



Population in China:
 1,634 (1990)
 2,050 (2000)
 2,570 (2010)
Location: Yunnan
Religion: Animism
Christians: None Known

Overview of the Lati

Countries: Vietnam, China

Pronunciation: "Lah-tee"

Other Names: Akhu, Pula, Tai Lati, Lachi, Lipulio, Fula, Foula, Lipu, Lipute, Lipuchio, Lipuke, Liputio, Lipupi, Lipupo

Population Source:
 1,634 (1990 Liang Min);
 2,000 (1999 J. Pelkey);
 Out of a total Yi population of 6,572,173 (1990 census);
 7,863 in Vietnam (1991 census)

Location: SE Yunnan: Maguan County in the Wenshan Zhuang-Miao Prefecture; Possibly a few in Hekou County

Status:
 Officially included under Yi

Language: Daic, Kadai, Lati-Kelao

Dialects (6): Lipute (Bag Lati), Liputio (Han Lati), Lipuke (Red Lati), Lipuliontco (Flowery Lati), Liputio (Black Lati), Lipupi (Long-Haired Lati)

Religion:
 Animism, Ancestor Worship

Christians: None known

Scripture: None

Jesus film: None

Gospel Recordings: None

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: LBT00



Dwayne Graybill

Location: The Lati — despite having a relatively small 1990 population of just 1,634 people living in 306 households — have several colorfully named subgroups, each speaking a separate dialect. Approximately half of the Lati call themselves *Han Lati*. Seventy-two households refer to themselves as *Flowery Lati*, 37 households as *Bag Lati* and 27 households as *Red Lati*. The Lati in China are located in Maguan County, Wenshan Prefecture in the southern part of Yunnan Province. There may also be a few in Hekou County. Across the border in Vietnam are the *Long Hair*, *White*, and *Black Lati*.¹

Identity: The Lati in China are officially counted under the Yi nationality, yet they do not even speak a Sino-Tibetan language and have no kinship with the Yi. The incorrect categorization of the Lati is an example of the hurried approach that the Chinese authorities employed in their classification of China's ethnic peoples.

Language: The Lati language is part of the Tai family. Seventy percent of the Lati in China are able to speak their language. Most Lati are bilingual in Chinese and Nung. Some can also speak the languages of the neighboring Hmong and Tai. One linguist has described Lati as "a possibly

extinct Kadai language in northern Vietnam."² The linguistic mix of Lati is reflected in a study which found it shares 36% lexical similarity with Gelao, 33% with Laqua, 34% with Buyang, 28% with Northern Zhuang, 25% with Li, 23% with Laka, and 22% with Dong.³

History: The Lati in Vietnam claim two historical founders of their race: Hoang Din Thung and Pu Lo To. They are reputed to have created many different species and to have educated the people how to live and farm.

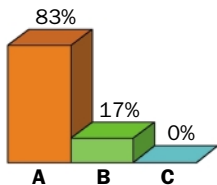
Customs: Most Lati live simple lives. They cultivate rice. Lati women are renowned for their skill in weaving and indigo dyeing. Each family clan owns drums

and gongs which are used in ritual ceremonies. At weddings the groom's family must provide a suitable amount of money to the bride's parents to repay the cost of the girl's upbringing. Lati homes are constructed on stilts and consist of three sections. The largest room contains the ancestral altar.

Religion: The Lati hold annual ceremonies determined by the lunar calendar. They pray for seeds before they plant them, believing each seed has a soul. They invoke the spirits to watch over the harvest, to ensure plenty of food for the entire village. The New Rice Festival along with the New Year and Seventh Month festivals are the largest, most colorful, and most important festivals of the year.

Christianity: The Lati are blocked off from Christian witness because the atheistic governments of both China and Vietnam forbid evangelism. There are no known Lati believers on either side of the border, and no missionaries are known to have ever targeted them. The nearest Christian communities to the Lati are among the Hmong Daw and Hmong Leng, but the Lati do not share a common language with the Hmong. The two groups rarely have contact with each other.

Status of Evangelization



A = Have never heard the gospel
B = Were evangelized but did not become Christians
C = Are adherents to any form of Christianity