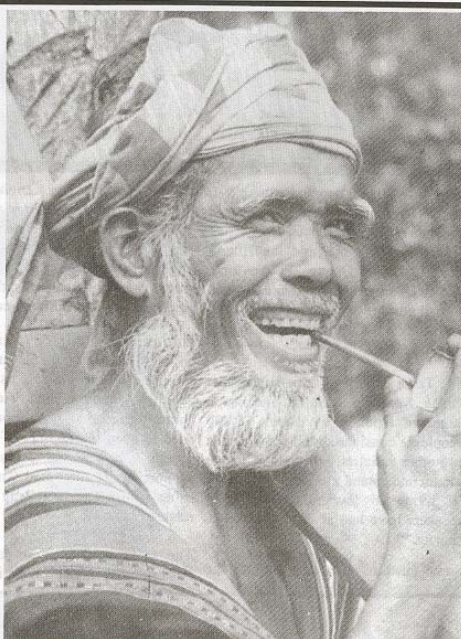
desired to take them as slaves. They have many poems, proverbs and puzzles that tell of the struggle between good and evil, and the true love and dedication between men and women. Musical instruments used by the Ta Oi include gongs, string zithers, flutes, pan-pipes, trumpets and drums.

When a young man desires to be married, a go-between is arranged to approach the family of the young woman who has caught his attention. Ta Oi society is strongly matriarchal. Men rule the community and no decision is made without their consideration.

Almost all Ta Oi are animists. They are deeply bound by fear to the spirit world. Spirit-houses are constructed on the outskirts of every village. The Ta Oi pray to numerous gods, ghosts and deities for the protection and blessing of their communities, harvests and animals. Many ceremonies are held where animals (including water buffaloes) and food are sacrificed.

After a Ta Oi person has died, a complex ritual is performed. A shaman is brought in to help the soul of the deceased find its way to the next life. Ta Oi women are sometimes buried in their traditional clothing, and with ornaments made of copper, silver, ivory or glass. Several years after the burial, the remains of the body are dug up, washed, decorated, and placed in a funeral house outside the fence of their former home.

Of the three distinct Ta Oi groups, only the Pacoh are known to contain any Christians (only about 100). The other two groups are completely unreachd. Evangelists from the Bru minority have tried to reach out to the Ta Oi, but they stopped after the Ta Oi strongly opposed them and drove them from the area. The only Scripture available is the Gospel of Mark, which was translated into Pacoh in 1965.



Pray for the Ta Oi

- 1 Pray against the demonic strongholds that have kept the Ta Oi from the Gospel for generations. Ask the Holy Spirit to soften the hearts of the Ta Oi to receive the Gospel.
- 2 Pray that God would raise up Christians to focus on reaching all three ethnic groups among the Ta Oi minority. Pray many strong churches would soon emerge in their midst.
- 3 Ask the Lord to heal the wounds of fear, suspicion of outsiders, and hatred that have kept the Ta Oi from knowing God.

Overview of the Ta Oi

Countries: Vietnam, Laos, USA
Pronunciation: "Tah-Oi"
Other Names: Toi-Oi, Ta-Oih, Ta-Hoi, Ta Uat, Upper Ta'oih, Ta-oy, Tau Oi, Kantua, Tahoi, Pacoh, Pakoh, Paco, Pokoh, Bo River Van Kieu
Population Source: 26,044 (1989 census); also in Laos and USA
Location: Thua Thien Hue: A Luoi District, Quang Tri: Huong Hoa District
Language: Austro-Asiatic, Mon-Khmer, Eastern Mon-Khmer, Katuic, East Katuic, Ta-oy-Tong
Dialects (6): Pasoom, Kamuan, Palce'n, Lceem, Ha'ang, Pahi

Literacy: 5-15%
Subgroups (3): Pa-Co, Kan-tua, Ba-hi
Religion: Animism, Ancestor Worship, Christianity
Christians: 100
Scripture: Portions 1965 in Pacoh. Work in progress. Gospels of Mark and John are available
Jesus film: none
Gospel Recordings: Tahoi #01010, Pakoh #01932
Christian Radio: none
ROPAL code: TTH00 (Upper Ta'oih), PAC00 (Pacoh)