

TAY

The Tay, with a population of more than 1.4 million, are the largest of Vietnam's 53 officially-recognized minority groups. They live in a wide geographical area across the northern provinces of Vietnam. The greatest concentrations are in Cao Bang, Lang Son and Bac Thai provinces. There are more than 100,000 Tay in China, where they have been included under the official Zhuang nationality and are now largely indistinguishable from other Tai-speaking peoples in the area. Some Tay refugee communities now live in the United States and France. They were permitted to migrate to these Western nations after the end of the Vietnam War.

The Tay were formerly known as the *Tho*, but this name is now considered

derogatory. Tho is also the name of another Mon-Khmer speaking minority in Vietnam. The Tay are similar to the Nung minority, although the Tay have generally assimilated more toward Vietnamese culture and language. Within the classification of Tay in Vietnam is a small, distinct language called *Tai Jo*. This is probably the same language as Tai Yo spoken in Khamouan Province, Laos. Other distinct languages among the Tay include the several hundred speakers of *Thu Lao*, and *Padi*.

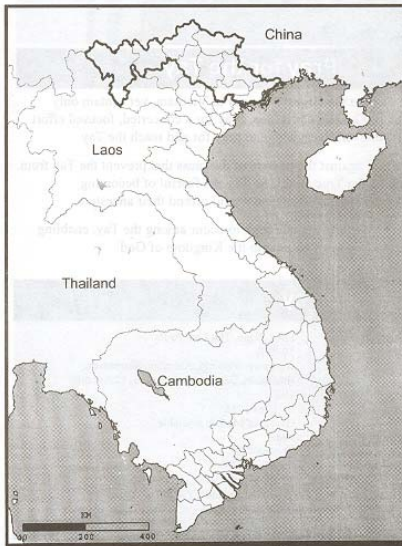
The Tay choose to live at the foot of a mountain or near a stream. Their homes consist of two main rooms, the front one for men and the rear one for women. The Tay possess a rich traditional folklore of poems, songs

and dances. One form of song is the *luon*, a duet where lovers sing romantic lines to each other.

The ancestors of the Tay migrated south from China under pressure from the advancing Mongol armies in the 13th century. The Tay were the only people group in northern Vietnam who refused to submit to the rule of the Hmong king, Sioung, in the late 1800s. Sioung was outraged and led a military campaign against the Tay for 12 years. Countless villages were burned and thousands of Tay were murdered. Many Tay fled the mountains to the lowlands to get beyond the reach of the Hmong.⁴²

In the past, the Tay were renowned as great hunters. They used cages, traps and bows and arrows to catch beasts. In the past 50 years, the ecology of the area has changed so dramatically that now few Tay (except those living in the most remote mountains) still hunt. Most Tay have adjusted to become farmers and rice cultivators.

Because of the horrific carnage inflicted by ethnic groups on their neighbors in the past, some Tay villages today still have a large hedge and a ditch around them to protect them from invaders. Most Tay



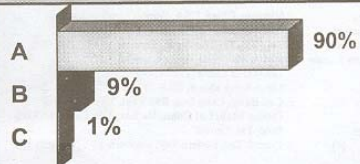
Population:
1,190,342 (1989)
1,478,400 (2000)
1,803,600 (2010)

Language:
Tai

Religion:
Ancestor Worship

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

villages are quite small, numbering no more than 15-20 houses. Their villages are always named after a nearby mountain or river.

For hundreds of years Tay society was ruled by strong leaders who often oppressed the poor people. One custom allowed the Tay overlords to sleep with young girls before they were married. Servants were also buried alive when their masters died. These customs have faded out in the last few decades.

Ancestor worship is the primary religion among the Tay today. Ancestral altars are located inside every house. Guests are not allowed to sit in front of the altar. Women must not look upon the altar after they have given birth to a baby, as this is considered a disgrace to the ancestors. Men who have attended a funeral are not allowed to tend cattle until they have had a bath.

An early missionary described the differences between the Tay and Nung: "There are several factors which seemed to designate the Tho [Tay] as the more strategic tribe of the two: The Tay are much finer looking; in fact they are the finest looking people we have seen among the natives of Indo-China; They cultivate their fields and gardens better, live in cleaner houses, and seem generally thriftier and more intelligent than the Nung."⁴³

There are very few Christians among the Tay in both China and Vietnam. Some have been exposed to the Gospel through the FEBC radio broadcasts. As early as 1913 there were a reported 4,000 to 5,000 Tay Catholics in China.⁴⁴ Missionaries translated several books of the Bible into Tay in 1938, but these have been out of print since 1963. The script used was an ancient form of 16th century Chinese characters. Few, if any, would be able to read it today. The Gospel of Mark is the only Scripture available in a contemporary Tay orthography.



Pray for the Tay

- 1 The Tay are the largest minority in Vietnam, yet contain only about 100 known Christians. Pray for a concerted, focused effort from believers everywhere to pray for and reach the Tay.
- 2 Intercede against the powers of darkness that prevent the Tay from knowing the True God. The Tay are fearful of becoming Christians because doing so would offend their ancestors.
- 3 Pray for a great breakthrough to occur among the Tay, enabling thousands to soon come into the Kingdom of God.

Overview of the Tay

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|-------------------|--|-------------------|--|
| Countries | : Vietnam, China, USA, France, possibly Laos | Subgroups (4) | : Phen, Ngan, Thu Lao, Pa Di |
| Pronunciation | : "Dai" | Literacy | : 50-75% |
| Other Names | : Tho, To, Tai Tho, Ngan, Phen | Religion | : Ancestor Worship, Animism, Shamanism, Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, Christianity |
| Population Source | : 1,190,342 (1989 census); 122,000 in China (1995 Global Evangelization Movement); also in USA, France and possibly Laos | Christians | : 100 |
| Location | : Cao Bang, Lang Son, Bac Thai, Tuyen Quang, Quang Ninh, Lai Chau, Ha Bac, Lao Cai, Ha Giang | Scripture | : Portions 1938 Gospel of Mark is available |
| Language | : Dale, Tai, Central | Jesus film | : none |
| Dialects (4) | : Central Tay, Eastern Tay, Southern Tay, Northern Tay | Gospel Recordings | : Tho #00792 |
| | | Christian Radio | : available (FEBC) 15 minutes per week |
| | | ROPAL code | : TH000 (Tay) and TYJ00 (Tay Jo) |