



THE PEOPLES OF  
CAMBODIA

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CAMBODIA

Cambodia Research Network - CRN

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# Introduction

## From Killing Fields to ....

'Cambodia.' What comes to mind when hearing this name? Perhaps ancient temples, genocide, Buddhism, humanitarian aid, poverty, corruption, high-profile Hollywood adoptions, the Ho Chi Minh trail, and carpet bombing are some of the possibilities. For some, nothing comes to mind because they have absolutely no knowledge about this small, Southeast Asian nation that often escapes the world's attention.

In reality, present-day Cambodia boasts a growing population of nearly 14 million people. Life for these people in the last 30 years has been an enormous struggle to overcome multitudes of obstacles. Years of war left the land and its people devastated and possessing little hope. Only in the last 10-15 years has any sense of normalcy been restored. Massive influx of foreign aid money and assistance continue to pour into Cambodia with the hope of helping the people pick up the pieces of their broken world. True progress has been painful and slow as Cambodians try to pick their way through new minefields of corruption and exploitation in an effort to move forward. These pressures also impact the various cultural and ethnic groups in Cambodia. The cultures of these people are priceless jewels forged and shaped by these hardships.

God desires to shape and polish these cultures as well. God loves all the people of Cambodia. He gave them rich resources and ethnic diversity to make something beautiful of their lives, not

something devastated by war. This book was written to describe some of these jewels formed under severe pressure.



**The purpose of this book is to introduce the Unreached Peoples of Cambodia to Christians, so that prayer for these peoples, ministry to these peoples, and friendship with these peoples might increase in our generation.**

Cambodia is moving forward away from the 'Killing Fields' of the past toward a bright future. There is hope for these ethnic groups to relate together, perhaps as one brightly shining jewel, perhaps as different gems set together. But it will take spiritual and social transformation for healthy new bonds of trust to form.



God loves the peoples of Cambodia. He has watched their families and cultures develop for ages. He knows every happy child and every worried parent. He knows every unemployed father and every abused mother. He loves every honest farmer and corrupt government officials. He loves the Buddhist majority and the Muslim, Chinese, and animistic minorities. He loves the urban poor and the jungle hunters.

## A Broken Heart

Jesus' heart was broken with compassion when he saw the wandering masses of society (Mt.9:36-38). He called his followers to join Him in compassion and in prayer to God for others. The first step of obedience in becoming a blessing to the nations is having a broken heart that prays for the nations.

This book will help you pray for these people groups and for harvesters, long-term servants, who can live among them, know them and love them.

A second step of obedience is learning as much as possible about these people groups. A good place to start is with the introductory pages of this book that give some broad background about Buddhism, animism and Cambodia. The best way to learn about another religion, however, is to meet others and truly listen as they discuss their personal faith, beliefs, hopes, fears, and dreams.

A third step of obedience is to partner with others to bless one or two people groups. A practical way to do this is called "Adopt a People." Adoption can be done by a family, a small group or a congregation. Adopting a People means treating that ethnic group like a member of your own family. As a congregation, this means committing to a long-term relationship toward a people, visiting them, and supporting workers among them. Partnering also means joining support networks that can help you bless this newly adopted member.

Adopting a baby means promising to care intensively for it until it is mature enough to care for itself. This book can help your group seriously consider and pray for several groups before making this long-term decision.

A fourth step of obedience is to go and live among the people and provide a useful service that creates opportunities for friendship. A few will be called to be the pioneers, many will be called to be support partners. The challenge of Jesus to his disciples was to pray for long-term workers to enter the harvest. It takes years of cultural learning to deeply understand and love people from another culture. People like that are grown, not born. This book will help challenge people to consider this cross-cultural lifestyle, and give them ideas for how to get started. Together, we can impact a people group in Cambodia with the love of God.

Read the pages that follow, not for information, but for inspiration! What is God calling you to do as a servant and partner in His plan to love the people

of Cambodia? May you discover in these pages the beautiful peoples of Cambodia and learn to love and appreciate them just as their Maker does!

## A Work in Progress



This book contains short cultural profiles of Cambodia's people groups. Cambodia is the most homogenous nation in mainland Southeast Asia with the Khmer representing nearly 90% of the population. This book contains an overall profile on the Khmer plus several segment spotlights which cross ethnic boundaries.

A one-page profile is by definition a simple summary.

Some of the profiles are based on extensive materials from academic, government and field sources. Others are mere sketches based on very minimal information available. Ongoing research into cultural similarities, preferred ethnic names, and population statistics continues to cause revisions to our list of peoples and clusters. As we gain better information this book will continue to evolve. This edition is merely a snapshot of our current understanding in early 2009.

This book represents the combined efforts of many Christian organizations in the Cambodia Research Network (CRN). It is copyrighted for the non-commercial use of its members. Outside CRN sponsored activities, this book may only be sold for recovery of purchase and delivery costs. Profits, if any, will be used to support the ongoing work of the CRN research network.

We are hoping this book stimulates serious ethnographic research projects and personal involvement with these peoples. At time of publication, little ethnographic data was available for the Kachok and Khaonh. We would welcome any new data from field sources. Please send suggestions and corrections (with explanations and bibliographic information) to the email address below. Thank you!

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# Cambodia Overview

## A Brief History

Cambodia's heritage can be traced back to the rise of the Khmer empire in the 9th century. As the Khmer Empire grew in power, the kingdom exerted political, cultural and spiritual influence over all of Southeast Asia until the 13th century. This empire employed its people to build intricate irrigation systems and construct temples, including the Angkor Wat temple complex, a finalist in the 2007 'New Seven Wonders of the World' contest.

After this great empire was overthrown in the 14th century, the Khmer faced weak kings, internal rivalries, and continual warfare with the Thais until succumbing to French colonial rule in the late 1800s. However, in 1953, the French installed Norodom Sihanouk, who led Cambodia to independence.

King Sihanouk was the country's leader for seventeen years, before being ousted in a coup d'état, led by General Lon Nol. In 1970, following the coup, Cambodia quickly descended into civil war, involving three factions. The factions consisted of Cambodians loyal to the royal family, those loyal to a communist ideal (Khmer Rouge), and those loyal to the new Prime Minister (Lon Nol). Each group believed they were loyal to the best interest of the Khmer. During the early part of the civil war (1970-1975), King Sihanouk

entered an alliance with the Khmer Rouge, led by Pol Pot. The Khmer Rouge was a small guerrilla force, but grew into a large army in just a few weeks. As the raging war in neighboring Vietnam entered Cambodia, fighting engulfed the entire country.

On April 17, 1975, Phnom Penh fell to the Khmer Rouge. Historian David Chandler paints a vivid picture: "Communist troops, dressed in peasant cloths or simple khaki uniforms, ominously silent and heavily armed, converged on the capital. Many of them were under fifteen years of age. Walking slowly down the

capital's broad avenues, they responded coldly to the people's welcome. Their arrival coincided roughly with the Cambodian New Year. The coincidence was deliberate, for the communists intended that the year to come, like Year One of the French Revolution, would usher in an entirely new phase of Cambodian history." Many rejoiced, believing the country's civil war was over and the country would soon be able to rebuild.

A new phase of Cambodian history was ushered in. The Khmer Rouge victory led to a revolution sweeping through Cambodia. Soldiers warned that U.S. war planes would bomb the cities, and forced the urban populations to evacuate, leaving the cities empty and lifeless. Many Khmer believed this evacuation would be short. It turned into



four years of forced labor, famine, suffering and death in agrarian labor camps.

The Khmer Rouge asserted that over two thousand years of Cambodian history had ended. The new regime carried out a radical program that included isolating the country from foreign influence, closing hospitals, schools and factories, abolishing finance, currency, and banking, outlawing all religions and confiscating all private property. The objective of the Khmer Rouge was to introduce a pure Maoist agrarian society. To “purify” the people, they executed all military and public service personnel, the educated, intellectuals, those believed to be loyal to the old government, professional workers, and religious leaders. A conservative estimate of deaths as a direct result of Khmer Rouge actions is slightly over one million, about one in every seven Khmer. Altogether, deaths related to Khmer Rouge actions, disease, starvation or other hardships are estimated at over 1.7 million people.

Khmer Rouge forces boldly began fighting with neighboring Vietnam. Responding to these armed incursions, Vietnam invaded Cambodia in 1978, forcing the Khmer Rouge to flee to the jungles along the Thai border. From there, they conducted a guerrilla war against the government throughout the late 1970s and 80s.

Following the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, individuals staggered back to their homeland

or made haste to refugee camps along the Thailand-Cambodia border. This mass migration left the rice harvest unattended. Famine swept across the country in 1979 and 1980. Those who found their families attempted to return to normal lives, wanting to put the horror of the previous four years out of their minds.



Vietnam helped Cambodia in the steep challenge of rebuilding the country. The death or disappearance of so many educated people was a serious obstacle to installing a new government. The country began to rebuild its infrastructure, religion and education with few qualified individuals. The Khmer people are still suffering from this tragic loss.

For a ten year period, Vietnam led Cambodia to institute various reforms. These reforms reestablished Khmer institutions and paved the way for a pattern of future reforms, including amending the constitution to make

Buddhism Cambodia’s state religion and abolishing the stature that limited monk-hood to middle-aged Khmer.

In 1990, the fighting parties agreed to form a legitimate authority that could aid Cambodia in forming a new government. In May 1993, UN-administered elections led to a new constitution and the reinstatement

of Norodom Sihanouk as king. The Khmer Rouge boycotted the elections, rejected peace talks and continued to buy arms from the Cambodian military leadership. Following the election, a government-sponsored amnesty secured defections from the Khmer Rouge until 1994



when the Khmer Rouge was outlawed by the government.

The result of the 1993 election was an uneasy coalition of Prince Ranariddh's Funcinpec and Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party. The unified government fell apart violently in July 1997. When the dust settled, Hun Sen assumed sole leadership of Cambodia. Elections in 1998 returned Hun Sen to this position, despite accusations from the opposition about questionable electoral practices. While his democratic credentials are far from impressive, Hun Sen has proven to be a stabilizing force for Cambodia.

Following two shaky decades and the decimation of the culture, economy, infrastructure, social structure and government, reconstruction has begun. Although the first two national elections were unstable, the 2003 and 2007 elections were relatively peaceful. Cambodia is developing its culture, economy, infrastructure, social structure, and government.



## Demographics

Over 14 million people live in Cambodia. Over half the population was born after 1987 and over 35% of the population is under age 14. Over 1.5 million live in the capital city of Phnom Penh. Cambodia is perhaps the most ethnically homogenized nation in the world as The Khmer (ethnic Cambodians) account for nearly 90% of the total population. When thinking of Cambodian culture and people most are thinking of the Khmer.

The largest of the minority peoples in Cambodia are ethnic Vietnamese. There may be up to 1,000,000 (7% of the population) Vietnamese in Cambodia. Vietnamese people share little in culture and language with Khmer. They work mainly as day laborers and fishermen.

Another ethnic minority is the Western Cham. As many as 500,000 Cham (3.5% of the population)

make their home along the Mekong River to the north of Phnom Penh. The majority of Cham are followers of Islam. The Cham settled in Cambodia following the defeat of their king in central Vietnam in the 15th century. Near the time of this migration the Cham became followers of Islam and remain linked with other Muslim communities.

Ethnic Chinese began settling in the area shortly after the 15th century. As savvy businessmen, these Chinese soon established themselves as the most influential minority in the country. Most of the Chinese in Cambodia are bilingual and maintain their culture; however, they are so well assimilated in the Cambodian

population that recognizing them is difficult. Today, the Chinese are reestablishing themselves as an economic force. Estimates vary, but it is likely that up to 500,000+ Chinese make Cambodia home.

The northeast region of Cambodia is home to several hill tribes. These groups have a combined population of over 100,000. The Khmer refer to

these tribes as Khmer Loeu, or "Upper Khmer." These tribal people still live in near primitive fashion and maintain their unique cultures and animistic religions.

Almost 80% of Cambodia's population live in rural settings. These people organize themselves into small farming villages. In the village there is a *mey phum* (village leader). If the village is large enough there is a Buddhist wat (temple). If the village is small then it shares a wat with a cluster of nearby small villages.

## Government

In 1993, Cambodia adopted a constitution outlining a multiparty democracy under a constitutional monarchy. The head of state is King Norodom Sihamoni. He was sworn in as king October 29, 2004. He followed his father, former King Norodom Sihanouk, who abdicated the throne citing poor health and protesting the infighting in the Cambodian government. Kings in Cambodia

used to rule with semi-divine status. Today, however, the monarch's role is predominantly ceremonial.

The Prime Minister, Hun Sen, is the head of government. He has held power in different coalitions since 1985. He seized sole ownership of the prime minister role from the co-prime minister, Prince Norodom Ranariddh in a 1997 military coup d'état.

The country's twenty provinces are each headed by a governor. Each province is divided into districts, communes and villages. The four municipalities of Phnom Penh, Sihanoukville, Kep and Pailin are also governed like provinces.

## Geography

Cambodia is located in Southeast Asia bordering Vietnam to the east, Laos to the north, and Thailand to the north and west. Cambodia's southern coast borders the Gulf of Thailand. The country is slightly smaller Oklahoma, or England and Scotland combined.

The most prominent geographical feature of Cambodia is its lakes and rivers. Two rivers, the Tonle Sap and Mekong River, meet in Phnom Penh. During the rainy season, the Tonle Sap River reverses its flow and fills Tonle Sap Lake to overflowing. The flood caused by this overflow is crucial to the farmers and fishermen in the northwest portions of the country.

Cambodia experiences a tropical monsoon weather pattern with three seasons. The hot and dry months are February to April. April is the hottest month, with temperatures hovering around 38 ° C (100 ° F) for the entire month. The rainy season begins in May and ends in November, when the country celebrates the end of rainy season with festive boat races in Phnom

Penh. The rainy season accounts for 80% of the annual rainfall in Cambodia. The cool season comes in the months of December and January. This season offers a little relief from the heat and humidity.

Cambodia is most beautiful before harvest time at the end of rainy season. The rice fields glow a brilliant green. Rice fields dominate the landscape. Most of Cambodia is low, flat plains, which tend to flood, aiding rice farming.

In 1960 forests covered 75% of the country, but now cover only 30%. Logging is now technically illegal, but

many believe the logging industry continues due to government corruption. No reason exists to believe the destruction of this natural resource will end soon. These forests house several endangered species, including elephants, tigers, leopards, rhinos, gibbons, bats and crocodiles.

## Economy

Cambodia is one of the poorest countries in the world. Over one-third of the country lives on less than \$0.45 a day. Cambodia's average income is rising, but still well behind other nations in the region. Cambodia exports rice, fish, timber, garments and rubber to the U.S. and other Asian nations. Tourism contributes significantly to the attempted economic recovery in Cambodia.

The country's policies and history of instability do not foster trust among businesses and foreign investment. Cambodia relies heavily on foreign aid, but this aid is sometimes withheld due to rampant corruption and fear of political instability. Businesses withheld \$400 million in 2005 as a result of corruption and disrespect for the government. However, these private businesses reported



paying \$330 million to public officials in “unofficial fees.”

The high level of poverty and fuzzy economics contribute to the fact that the UN rates Cambodia as the 129th developed country out of 177 countries in the world. Another recent study revealed Cambodia is one of the most corrupt countries in the world, ranking 151st out of 163 countries studied.

## Issues of Concern

### *Culture*

Cambodia’s culture suffered a severe blow during the Khmer Rouge’s assault on the arts. For many years, the common belief among The Khmer was that their culture had been annihilated. The Khmer Rouge did away with living bearers of Khmer culture, destroyed cultural artifacts, statues, musical instruments, books and anything that served as a reminder of a past it was trying to efface. The temples of Angkor were spared as a symbol of Khmer glory and empire, but little else survived. Despite this devastation, Cambodia is witnessing a resurgence of traditional arts.

### *Health Care*

Unsanitary conditions and malnutrition contribute to the poor health of Cambodians. Most children are severely under weight and height. The UN reports only 16 physicians for every 100,000 people in Cambodia. These physicians are limited by poor facilities, inadequate training and low medical standards. Infectious diseases such as Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS are responsible for more than 10% of all deaths each year. On a positive note, HIV infection in Cambodia fell from a height of 4% to under 2% in 2003.

Survivors of the Khmer Rouge atrocities carry horrible memories. According to a survey authorized by the WHO, 75% of adult Cambodians who lived through the Khmer Rouge era suffer from extreme stress or post-traumatic stress disorder. Children of that generation do not fare much better. Aid workers estimate 40% of young Cambodians suffer from stress disorders caused by growing up in a fractured social network. However, in Cambodia there is not one inpatient mental hospital and only 20 psychiatrists.



## *Human Trafficking*

The U.S. Department of State says Cambodia is “a source, destination, and transit country for men, women, and children trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labor.” Women and children are often trafficked to Thailand and Malaysia for forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation. Men are often sent to Thailand for labor exploitation in construction and fishing industries. There are 80,000 to 100,000 commercial sex workers in Cambodia and 30% are under the age of 18. Among sex workers, 58% claim they were sold into prostitution.

## *Education*

Only 37% of Cambodia’s adult population is functionally literate. The current education system is challenged by low wages (\$30-45 per month after the first year of teaching), and poor training for teachers. School facilities are also lacking. Over half the schools are without a water supply and over a third of the schools are without toilets. One out of five students who enter first grade finishes the 9th grade. Nearly 8,000 students graduate each year from one of Cambodia’s 47 colleges and universities. These graduates are expected to invest in the education of younger Cambodians, but usually enter the workforce to find better wages.

## *Families*

Families are fractured in Cambodia. It is not uncommon to find families without fathers. Mothers tell familiar stories that their husbands left them for another wife in another village. Gambling and domestic violence often plague families.

## *Drugs*

Cambodia faces narcotics-related corruption. Cambodia is a large producer of marijuana for the international

market. Cambodia is vulnerable to money laundering due to its cash-based economy and porous borders.

Many young Cambodians turn to street drugs to deal with stress. Their lack of money means they either buy *yama* (dangerous, low quality methamphetamines) or sniff glue. These drugs are addictive and once one begins using there is little help available for one to kick the addiction.

## *Religious freedom*

Buddhism is the national religion of Cambodia. The Cambodian constitution declares religious freedom for its citizens. However, it also states that to be Cambodian is to be Buddhist. The Khmer are not forbidden to convert to other religions, but social pressures are an obstacle to conversion at a local level. In some rural settings, villagers blame Christians for

bad luck and unfavorable weather conditions. Families often feel rejected when a family member becomes a believer.



## Asia's Burgeoning Buddhist Billion

As “the Church is bigger than you think,” so “the Buddhist world is larger than you think.” Buddhism significantly influences more than one billion people worldwide. Most live in Asia, though its growth is escalating in the West too. This religious philosophy affects the “Buddhist billion” in their daily practice of life. The forces driving it, consciously and sub-consciously, are karma, reincarnation, the endless wheel of life, a belief that all is in suffering, and that only one’s own human efforts can overcome it. Followers try to reach nirvana by keeping the Eight-fold Path and by producing counter-karmic good works and massive merit. Christ’s offer of salvation by grace through faith in His sacrificial substitution is largely foreign and unknown to millions of Buddhists.

## Variety of Expressions

Among Planet Earth’s population, hundreds of different forms of Buddhism are found on all continents in a multitude of variegated expressions: Tibetan Buddhist Lamas chanting in the high Himalayan Plateau, Dai and Tai-Lu minorities avidly holding to Buddhist traditions in Yunnan, Khmer farmers eking out an existence in the fields for their families in Cambodia, Han grandparents in China teaching their grandchildren how to worship before Buddhist images, Chinese youth offering incense jos-sticks at temple shrines, Thai Isaan taxi drivers battling to survive in the urban jungles of Bangkok,

over 150 million practicing Falun Gong Buddhism in China, and the majority of dominant Bama people in Myanmar (Burma) giving food daily to the monks are current examples of the pervasive spread of Buddhism. Like mushrooms sprouting after a storm, new Buddhist Cults continue to arise in Japan, Vietnam and elsewhere

throughout East Asia.

## World-wide Distribution

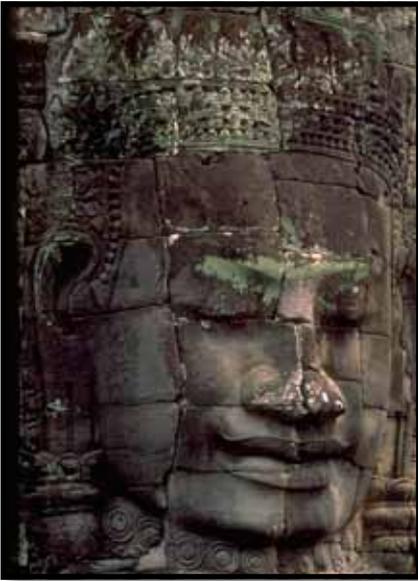
Asia is the focus of Buddhism. Centuries ago, many of Asia’s current Islamic peoples such as Indonesians, Malays, Afghanis and Uighers were formerly Buddhists.

Buddhism is prevalent on all continents. In Western nations today it has become quite popular and appealing. Hollywood actors, talk show hosts and even some politicians promote it. America has over ten million “night-stand Buddhists,” whose private and individual practice is independent of the saffron robed monks. In modern day Australia, according to Professor Philip

Johnson, “Buddhism is now the second largest faith.”

Theravada Buddhism (the narrow way) is found primarily in Southeast Asia (including Cambodia) and Sri Lanka, totaling 250 million. Mahayana Buddhism (the broader vehicle) spreads its cloak widely over 950 million from Siberia, Mongolia, Japan, Korea, and across China. In these latter three nations, Pure Land Buddhism is popularly followed. Disciples repeatedly call on the name of Amida, through mantras, expressing efforts of faith, hoping to reach the Western Paradise at death.





Wherever the Diaspora of Cambodians, Chinese, Japanese or Koreans have scattered them across the globe, there the elements of Buddhism are still evident, whether in South America or South Africa, Europe or Canada.

national, racial, and religious identity with Buddhism. This is one of the strongest barriers to conversion. “To be Thai, Cambodian, Dai, Tibetan, Lao, Burmese, Japanese . . . is to be Buddhist.”

Like a sponge soaking up water, Buddhism permeates the thinking, philosophy, education, beliefs and worldview of Folk Buddhists in subtle but unmistakable ways. It influences and affects all of life and accompanying daily practices. China’s traditional religions are heavily spiced with Buddhism. Beneath all, fundamental Humanism controls life, and focuses the adherents’ energies on self-reliant deliverance apart from any God or spiritual power. Buddhism thereby becomes the dominant canopy covering all aspects of living. The motto is “depend only on oneself.” Karma (cause and effect) controls everything. Buddhism teaches, “Do good, and one receives good. Do evil, and one receives evil.”

### Some Theological Differences

Because of the multiple forms and diverse expressions of Buddhism, it is not always easy to define precepts precisely. While there are basic doctrines fundamental to most sects, there is also much variance among the many syncretistic forms of Folk Buddhism. Thus belief systems among Buddhists tend to have some key primary colors in common, but many shades of the rainbow’s hues also exist, differing slightly from group to group.

### Eclectic Nature: The Blender Effect

Down through the ages, Buddhism has encouraged a placid approach of assimilation, which made the spread of this religion quite eclectic and even elastic. So today Buddhism has a vast plethora of fascinating faces throughout the earth. This common stance of acceptance and syncretism has produced many different cultural expressions of Buddhism mixed with local beliefs and adaptations of other religions. So it is not uncommon to find a variety of seemingly conflicting beliefs incorporated into the lives and practices of many Buddhists. This blended mixture is called Folk Buddhism. In Cambodia this folk religion incorporates guardian and nature spirits (*Neak Ta*), ancestral spirits, Brahman deities (*devada*), ghosts (*khmaoch, priey*) and other animistic practices.

Western academicians tend to analyze and define religions by categories - what part of it is Buddhism, or animism, or shamanism or ancestral cult and so on. But in his extensive studies of Buddhism in Asia, Dr. S.J. Tambiah of Cambridge pointed out that the Northeast Thai person sees his/her mixture of animistic spirits, ancestral cult, Brahmanic rites, and Buddhist beliefs and practices as one integrated whole - Buddhism, their own kind of Folk Buddhism.

### Total Saturation and Self Reliance

Buddhism’s vacuum cleaner effect sucks up indigenous religions under its broad umbrella. Thus, it dominates and integrates local belief structures but does not dislodge nor destroy them. This amalgamation of many religious elements under Buddhism constitutes a strong



## ***God Ignored: Spirits Feared***

Basic Buddhism is atheistic, rejecting gods and supernatural powers as inconsequential, though multitudes of Folk Buddhists fear the spirits (both ancestral and nature ones). They are often petrified by the thought of going to any one of eight Buddhist hells, and are afraid of disgruntled ancestral spirits, who plague and bother them frequently. The basis of Buddhism is Monism, in the sense of the unity of the nature of all things. Humans, like everything else, are seen as insignificant parts of one big whole. A personal transcendent God of creation is totally non-existent in Buddhism. A concept of any kind of Higher Being, either initiating or controlling the universes, is incongruous, impossible and unacceptable to Buddhist thinking.

## ***No Personal Soul Identity***

Although there is a debate among some Buddhist scholars, a fundamental view of the Buddha was that humans are not living souls, do not have an entity Christians call soul or spirit, nor do they therefore have individual personality that continues on after death. At death five aggregates or "*khandhas*" (matter, sensation, perception, mental formation, and consciousness) dissipate. That's all! Accumulated karma is the only thing that seems to be recycled into the next rebirth. This

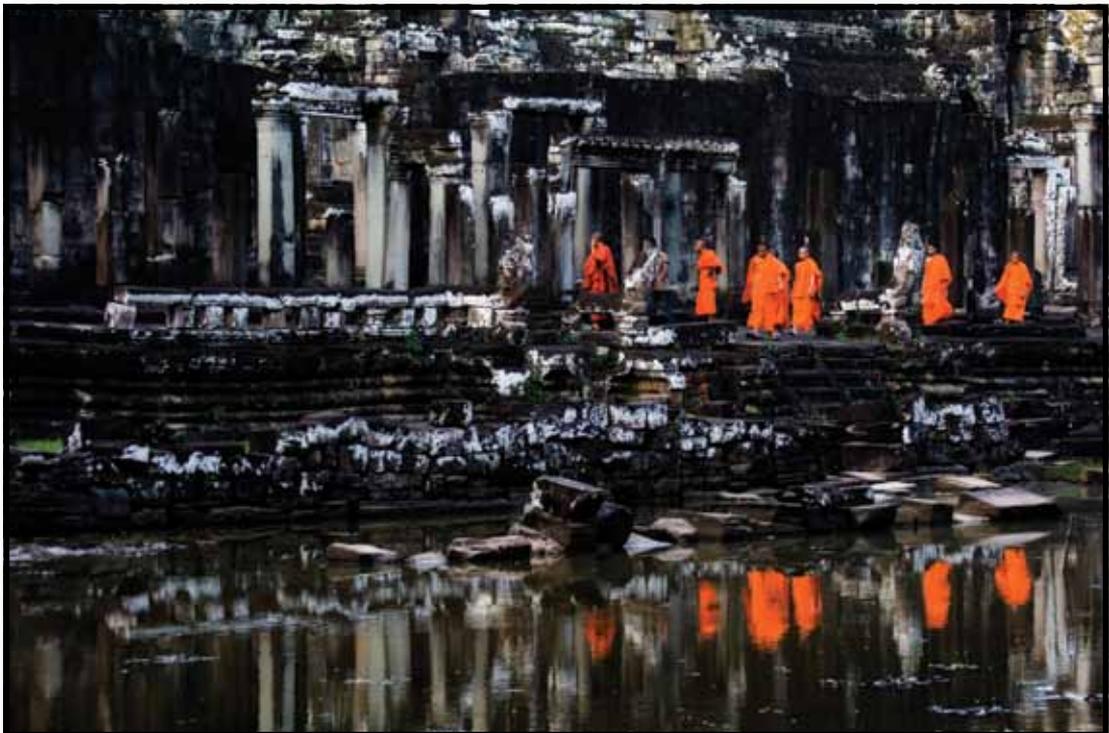
differs from Hindu transmigration of the soul, and also Christian eternal life.

## ***Impermanence and Emptiness***

In Buddhist understanding all is transitory, changing, and illusionary - so nothing is permanent - except suffering! This universal suffering is caused by or produced through *kiletsa* (craving and lust) and *rakha tanha* (passion and desire - both good and bad). For Buddhists, eliminating all desire and passion is believed to be the solution for breaking free of the endless cycles of rebirth.

## ***Release by Extinction***

Nirvana is a state of escape from all impermanence and suffering, achieved purely by one's own self-efforts to overcome the accumulated karmic consequences of multiple millions of past rebirths. Nirvana is like an unblissful state of bliss, an unconscious state of consciousness, a non-existing existence, like the smoke after a candle has been blown out. The Christian Heaven with its total lack of suffering, curses, tears, death and any marriage, differs from Nirvana and is loftier than the sensual pleasures of the various Buddhist heavens, the abodes of sensual gods and devas.





### ***Equality or Some Discrimination***

The Buddha rightly rejected the system of the castes of Hinduism, but still maintains one, a “sexist” caste - as females (particularly in the Theravada School) can never obtain the nirvanic state except after being reborn as males. Hence normally Buddhist nuns are not empowered or entitled. The Christian Bible teaches that in Christ there is no difference between male or female in His sight (Galatians 3:28). Unfortunately human practice often betrayed that truth and ideal, even in the Church.

### ***Salvation Possible or Not***

In Theravada Buddhism only priests have any possibility of attaining Nirvana, through rigidly keeping 227 or more laws perfectly. Mahayana Buddhists recognized this as being too strict. They liberalized teachings so their “larger vehicle” made provision for the average person to progress toward Nirvana. Primarily this was by the help of Bodhisattvas - high level priests or important persons, who delay their own entry into Nirvana in order to assist others along the way. By comparison, Jesus Christ, as God’s Son, provided redemption for all tribes and peoples through His unique sacrifice on Calvary. In Christ Jesus saving, eternal life is available to all who repent, trust, and obey Him.

### **A Global Religion and the Church's Response**

Today, in its variegated forms, Buddhist influence saturates Asian peoples and envelopes all continents. After 1,000 years Buddhism declined in India when Hinduism reabsorbed it. However, in the last half century, a New Buddhist revival movement among Untouchable Caste Hindus swept up to ten million Dalit converts into that religion. Buddhism today influences more than one billion people around the globe, from Siberia to Indonesia, and from west India to Japan.

Significantly, this concentration encompasses the eastern half of the 10/40 Window where almost one half of humanity lives and where the majority of unreached peoples are found. Some form of Buddhism affects most of these peoples. Thus, the challenge to the Church of the 21st century is to sacrifice through love, perseverance, and purity of life in order to reach this large remaining Buddhist bloc. Here is the call to pray, go, send, evangelize, and plant churches among all Buddhist peoples of Asia. Join us in the vast opportunities to make a difference by loving and serving millions of Buddhist peoples and by sharing Christ’s Gospel with them in this 21st century. Begin blessing these nations by interceding for Cambodia and its 95% Buddhist millions.

## A Comprehensive Definition

In this article animism is defined as the belief that personal spiritual beings and impersonal spiritual forces have power over human affairs and that humans, consequently, must discover what beings and forces are impacting them in order to determine future action and, frequently, to manipulate their power. What are the cultural ramifications of this definition? What are the implications of it for the Western missionary evangelizing in animistic contexts?

## Animism: A Belief System

Animism is a belief system through which reality is perceived. This belief system assumes that the seen world is related to the unseen: An interaction exists between the divine and the human, the sacred and the profane, the holy and the secular. Personal spiritual beings and impersonal spiritual forces are everywhere thought to be shaping what happens in the animists' world. Animists live in continual fear of these powers.

A Western secularist would likely look at these beliefs with amazement and ridicule. "How can these unseen powers be real?" he reasons. "How can anyone really believe that spirits and forces should be feared, manipulated, or worshipped?" To him, belief in spiritual beings and forces does not seem "logical." However, the animist begins with different presuppositions. He assumes that spirits and forces shape reality and interprets daily events to fit this model of reality. While a Westerner generally interprets reality through a secular worldview believing no spiritual powers impact the living, the animist presupposes that all of life is being controlled by spiritual beings and forces. The animistic model is as logical as the secular model, if one accepts the basic assumptions of spirits and forces shaping reality.

## Animism: A Belief in Beings and Forces

Beings and forces are typically interacting phenomena in animistic contexts. Beings are personal spirits which include God, gods, ancestors, ghosts, totemic spirits, nature spirits, angels, demons, and Satan. Forces are impersonal powers. They include the power behind the use of magic, astrology, witchcraft, evil eye, and other related phenomena. Some cultures have broad, descriptive terms for this power, like *mana* in Melanesia, *toh* in parts of Indonesia, and *baraka* in the Muslim world. Since personal spiritual beings and impersonal spiritual forces interact in animistic cultures, they must be studied in relation to one another.

## Animism: Power to Control Human Affairs

The essence of Animism is power-power of the ancestor to control those of his lineage, power of an evil eye to kill a newborn or ruin a harvest, power of planets to affect earthly destiny, power of the demonic to possess a spiritist, power of magic to control human events, power of impersonal forces to heal a child or make a person wealthy.

Animism's "foundation is based in power and in power personalities" (Kamps 1986, 5).

The secret use of spiritual power by an individual is almost always malevolent-meant to cause suffering. When used publicly by recognized leaders of a society, spiritual power is often benevolent, discovering who has brought evil upon the society. Whether spiritual power is used negatively or positively, its existence is never questioned by the animist.

## Animism: Discovering What Beings and Forces are Impacting Life

The animist lives in fear of the spiritual powers. He may appease the spirits before and after harvest, seek the spirit world to insure success before the marriage of his daughter, determine how the planets and stars will be arranged on the day of an important election, or dress up his male child like a girl so that he might not



be injured by the evil eye of a jealous neighbor. The animist is overwhelmed by the many powers that might bring evil upon his life. He believes that only by use of the powers can he be successful. He desperately searches for information to ward off evil and manipulate the powers to do his bidding.

He is never completely confident that all powers are lined up on his side. When confronted with unexpected evil, he typically asks questions like "Who has caused this affliction to come upon me? Why has it happened to my family at this particular time? What power is troubling me? Has this been caused by an ancestor? By some spirit? By witchcraft? By the evil eye? By the stars? Who can help me discover the cause and source of this evil?"

Benevolent animistic specialists are consulted to determine the cause of the affliction and prescribe remedies. It might be determined that malevolent practitioners have brought the evil upon those afflicted. Sometimes malevolent practitioners, despised and feared in every animistic society, are consulted to defeat enemies.

Each animistic society uses numerous methods to determine which powers are impacting their lives. Some of these methodologies of divination include omens, astrology, technique, ordeals, relying on the dead, dreams and possession.

### **Animism: Determining Future Action and Manipulating Power**

Animists seek to discover what beings and forces are impacting them in order to determine future action and, if necessary, manipulate powers that stand in the way of health, wealth and security. They believe that they can only determine future courses of action by discovering what is happening in the spiritual realms. They may determine that the time is favorable to invest in the stock market, sign a treaty, plant crops in the fields or marry a wife. Ominous signs might lead them to postpone action or to attempt to manipulate the powers.

Much of Animism is based on manipulation. The animist does not seek a personal relationship with the powers. He rather seeks to manipulate spiritual beings and forces to do his will. He might manipulate spiritual powers in order to determine the source of calamity, to predict the future, to curse those who are in opposition or to determine a fortuitous time to invest in the stock market.

People of God, in contrast to animists, believe that humans should neither divine spiritual causation nor attempt to manipulate the divine. They must rely on God and pay homage to him. The prophets exhorted Judah to "wait on the Lord" and "put trust in him" (Isa. 8:17). But instead of "waiting on the Lord," they desired immediate knowledge and power and consequently began to consult the mediums and the wizards. Isaiah rightly asked Israel: "Should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?" (Isa. 8:19). They should have relied on the "law and testimony" in order to receive the true "light of dawn" (Isa. 8:20). Instead of relying on God, they attempted to manipulate their destiny by animistic rites.

The Judeo-Christian way is based upon personally relating to sovereign God giving to him glory and honor. Conversely, the animistic way is based on manipulating the divine to serve human needs.



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# Current Status Report

Although the first Christian contact with Cambodia was made by Portuguese Dominicans in 1555, the first evangelical missionaries didn't arrive until 1923, when two C&MA families were able to enter the country. Response to the gospel was slow, although by 1935 there were Christians ministering in 11 of Cambodia's 14 provinces. However, new believers were often persecuted. In his book, *Killing Fields, Living Fields*, Don Cormack writes, "To be a Christian in Cambodian society was to be a social pariah, misunderstood and ill-treated, a convenient scapegoat for blame and abuse."

In fact, the short history of the Cambodian Church is one of persecution and restriction. The first political opposition began in 1928, when the king prohibited proselytizing among Cambodians. Missionaries were expelled during the Second World War period, and both Catholics and Protestants were killed during the "Issarak" uprising from 1942-1952. After a relatively peaceful period during which the church grew slowly, missionaries were again forced to leave Cambodia in 1965 by the anti-American regime. It is estimated that the Evangelical Church numbered 1000 at the time.

Five years later, a new pro-American regime took power. Missionaries returned and despite the beginning of the war with the Khmer Rouge, there was freedom and growth for the church. Many turned to God. From three congregations in Phnom Penh when war broke out, there were thirty by 1975. The civil war forced over 2 million refugees into Phnom Penh and many responded to the gospel of Jesus Christ. There were perhaps as many as 10,000 believers when the city finally fell to the Khmer Rouge on 17th April 1975. Once again, the missionaries were forced into a reluctant exodus. Along with the rest of the country, the Cambodian Church suffered greatly

at the hands of the Khmer Rouge. By 1979, only a few hundred Christians of the 10,000 remained, along with just 3 pastors. Church buildings were destroyed. Bibles were burned.

Hundreds of thousands of Cambodians fled to Thailand, where they were housed in refugee camps on the border. Many Christian workers joined with the surviving Cambodian believers in witnessing in the camps and the church began to grow once more. In one large camp, Khao I Dang, a church of several thousand emerged.

Although the country was liberated from the Khmer Rouge in 1979, the Church continued to face pressure and persecution. The new government refused to allow church meetings, confiscated Bibles and kept known Christians under surveillance. This continued for a decade until the Cambodian Protestant church was formally recognized in 1990. Christian mission and relief agencies were able to enter the country and, as Cambodia's plight gradually became known to the outside world, interest soared. Today there are hundreds of organizations and denominations working in Cambodia, with mixed results.

The church has grown significantly in the last 15 years. From the small remnant that survived

the Khmer Rouge genocide, it is now estimated that there are 250,000 believers in over 2500 churches. The church is young and enthusiastic, with a natural flair for evangelism. Although written resources are scarce, there is a wealth of indigenous songs and hymns of worship.

Such rapid growth presents challenges in the areas of discipleship and leadership. The quantity may be increasing, but quality and depth still seem to be lacking. Intentional lifelong discipleship programs are rare and many of those who profess faith in Christ seem to fall away at the first sign of difficulty. Many missions have



responded to the need for leadership training, so that today there are several formal, residential Bible Schools as well as non-residential options, such as the Theological Education by Extension (TEE) program.

The presence of so many foreign missions - and the funds they bring - has led to its own set of problems. Disunity, fragmentation and competitiveness continue to affect the Church, although attempts have been made to unite under umbrella groups such as the Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia. Further strides towards unity are needed. While the needs of a developing country like Cambodia cannot be ignored, inappropriate use of foreign funding has left many churches dependent on outside help, slowing down the move towards self-sufficiency and self-governance.

Although the Church in Cambodia is growing, the challenge of reaching the unreached remains. Most of Cambodia's cities, towns and district centers now have a church. But the rural areas, where 80% of people live, still have little Christian witness. Although there are significant Christian populations among a few of Cambodia's tribal peoples, such as the Jarai, many of the other people groups have few or no believers.

| <b>Date</b> | <b>Main events</b>  |
|-------------|---|
| 1555        | Roman Catholicism first introduced by Portuguese Dominicans from Malacca  |
| 17th C.     | French Roman Catholic priests establish their church in Cambodia  |
| 1923        | Two American C&MA couples are permitted to enter Cambodia, begin Bible school in Battambang, and Bible translation (NT complete 1933, OT complete 1940) |
| 1928        | King Monivong bans evangelism and imprisons Bible school students   |
| 1945-52     | Many Catholics and some Protestants killed in anti-French Issarak uprisings   |
| 1953        | Khmer Bible is published  |
| 1965        | All American Protestant missionaries forced to leave Cambodia   |
| 1970        | C&MA missionaries return to find a Protestant church numbering about 300  |
| 1970-75     | Significant church growth in Phnom Penh and provincial centers  |
| 1975        | All missionaries leave Cambodia; total number of Christians in Cambodia is c. 10,000  |
| 1975-79     | Virtually all Christian leaders and 90% of the church die in the genocide   |
| 1979-90     | Church grows in the border camps; underground church in Cambodia numbers less than 1,000  |
| 1990        | Christianity formally recognized; Christian relief agencies and missionaries begin to enter Cambodia  |
| 1993        | New constitution enshrines freedom of religion  |
| 1994        | Protestant church numbers c. 5,000 with churches in every province  |
| 2000        | Protestant church numbers c. 40,000   |
| 2008        | Protestant church numbers c. 250,000  |

# Pray for Cambodia

## *Praying through the Gospels and Acts*

**T**he life example of Jesus and the Apostles shows us how God wants us to love, pray for and serve the Unreached Peoples. The Gospels and Acts can become our prayer guide for how to pray for these unreached peoples. We should regularly read through these books, and pray for Christians living among Unreached Peoples to have the love and power of Jesus and the faith and boldness of the Apostles. The experience of Jesus, Peter and Paul teach us that prayer is hard work. It is hard for several reasons.

First, prayer is hard because it is not selfish. When we pray, we look beyond ourselves to the desires of God and the needs of others. It often takes personal repentance and humility to be able to pray “Not my will, but Thine be done” and “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Second, prayer is hard because it is an act of faith. When we pray, we pray to the unseen God and for unseen people and places. When things are out of sight, they are often out of our minds, and out of our prayers. Faith is grasping hold of the eternal and unseen for the needs of people separate from us by space and time.

Third, prayer is hard because it is a true battle. Christians are called to love men and fight against evil spirits. When we pray for men, we pray against Satan’s spiritual army. We oppose the temptations, trials, terrorism and tricks that lead men into sin and spiritual bondage.

Fourth, prayer is hard because it costs us time. There is an unseen spiritual economy that is as real and

powerful as the business offices and brokerages of the world. When we use the authorization of Jesus name, we release transactions that can change lives around the world. But like any business worth doing, it takes time to serve people in prayer.

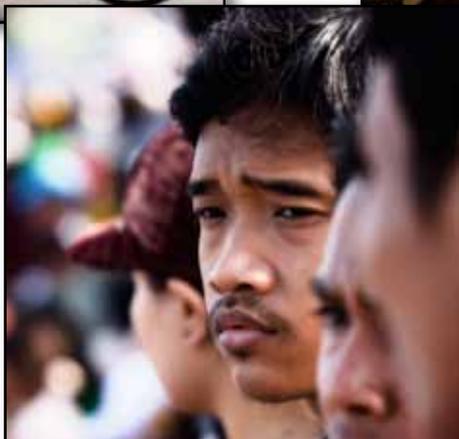
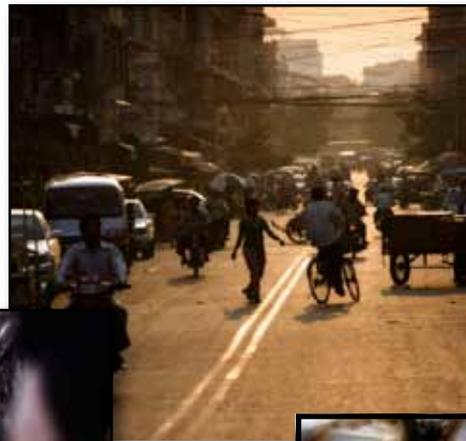
If we are serious in our commitment to love and serve the Unreached Peoples, we must make time for the hard work of prayer. Like most work, it is often easier to do with a group. However, if we wait until a group meets, we may never pray.

Use the prayer guide below as you read through and pray for the peoples in this book. Whether in a group or alone, these topics will help you listen to the Holy Spirit and recall God’s promises in Scripture.

Many believers have used the ACTS prayer reminder: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication. If you don’t know how to pray for Unreached Peoples and the workers living among them, use the GOSPELS acronym below to get started. You will also find some good verses to pray over in the appendix at the back of this book.

May God strengthen and enrich your own heart and your local ministry as you give yourself to the powerful, hard work of prayer for the nations. Pray with an open Bible and pray without ceasing!

|          |                         |   |
|----------|-------------------------|---|
| <b>G</b> | Go Good News            | Pray for workers to Go share the Good News to all peoples.<br>Rom. 10:9-17; Mat. 13:1-51; 24:14; 28:18-20; Rev. 5:9-17; 21:22-2; Acts 26:12-23  |
| <b>O</b> | Opportunities Obedience | Pray for Opportunities to share, and Obedience to God.<br>Col. 4:2-6;<br>Eph. 6:18-20; Mt. 10:1-20; Lk. 4:18,19; 1Pet. 3:15-18; Heb 13:1-21; 2Cor. 4:3-7                                |
| <b>S</b> | Spirit Servanthood      | Pray for the power, gifts & fruit of the Spirit in Servanthood.<br>Gal. 5:13-26; Eph.1:15-22; 4:3-16; 6:10-20; Acts 4:23-31; 1Pet. 4:7-11;<br>1Cor. 12:1-31; Rom. 8:1-17; Mk. 10:42-45  |
| <b>P</b> | Peace Persecution       | Pray for Peace and endurance in the midst of Persecution.<br>1Tim. 2:1-8; Jas. 3:13-18; Rom. 12:9-2; 2Th. 1:3-7; 1Pet. 2:8-18; 4:12-19;<br>Rev. 12:7-12; Jn. 15:18-16:4, 16:33; 17:5-19 |
| <b>E</b> | Encouragement Equipping | Pray for Encouragement and Equipping of the whole Body.<br>Eph. 4:2-13; Heb. 12:1-12; 1Cor. 12:12-26; 2Cor. 1:2-11; Phil. 4:4-17;<br>1Th. 3:6-13; 2Tim. 2:2-7; 4:1-8                    |
| <b>L</b> | Love Lifestyle          | Pray for God’s Love to be seen in a cross cultural Lifestyle.<br>Jn. 15:9-17; 21:15-17; 1Cor. 9:19-27; 13:1-13; Phil. 1:27-2:19; 1Th. 1:4-10;<br>Rom. 8:28-39                           |
| <b>S</b> | Sin Satan               | Pray against Sin and Satan: temptation, lies, fear, bondage.<br>Jam. 4:1-12; 1Pet. 5:6-11; 2Cor. 2:11; 10:3-5; 1Cor. 10:11-13; Job 1:6-22   |



# Brao



|                   |              |
|-------------------|--------------|
| Population        | 30,000       |
| Major Religion    | Animism      |
| Language          | Brao         |
| Percent Christian | Less than 1% |
| Bible Translation | Partial      |



## Who are the Brao?

The Brao of northeast Cambodia have dark skin and black hair, resembling the majority Khmer and Lao lowlanders of the region, although Brao are generally shorter in stature. They are one of several hilltribes inhabiting isolated villages in Ratanakiri province of northeastern Cambodia and in Attapeu province of southeastern Laos.

The Brao language is a member of the Mon-Khmer language family. Krung, Kravet, Lun and Laveh are also names for the overall Brao ethnic group. These represent mutually intelligible dialects within the group.

Older Brao often wear traditional dress. Their earlobes are stretched from wearing large elephant tusk earrings in the past. Their faces sometimes bear tattoos, also a fashion from the past. Younger people generally wear western clothing purchased in the market.

## What are their lives like?

The Brao differ from the lowland paddy rice farmers of the region. They traditionally depend heavily on the forest for their livelihood and usually grow upland dry rice using swidden agriculture methods. Cash crops like cashew and coffee provide limited income.

Rolling forested hills of red volcanic earth cover much of the Brao homeland and several major rivers traverse flat floodplains. Hunting, fishing and raising animals provide protein in their diet. Unfortunately, recent logging has deforested vast tracts of their land. Ladies are often seen walking the red dirt roads with baskets on their backs carrying produce and goods.

## What do they believe?

For centuries they have maintained animistic beliefs rather than embracing the Buddhist religion of the lowland people. The Brao live in continual fear of evil spirits. Village elders are responsible for leading village sacrifices made to spirits in the forest, streams, rocks and fields. This maintains order in the community so that the spirits are not disturbed. Village diviners determine the cause of sickness through ritual and prescribe an animal to be sacrificed to the respective spirit.

Sickness and crop failure are generally blamed on spirits. Arak and Bras are the local names for spirits requiring appeasement. Villagers raise chickens, pigs, cows and water buffalo primarily for sacrifice. Village sacrifices, weddings and funerals involve the entire village drinking large quantities of rice wine over several days.

## What are their needs?

The Brao were untouched by the gospel until 1992. Today there are around 200 believers in Cambodia in small isolated groups. However, because of government restrictions, the Brao living in Laos have not yet heard the gospel, with no known believers among them. About one third of the Bible has been translated into the Krung dialect. Other dialects of Brao have no scriptures yet. A part-time Bible school has begun, and church leader training remains a long term need.

The Brao are very poor, with little access to schooling, literacy programs and electricity. Additionally, illegal logging and land concessions encroach on traditional Brao land. Access to justice through the court system is difficult to obtain.

# Bunong



|                   |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Population        | 30,000      |
| Major Religion    | Animism     |
| Language          | Bunong      |
| Percent Christian | 3%          |
| Bible Translation | In Progress |



## Who are the Bunong?

Located in the remote mountainous northeast region of Cambodia, bordering Vietnam, Mondulkiri is the country's largest province and is home to the second largest ethnic minority population, the Bunong (or Phnong). Renowned as elephant tamers, they comprise about 30,000 of the province's estimated 43,000 residents. The Bunong language is the main language spoken in their homes and villages.

## What are their lives like?

The Bunong culture and way of life is intimately associated with the forest area in which they live. Access to land and the forests is essential to their survival. The Bunong practice labor-intensive swidden ('slash and burn') agriculture, following a 15-20 year cycle, using one site for up to five years before moving to a new location.

## What do they believe?

The Bunong practice animism; the stability of their lives depends on the satisfactory appeasement of various types of spirits. Animal sacrifice plays a vital role in the appeasement process. Weddings, funerals, periods of illness and seasonal celebrations are some of the more significant events requiring sacrifices.

In the mid 50s, having heard of minorities in Vietnam turning to Jesus, the Bunong in Cambodia asked the only operating mission agency to send missionaries. This request could not be fulfilled then, nor a second one in the mid-60s. Ten years later, the province was part of the "Ho Chi Minh trail" and the target of US bombing. Many Bunong fled to Vietnam, where they finally heard the Gospel. In 1986, about 150 Bunong believers came back to Cambodia. Today, they are 1000 strong. The first Western missionaries came in 2000.

## What are their needs?

**Food and land protection:** The Bunong experience a period of 3-5 months where the food grown in their fields runs out, so they must forage in the forest, hunt, fish or gather resin to sell. Major tracts of land have been logged, sold or otherwise removed from the traditional ownership of the Bunong community, leading to a decrease in access to life-sustaining resources.

**Literacy and education:** The majority of Bunong do not have sufficient math skills to fairly buy or sell produce at the market, and few can properly count money or use a scale. They are frequently cheated by local traders. Their ability to interact with the broader society is limited, preventing adoption of innovations and ideas from the outside. Also, as outside influences encroach with alarming speed and impact, the Bunong are ill-equipped to confront the onslaught of changes. Lack of Khmer language skills also render them at even greater risk for exploitation.

**Health care and education:** Many serious diseases have a much higher rate of prevalence in Mondulkiri than in other provinces. Also, the Bunong do not possess basic information which could allow them to treat or prevent simple diseases.

**Salvation and Scriptures:** Only Christ can deliver the Bunong out of their poverty - physically and spiritually. They need God's Spirit to fully transform their lives. The church struggles due to lack of Scriptures in the Bunong language, and also desperately needs strong teaching.

# Cham



|                   |              |
|-------------------|--------------|
| Population        | 500,000      |
| Major Religion    | Islam        |
| Language          | Cham         |
| Percent Christian | Less than 1% |
| Bible Translation | None         |



## Who are the Cham?

The Cham used to have their own kingdom called Champa in present-day south-central Vietnam. According to ancient legend, the Vietnamese king persuaded the Cham king to marry a beautiful Vietnamese woman so that she could find out how the Vietnamese could overthrow the kingdom of Champa and take their land. When she learned from the king of Champa that the secret of the kingdom's strength lay in a special tree that was in front of the palace, she complained of stomach pains and blamed them on the tree daily until the king, who could no longer bear her complaining, had the tree cut down. Shortly after the tree was cut down, the Vietnamese went to war with the Cham and took their land. The majority of the Cham fled west into present-day Cambodia.

In Cambodia today, the Cham are a minority group with a population of about half-a-million. The Cham are bilingual and speak both Khmer and Western Cham. Some Cham also speak Malay, Arabic, Vietnamese and Thai. Angkor Wat, a famous Cambodian Hindu temple depicts the ancient wars between the Cham and the Khmer and also has Chamic inscriptions on its walls.

## What are their lives like?

The Cham are skilled fishermen and have been for centuries, but recent regulations have limited the amount of fishing that can be done. So many Cham have left the river banks and headed for the jungles and mountainous regions to clear the land and do cashew, mango, tobacco, pepper and coffee farming. Many Cham are rice farmers and enjoy two harvests per year in good years. Logging used to be a lucrative pursuit for Cham in the northeast provinces, but, with rapid deforestation a growing concern, laws have

been enacted against logging and many Cham who were involved in logging have left Cambodia to find work in Thailand or Malaysia as illegal immigrants.

## What do they believe?

Originally, the Cham were Hindu, but in the year 1421, a clever Muslim trader from Malaysia went to Champa and converted the King to Islam. Shortly after that the king declared Islam to be the official religion of the Cham. Today, the majority of the Cham follow a very basic form of Malaysian Sunni Islam with Mohammed as the prophet, prayers five times a day and fasting at Ramadan. The Cham are less well-informed about Islam and more tolerant of other faiths than their Malaysian and Middle-Eastern counterparts. A small portion (about 40,000) of the Cham only have prayers once a week and incorporate the worship of spirits and animistic rites. These Cham claim that they hold to the ancient form of Islam that was held in Champa.

## What are their needs?

The first known Cham convert to Christianity came to Christ in 1999. By 2002, there were only two known believers. The Cham desperately need to hear the truth about Jesus who they think is only a prophet that came before Mohammed and they need to know that only his merit can take them to heaven. The Cham are also in need of good medical care as well as economic aid and development.

# Chinese Cambodians



|                   |                           |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Population        | 500,000                   |
| Major Religion    | Chinese Religion, Animism |
| Language          | Several Chinese Dialects  |
| Percent Christian | Less than 1%              |
| Bible Translation | Yes                       |



## Who are the Chinese Cambodians?

**C**hinese Cambodians are a group of ethnic minorities of Chinese descent living in Cambodia. There are actually 5 different ethno-linguistic groups among Chinese Cambodians which include Teochew, Cantonese, Hokkien, Hakka and Hainanese, the majority having Teochew ethnicity. These Chinese peoples began to immigrate to Cambodia as early as the 3rd century, coming in waves due to wars, political pressures and economic hardships.

Over the years many of the Chinese intermarried with the Khmer and were absorbed into Khmer culture, introducing Chinese customs and beliefs into Khmer society. But there remains a community of Chinese Cambodians who speak Khmer, yet have retained the distinctiveness of their own language and culture.

During the Democratic Kampuchea regime (1975–1979), the Khmer Rouge sought to persecute and purge the Chinese from Cambodian society. Attempting to escape extermination, many Chinese fled to neighboring Vietnam, while others tried to mix with Cambodian villagers, passing themselves off as peasants.

In 1979, the Chinese returned and settled primarily in the population centers of the country, particularly Phnom Penh.

## What are their lives like?

Nearly all Chinese Cambodians are involved in a business of one sort or another, ranging from small family-based shops to large companies. The vast majority of Chinese own retail sales shops, having converted their homes into street-side stores or selling in small market stalls. Most Chinese do business day in and day out without taking time off for rest, working from early morning to well into the evening.

However, during the Chinese New Year celebrations most Chinese will stop doing business for 3 or 4 days to celebrate with their families and travel.

Chinese food, traditional medicines, decorations and religious paraphernalia are found in abundance in Phnom Penh. Chinese noodle shops and cafés cover the city and are enjoyed by Chinese and Khmer alike.

## What do they believe?

Chinese Cambodians hold to traditional Chinese religious practices, ancestral worship, demon veneration and Theravada Buddhism. It is not uncommon to find an entire wall in their homes covered with altars to a pantheon of gods, as well as food sacrifices and incense burning in their shops. Even though religious beliefs are expressed in a variety of ways, the true god of the Chinese is money.

It is out of fear, not love, that Chinese Cambodians serve these gods, for to not offer sacrifices and burn incense to them is to invite disaster – poverty, sickness and bad luck.

## What are their needs?

Although economically more stable than average, nearly all Chinese Cambodians have not heard a clear presentation the gospel. Demonic strongholds and searching for wealth have been strong barriers, causing the good news to fall on deaf ears. Pray that God would send laborers to work specifically with these people, breaking through the spiritual, economic and linguistic barriers that have kept them isolated.

# International Community



|                   |                          |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Population        | 50,000                   |
| Major Religion    | Secular/non-religious    |
| Language          | English, French & Korean |
| Percent Christian | 25%                      |
| Bible Translation | Yes                      |



## Who are they?

Since the early 1990s, when Cambodia became more politically stable and more open to overseas aid and investment, the international community has grown rapidly. In addition to diplomatic staff and UN representatives, there are hundreds of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), consultants, missionaries and an increasing number of foreign businessmen and women. It is estimated that the international community may number as many as 50,000. Most internationals are based in Phnom Penh with other concentrations in the cities of Siem Reap and Sihanoukeville. Outside of these groups there are large numbers of French, Indians and Koreans, even though many nationalities from all over the world are represented. Many internationals work in Christian humanitarian and mission agencies.

## What are their lives like?

In the 1990s, when the UN Transitional Authority helped to facilitate the move towards peace and democracy, the soldiers serving in Cambodia received massive salaries in comparison to local people. Even today, the average member of the international community will earn more in one year than most Cambodians will earn in a lifetime. Such salaries allow a comfortable standard of living, although this affluence is offset by the challenges of living and working in Cambodia. Those working in NGOs often complain of systemic corruption. The underdeveloped health care system and lack of safe blood mean that even a minor illness or operation requires a medical evacuation. Although improving rapidly, Cambodia's infrastructure is still poor. For those working outside the major population centers, basic amenities are rare.

## What do they believe?

Unsurprisingly, the international community in Phnom Penh is made up of a diversity of nationalities, cultures, beliefs, values and occupations. There are Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and those with no religious affiliation. Many of those working in humanitarian and human rights organizations have very strong negative attitudes about Christianity and missionaries. Others are more open. The dichotomy can be quite stark. There remains a significant portion of the international community that is without faith in Jesus.

## What do they need?

Praise God for the work being done by many internationals to help the people of Cambodia. Pray that programs to help the poor and needy in Cambodia will be successful and free from corruption. Pray also that internationals will not become calloused to the poverty and suffering which surrounds them in Cambodia. At the same time, pray against burnout for internationals living and working in conditions far outside the norms in their home countries.

Most importantly, pray for those who still do not know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Pray for their eyes to be opened to the truth of the Gospel.

# Jarai



|                   |         |
|-------------------|---------|
| Population        | 20,200  |
| Major Religion    | Animism |
| Language          | Jarai   |
| Percent Christian | 7%      |
| Bible Translation | Yes     |



## Who are the Jarai?

The Jarai are a minority group living in northeastern Cambodia and the Central Highlands of Vietnam. They have inhabited these areas for thousands of years. The small Jarai community in Cambodia maintains unofficial links with 300,000 Jarai kinsmen in Vietnam.

Unlike all of the other indigenous minorities in Cambodia, the Jarai language is not related to Khmer. Rather, it is distantly related to the languages spoken in the island nations of Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

## What are their lives like?

Most Jarai engage in subsistence agriculture, growing rice and vegetables in small plots cut out from the forest. Their diet is further supplemented by hunting, fishing, and gathering wild foods from the forest. These sources are diminishing with increased population and environmental degradation.

Traditional Jarai villages are made up of twenty to sixty longhouses, partitioned into quarters for individual family units, and are not mixed with families of other language groups. Jarai society is matrilineal. Marriage is normally initiated by the bride's family, and newlyweds typically live with the bride's family. Frequent intermarriage and trade between speakers of other languages leads to a high degree of multilingualism.

## What do they believe?

Like other minority groups in the area, Jarai religious beliefs are animistic. Objects in the natural world - trees, mountains, rivers, etc. - are believed to be inhabited by spirits. People are compelled to make

sacrifices to appease the spirits in case of illness and to gain favor for good crops.

Great significance is placed upon spirits who own and protect certain territories. When traveling, animist Jarai typically offer sacrifices seeking protection and safety from the spirit governing their new location. This practice causes many Jarai to fear traveling far from their homes.

Before 1975, Christian missionaries in Vietnam planted a few churches and translated the New Testament. The church has continued to grow, spreading to Cambodia in the 1990s. Today a significant minority of Jarai people, and even entire villages are known as Christian. Although Jarai in Cambodia speak a different dialect, they are able to make some use of the Bible and the literacy materials that were produced in Vietnam in the early 1970's.

## What are their needs?

The Jarai live in the most remote part of Cambodia, cut-off from public education, modern health care, roads and communications. This is beginning to change, but along with roads and mobile phone towers come people seeking land and other resources. Difficulties in dealing with these new outsiders make the Jarai open to exploitation. Pray for the young Jarai church in Cambodia, that they will understand and apply the Scriptures, enabling them to be an effective light in their communities, affecting their culture for Christ.

# Kampuchea Krom



|                   |              |
|-------------------|--------------|
| Population        | 250,000      |
| Major Religion    | Buddhism     |
| Language          | Khmer        |
| Percent Christian | Less than 1% |
| Bible Translation | Yes          |



## Who are the Kampuchea Krom?

**K**ampuchea Krom or Khmer Krom translates literally as ‘lower Cambodians.’ They are descendants of the original Khmer inhabitants of what is now southern South Vietnam. The Khmer controlled the region until the early 1600s.

Today there are at least 8 million Khmer in Vietnam, although accurate figures are difficult to obtain. The Vietnamese government attempts to minimize the importance of the rural Khmer population by drastically lowering the numbers. More and more young Kampuchea Krom are becoming integrated into Vietnamese society as national schools teach only in Vietnamese. Khmer temple schools provide the only opportunities for learning to read and write the Khmer language. Even with these factors, there are still millions of Kampuchea Krom who conduct their daily lives using the Khmer language.

There are at least 250,000 Kampuchea Krom who have migrated from Vietnam and now live within the borders of Cambodia. Because of linguistic, political and social factors they are distinct in many ways from the wider Khmer population in Cambodia.

## What are their lives like?

Typically, the Kampuchea Krom in Vietnam are rural people who live in villages outside of the main cities. Daily life consists of subsistence farming and agriculture. Opportunities for advancement in society are limited and difficult to obtain because of Vietnamese control. Many young men seek education and opportunities as monks in the Buddhist temples.

## What do they believe?

The main religion of the Kampuchea Krom is Theravada Buddhism. There are over 560 Khmer Buddhist temples in Vietnam. Kampuchea Krom beliefs do not include a concept of a living God. The goal of their religious devotion and rituals is to obtain merit that might somehow enable them to escape the cycle of reincarnation and achieve Nirvana, a state or place of nothingness.

Theravada Buddhism is the public veneer of Kampuchea Krom religion, but animistic belief in the spirit world may have more of a hold on their daily lives. The Kampuchea Krom keep an altar outside their homes where they offer food and incense to the spirit world on a daily basis. Their actions are driven by the fear that these spirits can cause them harm if not appeased. Fortune tellers are regularly consulted at times of trouble or desire because of their perceived links to the spirit world.

## What are their needs?

The Kampuchea Krom have had very little opportunity to hear about Jesus, and for the most part they are extremely poor. The vast majority have never heard the Gospel, and many have never heard of Jesus. There are only a few thousand Christians among this vast people group. The fields are white unto harvest, and those who are hearing are also showing a hunger to know and understand more.

Pray for the Christians that they may get nourishment for their souls and walk in the power of the Holy Spirit to witness to their neighbors and friends. Pray that there may be a spreading fire among them that spreads from village to village which results in groups that multiply spontaneously.

# Khmer



|                   |            |
|-------------------|------------|
| Population        | 12,750,000 |
| Major Religion    | Buddhism   |
| Language          | Khmer      |
| Percent Christian | 1-2%       |
| Bible Translation | Yes        |



## Who are the Khmer?

The Khmer are one of the oldest population groups in Indochina, occupying of the Mekong valley and fertile plains, from modern day northeast Thailand to southern Vietnam. The Khmer language is related to many languages spoken by hilltribe peoples of Laos and Vietnam, but is very different from Thai or Lao. Khmer people constitute about 90% of Cambodia's 14.2 million people. There are also millions of Khmer still living in Thailand and Vietnam.

## What are their lives like?

The Khmer developed a highly sophisticated culture that dominated the entire Indochinese peninsula by the 10th century A.D. The flowering of Khmer culture is embodied in Angkor Wat, a temple complex built in the 12th century. Today this temple is the national symbol of Cambodia.

Years of war and brutal killings have so skewed traditional morality and trust that the family unit is suffering. The children, forced into independence too quickly, see little need for parental authority. Likewise, due to years of separation, many wives have lost trust in their husbands.

Only 20% of Cambodia is urban. Most Khmer live in raised wooden houses on family farms. Villagers share in harvest and other heavy tasks. The Khmer are primarily engaged in agricultural activities and rice is the main crop grown. The land has become increasingly devastated due to years of war, massacres, political isolation and socialist bureaucracy.

The devastating effect of the Khmer Rouge caused unprecedented suffering for Khmer people, along with the rest of Cambodian society. The effects of the tragedy are still felt in Khmer life.

## What do they believe?

During the empire of Angkor, the reigning monarch was identified with Siva, king of Hindu gods. In the 13th century, Theravada Buddhism undermined the prestige of kings and priests and eventually in 1432, the Angkor Empire fell. Theravada Buddhism remained the dominant and unchallenged faith until 1975. During Pol Pot's regime, 90% of all Buddhist monks were killed. In 1989, the Hun Sen government re-introduced Buddhism as the national religion. Today more than 94% of the population is Buddhist. Cambodian Buddhism is an easy-going faith and tolerates ancestor and spirit worship.

Christianity made little impact on the Khmer until the early 1970s when revival broke out. Church growth was phenomenal for three years but was halted by the communist takeover in 1975. Ten thousand Christians were killed during the Pol Pot regime, and less than 1,000 survived.

Freedom of religion was made a constitutional right in 1990. Since 1996, Protestant Christianity has doubled in size every two years. It is now estimated that there may be 260,000 believers among the Khmer.

## What are their needs?

Even though the Gospel has made great strides in recent years, less than 2% of Khmer people have faith in Jesus. Millions are still without Christ. Among believers, there is a great need for discipleship and leadership training as well as wisdom about how to best reach more Khmer.

# Segment Spotlight: Cambodian Diaspora

## What is the Cambodian Diaspora?

The Cambodian Diaspora is made up of those who left Cambodia starting in April 1975, when the government fell to the Khmer Rouge. Khmer began to flee the Killing Fields to find safety in refugee camps along the Thai border. This continued through the 1980s as the Vietnamese army invaded and occupied Cambodia. These displaced people sought acceptance as refugees in various countries. The United States, Australia, France and other countries became their new homes.

## What are their lives like?

Cambodians have had difficulty adapting to their new countries. The suffering they experienced under the Khmer Rouge caused many to experience post traumatic stress syndrome. Also, most Cambodian refugees had a low level of education and were farmers. Many were



settled in urban areas where they could not use their agricultural experience. As a result, many overseas Cambodians live in poverty. In the United States, Cambodians are near the bottom in education and per capita income among all immigrant groups. Even among second generation Cambodians, many drop out of high school and few attend college. Therefore, these problems are passed on from one generation to the next.

## What do they believe?

Khmer in the West have similar beliefs to those in Cambodia. They practice Theravada Buddhism mixed with animism and ancestor worship. When Cambodians arrived in the Thai refugee camps, many heard the Gospel and a

high percentage made professions of faith. This trend continued as they were sponsored by Christian churches in the West. Unfortunately, as they settled into their host countries many fell away. Over time, Buddhist temples were built in those countries which provide a place to practice their Khmer culture and traditional beliefs.

At the same time, Cambodian churches have had a significant influence. In the early 1990s, there were actually more Khmer believers in the West than in Cambodia. When a new Cambodian government was formed, many of these Christians played an

important role in bringing the Gospel back to their homeland. Today, the overseas churches continue to send money and people to support the growing Christian movement in Cambodia.

## What are their needs?

Cambodians in the West need to adapt to their new countries. The second and third generations need better educational opportunities so that their communities can emerge from the poverty which has characterized their overseas experience. Most of all they need a relationship with Jesus Christ.



## Fast Facts

**Population:**

277,000

**Major Religion:**

Buddhism, Animism

**Language:**

Khmer, language of host country

**Percent Christian:**

Less than 1%



# Segment Spotlight: Commercial Sex Workers

## Who are the Commercial Sex Workers of Cambodia?

“Desperate people do desperate things.” Many women, girls and boys are sold or step into prostitution feeling they have no other choice for their livelihood. For many, loss of virginity is the equivalent of loss of value and so once in prostitution they continue.

Parents may be approached by a person who offers to take their daughter to the capital city for needed work. In reality, this person will sell the girl to a brothel where she cannot escape.

Some enter prostitution voluntarily. If a girl is raped, she may feel (or be told) that she has brought shame upon her family and so she leaves. Some girls with fierce family loyalty will prostitute themselves and send all the money they receive home.

For still other situations, the bottom line is greed or power.

## What are their lives like?

Once in the brothel, girls may be subjected to beatings, electrical shock, and food deprivation until they agree to sleep with customers. Their ‘homes’ are small wooden shacks with tiny cubicles containing little other than a bed. Those in lower level brothels may make one dollar per customer (if they are even allowed to keep it). They may service ten or more men per night. They are often given drugs by the brothel owners to foster addiction. They become indebted to the brothel owners due to a need for medicine and basic necessities. One man may take a girl out for a night only

to have her be gang raped by several of his friends. AIDS and other diseases are serious threats and there is often not enough income for proper treatment.

## What do they believe?

Most people follow the religion of the country, Theravada Buddhism, but few are strongly committed to its teachings. Many feel permanently stained or defiled by their activities. They believe they are valueless and their lives are like that of a dog or a rat confined in a trap - a common statement made by those caught in the web of prostitution.

## What are their needs?

Those in prostitution need to know they have value and worth as individuals. They need to be touched with God’s love and to know that Christ came to set them free—physically, emotionally and spiritually.

There is a great need for alternative income sources. Each man needs a godly transformation to see himself as a faithful lover to his wife, a protector to his daughters and a model of purity to his son. People who regard other humans as commodities need to meet justice head-on; legal and judicial systems need to have a concern for the vulnerable and be able to act on their behalf. Please pray for encouragement, protection, and favor for those who work with these precious traumatized people.



## Fast Facts

Estimated number in Cambodia:

Estimated between 51,000 and 100,000

Percent HIV positive: Approximately 28%

Average age: 30% under the age 18

Youngest age: 12 - 13



# Segment Spotlight: Factory Workers

## Who are they?

In 2006 the total number of employees in Cambodia's ever expanding garment industry was 293,600. There are over 200 garment factories in Cambodia. Most are in Phnom Penh with others in and around the port of Sihanoukville.

Nearly 90% of garment factory workers are young women aged 18-25 years old. Many come into Phnom Penh from the countryside to look for work and often send 30-50% of their salaries back to their families. The average monthly salary for a factory worker in the garment industry in 2006 was \$72.

Only 8% of women working in the garment industry have had a high school education.

## What are their lives like?

Official working hours are 8 hours per day, 6 days per week but many workers do overtime in order to supplement their salaries.

Typically, a worker in the garment industry will average 10 hours per day in the factory. Underpayment of wages has been a problem in some factories. And there are continuing problems with use of protective equipment, safety guards on machines, training, good ventilation and cleanliness.

Outside of work these young women face other problems such as inadequate accommodation and can fall victim to unscrupulous landlords. Those who are new to the city face an entirely different pace of life and often a new set of values. City life brings with it an increased threat of violence, rape and STDs.



## What do they believe?

Like most Cambodians, factory workers will be Folk Buddhists – a mixture of Theravada Buddhism, animism and ancestor worship. They will generally try to live a good life, believing that those who do good things will receive good things and those who do bad things will receive bad things. But they also live in fear of the spirits and will be sure to make the right offerings at the right times to the right spirits in order to secure protection and blessing.

However, as with many young Cambodians today, they are open to the Gospel. Finding a safe place to stay in one of the growing number of hostels run by churches and Christian organizations will often be the first step to serious consideration of the person and claims of Jesus Christ.

## What are their needs?

As well as fair and reasonable working conditions, these factory workers need safe and suitable accommodation where they can be free from the threat of violence or exploitation. But most of all these young women need Jesus Christ. Pray for those who run hostels and evangelistic programs aimed at witnessing to and discipling these young people. Also pray that many other churches in the city will respond to the challenge of reaching them.



## Fast Facts

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| <b>Number of workers:</b>                                | 293,000 |
| <b>Number of factories:</b>                              | 200+    |
| <b>Average age of workers:</b>                           | 18-25   |
| <b>Average salary:</b>                                   | \$72    |
| <b>Percent of workers without high school education:</b> | 92%     |



# Segment Spotlight: Orphans

An “orphan” in Cambodia is a child who has lost or been abandoned by one or both parents. By the end of 2003 there were an estimated 670,000 orphans, a large number of which are AIDS orphans. Most often these children are living with their mothers or are cared for by another relative. Orphans living with other relatives are often resented; the living arrangement greatly strains the family’s resources, adding more pressure to those already burdened by poverty. This can lead to malnutrition at best, but many children also encounter neglect, abuse, and emotional and psychological hurts. Some families even sell these children into brothels to help pay a family debt.

Other orphans are sent to live in the local temple grounds to be educated and looked after by the monks, who are often scarcely no more than children themselves. These young men have no training or preparation for teaching or childcare, and most are quite anxious about the responsibility.

Still other children are cared for in orphanages, some of which are care centers and some of which are set up to facilitate adoptions. Care in these centers ranges from wonderful loving care and family-like settings to low quality care and neglect, whether intentional or not.

## Pray for the orphans of Cambodia:

-to know God as their Heavenly Father, who cares for orphans and widows, who provides all things, loves them deeply, and will never abandon or abuse them

- to be able to forgive and love their fathers or others who may have abused or abandoned them; to be released from the spirit of hatred
- to break out of the cycle of poverty
- to receive skills training and quality education
- to learn the value of hard work, not unhealthy dependence or laziness
- to have access to good medical care
- to know protection or receive deliverance from sexual abuse
- to receive deliverance from trauma

## Pray for the caregivers:

- to raise the children in love
- to find the peace and hope that comes only from faith in Jesus Christ and to look to God the Creator as the provider of all good things
- to be provided with the funds needed to properly care for the children, and to be

- honest in handling those funds
- to resist the temptation for corruption
- to receive adequate training
- for faithfulness, honesty and truth to rule their lives

## Pray for Cambodia:

- for funds to reach the intended destination and for restraints to be in place to provide ethical adoptions
- that life would not be seen as cheap, that children would be valued and people would not want to get rid of their children.



## Fast Facts

Estimated number of orphans:

670,000

Common threats to orphans:

Abuse, malnutrition, human trafficking



# Segment Spotlight: Physically Disabled

## Who are they?

**T**hirty years of conflict and its aftermath have left Cambodia with one of the highest rates of disability in the world. Disability affects Cambodians of all religions, ethnicities and socio-economic levels, with the highest concentration among the poor.

Cambodia is one of the most heavily land-mined nations in the world. Even today, two people are injured or killed by landmines or unexploded ordnance daily, adding to the figure of 36,000 Cambodian amputees.

Among the poor, many become permanently disabled by untreated illnesses in infancy and childhood. The destruction of the nation's infrastructure and health services during the war means that today there are large numbers of people living with impairments from vaccine-preventable illnesses such as polio and measles. 70% of women are assisted by unskilled attendants during labor and birth injuries are also a significant cause of disability for both mothers and babies.

Stunted growth due to malnutrition is common. Also, iodine deficiency causes intellectual impairment in many rural communities.

## What beliefs affect their lives?

One popular interpretation of karma teaches that disability is caused by bad actions in previous lives. This belief can lead to discrimination against people with disabilities, making it difficult for them to become fully involved in family and community life.

The physical and attitudinal barriers which exclude children with disabilities from going to school and keep adults with disabilities from vocational training have long term consequences. Without education it is difficult for disabled adults to support themselves. They remain poor and dependent upon others, a cycle of poverty which often has a devastating effect.

While a physical or psychological impairment may be a source of frustration for the person with a disability, it is the barriers put up by society which cause the more devastating 'handicap'.

'Difficulty in the heart' (Khmer: *pibaak chet*) is often used by people with disabilities to describe the emotional distress caused by experiencing ongoing social marginalization.

## What are their needs?

Pray that as the nation's medical, health and social services are gradually rebuilt, poverty-related disabilities will become less common and the needs of people with existing disabilities will be adequately addressed.

Activities to raise awareness are having some impact in breaking down prejudices and misunderstanding about disability, but more needs to be done. Pray for Cambodian communities and churches to become increasingly inclusive of people with disabilities.



## Fast Facts

**Number of amputees:**

36,000

**Percent of children stunted by malnutrition:**

45%

**Number of women who will die in childbirth:**

One in fifty



# Segment Spotlight: Urban Poor

## Phnom Penh, a city of squatters

**P**hnom Penh is one of the most unique cities in the world. It is the only capital city in recent history whose entire population has been evicted. During four years (1975-1979) of Khmer Rouge rule, the city was empty and its infrastructure neglected.

When the population started to return in 1979, the shape and structure of the city changed completely, as most of the new residents came from rural areas. Following Pol Pot's ousting by the invading Vietnamese, people began to emerge from the jungle into an empty, dilapidated city. They camped out in empty buildings and lit open fires to cook their rice. When all the houses and flats had been occupied, newcomers built shelters wherever they could find space: along river banks, railway tracks, on streets, in the areas between buildings and on rooftops.

These collections of dwellings, as the only solution to the city's critical shortage of affordable housing for the poor, became thriving communities and home to a new generation of city-builders. During the 80s, however, the city further deteriorated due to the lack of both financial and human resources.

With the arrival of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) and their cash in 1992, the city entered a period of growth and dramatic change. Phnom Penh attracted a large number of migrants who arrived in search of economic

opportunities. Consequently, the city's population increased from 584,000 inhabitants in 1987 to more than 1 million over the following decade. This rapid growth was chaotic and disorganized. The neglected physical infrastructure still has an impact on the urban environment and living conditions of local residents.

Today, Phnom Penh is continually drawing in thousands of low income migrants who come looking for work in the city's factories, markets and construction sites. Although its growing economy depends heavily on the cheap labor

that these people provide, the city has been unable to offer them much in return by way of affordable housing or assistance and the urban poor are left to fend for themselves.

### What are their needs?

At the physical level, Cambodia's

urban poor struggle to find shelter, adequate sanitation, clean water, physical security and good medical care. Adequate work can be very difficult to find. The poor are often victimized as the wealthy and powerful pursue gains at their expense. Pray for social justice and relief from daily suffering.

Spiritually, most of the urban poor are lost in the common mixture between Buddhism and animistic beliefs and practices. The greatest need of Cambodia's urban poor is to know Jesus as Savior and Lord.



### Fast Facts

**Number of families living in slum areas:**

35,000

**Average daily salary:**

1 US\$

**Common health afflictions:**

Tuberculosis, AIDS, malnutrition

**% Urban poor families with no access to a toilet:**

40%



# Segment Spotlight: Young People

In many ways, Cambodian youth are identical to youth all over the world. They enjoy spending time with their friends and sport such as soccer and volleyball. Local games include *sey* which uses a kicking toy with feathers on top (similar to a hackey sack in America). As other typical youth, they also enjoy watching television and playing video games.

Most children in the West grow up believing they have opportunities to do whatever they want to do as long as they put their mind to it. Opportunity and freedom nurture western youth to follow their dreams and attempt big things. This concept is virtually non-existent among Cambodian youth.

Over half the population of Cambodia is under twenty-one. Cambodian youth grow up in a country that is full of corruption, deceit, ulterior motives and few opportunities. Instead of thinking about the possibilities of the future, many youth are more concerned with how they will find food for the day.

Most youth in Cambodia are reared in fractured families. Some people expect men to be unfaithful in marriage. In fact, some men father families in numerous villages. In addition to unstable homes because of infidelity, youth are being raised by parents who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. Forty percent of all young Cambodians suffer from stress disorders caused by growing up in such a fractured society.

Education is poor in Cambodia and relatively few youth are able to earn a high school diploma. However, young people recognize that in order to find

jobs and opportunities in Cambodia they must be able to speak English. Young people flock to language centers in hopes of learning the English language so that they can have access to jobs.

Youth seek escape in many ways. Some young people become extra motivated to produce financially and educationally. Other young people turn to gambling, computer games or drugs. The lack of available jobs does not encourage creativity and hopefulness among the youth.

Cambodians consider someone who

is not and never has been married to be a youth. Age does not necessarily determine youth in the Khmer culture. Cambodians expect youth to act childish and irresponsibly. Khmer do not expect youth to handle adult responsibilities until they are married.

Pray that the youth find hope. The economic, social, educational and spiritual condition of the country saps the hope of many young people. Hope exists only in Jesus Christ. Pray down the spiritual walls of darkness which hinder them from investigating truth claims other than the traditional teachings.

Pray that youth would have access to good medical care.

Pray that the love of Christ exhibited by churches in Cambodia would draw youth to Christ.

Pray that youth would find peace in Jesus and in the community of believers that does not exist in the culture.



## Fast Facts

**% of Total Population:**

>50%

**Top Concern for Many Youth:**

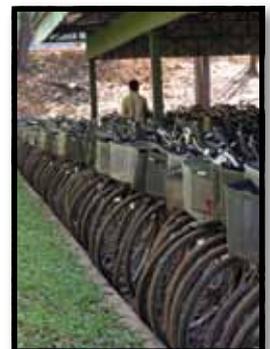
Where they will get their next meal

**Top Educational Priority for Many:**

Learning English

**Rite of Passage to Move from Youth to Adult:**

Marriage



# Khmer Keh



|                   |           |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Population        | 5,222     |
| Major Religion    | Animism   |
| Language          | Khmer Keh |
| Percent Christian | 1%        |
| Bible Translation | Yes       |



## Who are the Khmer Keh?

The Khmer Keh are a minority group of Khmer people living in 8 villages in the northeastern part of Cambodia. Legend tells that hundreds of years ago a crocodile caught the daughter of the king. The citizens went after the crocodile, but could not catch it. Because they were afraid to go back, they settled in different villages. They were called Khmer Khac which later changed to Khmer Keh. Some also went to the Thai border. The Khmer there are northern Khmer, or Khmer Surin.

They speak their own dialect of Khmer, which is mixed with Lao and very similar to Khmer Surin. Apart from their dialect and darker skin there is little difference from other Khmer. They relate and intermarry with the rest of the population.

## What are their lives like?

Most of the Khmer Keh are subsistence rice farmers. Some people raise chickens or pigs and they also catch fish and frogs. There is no tradition of growing vegetables or fruit. There is great dependence on food that grows naturally in the forest. Change is slowly coming through a development program encouraging vegetable gardens.

Their wooden houses are built on stilts, with low roofs, like the Lao houses, traditionally made of straw, now mostly with iron. The women usually dress with a sarong and a shirt or blouse, men with trousers or a *kroma*. They used to weave and make their own cloth, but now they buy all in the district capital. Some now also have motorbikes and even mobile phones.

There are schools in their villages, but some children cannot go to school because of distance or family work needs. Education is very basic. Reading is rather difficult for them. The girls

are married at the age of 15 to 17 years or even younger. If a girl is over twenty, nobody wants to marry her any more.

## What do they believe?

The Khmer Keh are mostly animistic with Buddhist influence. Once a year, there is a ceremony where the spirit medium performs special dances to receive the spirits. The followers come to offer things like eggs, chicken, alcohol, money, *kroma* or material for a skirt. When they are sick they either go to the medium, who will tell them the cause of the sickness and what they should offer, or they go to the *Kru Khmer* (traditional healer).

Young people today often do not have such a strong belief in these spirits as their ancestors.

## What are their needs?

The Khmer Keh are very dependent on rice planting for survival. Those who do not get enough harvest to feed their families have to borrow rice at high interest rates.

There has not been much exposure to the outside world, but the district is beginning to open up as accessibility gets better. This type of outside contact is new and the Khmer Keh are very vulnerable to any kind of influence. In some villages there are groups of Christians, but they are still very young in their faith. The leaders are simple people with servant hearts, but have only very basic education and not much training. Pray that the believers can grow and mature in their faith and understanding of the Word of God. They also need more teaching and training.

# Kraol



|                   |         |
|-------------------|---------|
| Population        | 3,000   |
| Major Religion    | Animism |
| Language          | Kraol   |
| Percent Christian | 0%      |
| Bible Translation | None    |



## Who are the Kraol?

The Kraol people live on the border of Kracheh and Mondolkiri provinces. They number nearly 3,000, with most living in Kracheh. They live primarily along the banks of the Krieng River. They suffered greatly under the wars of Cambodia. At one time they were forced to adopt Khmer ways, including religion and language in an effort to “civilize” them. They were bombed during the Vietnam-American war and the Vietnamese would force them to help them carry supplies on the infamous Ho Chi Minh trail. Under the Khmer Rouge, they were heavily persecuted and forced to move into another area for growing rice. In the late 1980s the main Kraol village of Srie Chi, was burned down by the Khmer Rouge and many villagers killed. A few Bumong have married into their tribe, but they generally live among their own people and still use their own language, though most can speak Khmer fairly well.

## What are their lives like?

Most of the Kraol are rice farmers and they raise cows which are sold to Khmer every year. The cows are left to graze in the jungles during the day and the brought back into the villages at night. Since the main Kraol village was recently destroyed, they have rebuilt the village in a Khmer style complete with a Wat where a few of the young people live as monks. There is basic primary education for only grades one through three, but the teachers are usually young Khmer men from Kratie town who are not used to jungle life so there are only classes for a few days each month.

The closest neighbors to the Kraol are the Mel people. They share much of the language with the T'moan people, but have a distinct dialect. The Mel

and Kraol languages are not mutually intelligible, so they converse using the Khmer language.

## What do they believe?

While professing to be Buddhist because of political pressure, all the Kraol are animists and continue their animistic sacrifices. They hold annual sacrifices where they slaughter several water buffalo or cows to appease the spirits they fear. More regularly, for sicknesses or spells, they will offer chickens and pigs for sacrifices.

Celebration of Buddhist holidays is mixed with animistic wine-pot drinking and sacrifices to spirits. The Gospel has only recently come to the Kraol and most have still never heard.

## What are their needs?

The Kraol have only one poor dirt road which goes to their village and only a few wells dug by an organization a few years ago, for some three thousand people. Only the main village has access to any well water. Because of their remoteness everything is expensive for them including fuel for plows, canned goods and tools. The Kraol all live along the river Krieng and there are no bridges which cross this river near where they live. There are Kraol people on both sides of the river, so crossing to the other side is difficult at any time of the year. Because of their poverty, there is no market for the food they grow and little access to medical care, education or modern infrastructure.

# Kuy



|                   |                        |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| Population        | 30,000                 |
| Major Religion    | Animism, Folk Buddhism |
| Language          | Kuy                    |
| Percent Christian | Less than 1%           |
| Bible Translation | None                   |



## Who are the Kuy?

**K**uy people are found in Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. They are also known as Kui, Suai and Kamen-boran (which means ancient Khmer). In Cambodia they live primarily in the north-central part of the country, in Preah Vihear and Kampong Thom provinces. Their villages are mostly in remote areas interspersed with Khmer villages.

Early inhabitants of the area, the Kuy did not have an advanced civilization or empire like the Khmers. In the past they had a reputation as iron ore smelters and blacksmiths, but those skills seem to have been lost.

In appearance they do not differ from the Khmers. They have their own language, unwritten until recently. One folk tale is that the village elders originally wrote their language on a pig skin but then dogs ate it so their writing was lost. Kuy is in the Mon-Khmer language group and there are several dialects. Most Kuy people also speak Khmer and in some places they are losing their own language.

## What are their lives like?

The Kuy are mostly poor wet rice farmers. Farming is labor intensive, plowing with cows or water buffalo and transporting goods by oxcart. They grow few other crops, though in some areas they grow cashews. They also raise chickens, pigs and cattle. Many also gather forest products like resin, wood and traditional medicines although this is changing due rapid deforestation. Frequently, their diet consists of rice eaten with salt and chili peppers.

Kuy villagers live in houses like those of their Khmer neighbors, bamboo and thatch on stilts. Their fields are typically some distance away surrounding the village. Their dress is not different

from that of the Khmer people. They typically wear western type clothing, though women often wear a sarong. Both men and women use the Cambodian Krama (checked cotton piece of fabric) as scarves, head wear, belts, wraps for bathing and other uses.

Like most in Cambodia, the Kuy have an oral culture with high illiteracy. For most, education is only available for two or three years, but in Khmer, which contributes to their assimilation into Cambodian culture.

## What do they believe?

Their beliefs are a mixture of animist and Folk Buddhist ideas with animism being the older and more dominant belief structure. Buddhism is increasing in their areas as they assimilate more with the Khmer people. For example one large village now has a very simple wooden Buddhist temple built less than 10 years ago. Many wear strings tied around the neck, waist or wrists to ward off evil spirits. They mostly rely on traditional healers in the case of illness.

## What are their needs?

The Kuy are at the bottom of the economic heap in Cambodia. They are often looked down upon by Khmer people. The Kuy have little access to good health care. They could really benefit from health and hygiene education, better access to clean water, and improved agricultural methods.

Many have never heard of Jesus and few have had the opportunity to hear the Gospel presented in a way that makes sense to them. Pray for committed Cambodians and other believers to bring the good news to these people.

# Lao



|                   |            |
|-------------------|------------|
| Population        | ??         |
| Major Religion    | Buddhism   |
| Language          | Lao, Khmer |
| Percent Christian | ??         |
| Bible Translation | Yes        |



## Who are the Lao?

The Lao like their sister race the Thai/Tai, pushed southward from central China and took over the river valleys in the mountainous area of northern Laos and along the Mekong river as far south as Steung Treng, a northern Cambodian border province. They captured the land vacated by the retreating Cambodians, who had pushed their kingdom as far north at Vientiane, the present day capital of Laos.

In the mid 19th century, the French built major roads along the Mekong River through Cambodia to Saigon, giving access to new markets and agricultural areas.

Over a century ago, the Lao living on the islands in the Mekong where land for wet rice was limited, decided to explore to the south. Thus, the Lao settled along two rivers and today there are numerous villages where Lao is spoken. In spite of attempts to impose fines on the Lao in the 60s for using their mother tongue rather than Khmer, Lao remains their first language and the children start school often not speaking Khmer. During the Khmer Rouge years, some Lao moved back to Laos reinforcing ties with relatives living there. Since roads are improving, many travel to Laos for the big festivals.

## What are their lives like?

The Lao live mostly in wooden houses on stilts along river banks, and farm inland alongside the local population. They have herds of buffalo and cows and ox-carts bring the rice sheaves back to the villages for threshing and storing. Fishing and gardening supplement their food. They prefer glutinous rice steamed and put into baskets. The Lao are partial to frogs and snails, bamboo shoots and leaves found in the

forest. They celebrate anything with rice whisky with resulting drunkenness.

For visits to the pagodas and special festivals, the Lao like to wear traditional hand woven silks, but those in Cambodia do not weave themselves. They have a fairer skin than the Khmer and ethnic minorities. They are striving to maintain their ethnic identity.

## What do they believe?

The Lao are Theravada Buddhists and their pagodas in the bigger villages are the hubs of their social activities. Their fear of spirits keeps them in bondage, however, and their houses have altars and miniature temples where offerings are made to appease the spirits. Ancestors are also revered. They tie strings on each other's wrists at many ceremonies like weddings and farewells. These strings signify the keeping of the '*khwai*' spirits within the person for a healthy and successful life. Some festivals, like the New Year (April) and Water festival prior to harvest, go back further than Buddhism to Hindu and animistic elements.

## What are their needs?

As education becomes more available to them, they want good jobs in the cities and many young people are moving away. Parents are therefore losing their 'farm hands' and agricultural profits. Spiritually the Lao need liberation from fear of the spirits and all the traditions that go with their religious life, so that they can embrace the good news of Jesus Christ. One group of Christians in Siem Pang has been meeting for eight years; otherwise there are only scattered believers.

# Mel



|                   |         |
|-------------------|---------|
| Population        | 3,000   |
| Major Religion    | Animism |
| Language          | Mel     |
| Percent Christian | 0%      |
| Bible Translation | None    |



## Who are the Mel?

The Mel people live in the Northern Kracheh province. They number about 3,000 people in the entire tribe. They live in an area which is down river from the Kroal people along the Krieng River. The Mel mostly live on the most accessible side of the Krieng River with a simple dirt tract as their road to the main town of Kracheh some 100 km away. The Mel people are often the “middle men” for the remote jungle tribes and the Khmers who wish to buy their products. The remote tribes of the Kroal and T'moan will gather jungle products like resin and small animals and will sell it to the Mel people who in turn sell it to the Khmers for a profit. There are many comparatively wealthy people among the Mel and those who have military connections bring in Khmer loggers and traffic larger wildlife such as tigers and sun bears.

## What are their lives like?

Most of the Mel are rice farmers and they raise cows which are sold to Khmer every year. The cows are left to graze in the jungles during the day and the brought back into the villages at night. The Mel are more assimilated to the Khmer lifestyle than other more remote tribes. The new houses which are built in the Mel areas all reflect Khmer architecture and village layout, and most Mel children no longer speak Mel. There are numerous and large schools among the Mel villages as well as health centers and government offices. Some work has begun on a road into the main Mel village of “Ralouh” which when completed will bring in more and more Khmers, and increase the assimilation to the Khmer lifestyle as well as bring more development to the area.

## What do they believe?

There are a few Mel Christians in scattered villages and no organized church has been started, though work is continuing. Most Mel will claim to be Buddhist, and in the main town of Ralouh, most probably are, but in the outlying Mel villages there are few if any Buddhists. They all follow the animistic religion of their traditions.

In the main villages, when Buddhism replaced Animism, many of the outside pressures have crept in. Karaoke parlors and prostitutes are common place in the main village of Ralouh.

In the outlying villages, the Mel remain traditional animists. They hold annual sacrifices where they can slaughter several water buffalo or cows as sacrifices, and more regularly for sicknesses or spells they will offer chickens and pigs for sacrifices.

## What are their needs?

Though the Mel are in close proximity to the Kroal people, most development has taken place only among the Mel people. Probably because of their assimilation to the Khmer way of life, outsiders find it easier to work among the Mel than the Kroal. The condition of the villages are still much worse than most Khmer villages. Only the main village has access to any well water. Because of their remoteness everything is expensive for them including fuel for plows, canned goods and tools.

# Northern Khmer



|                   |                                   |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Population        | 1,250,000<br>(mainly in Thailand) |
| Major Religion    | Buddhism                          |
| Language          | Khmer                             |
| Percent Christian | Less than 1%                      |
| Bible Translation | Yes                               |



## Who are the Northern Khmer?

The Northern Khmer are mostly found in the lower northeast of Thailand, in the provinces of Buriram, Surin and Sisaket, which border Cambodia. Northern Khmer speakers are also found in villages along the Thai-Cambodian border in the Prachinburi province. They are also known as Thai-Khmer or Khmer-Surin. They number approximately 1.25 million people in Thailand with possibly 3,000 - 5,000 Christians among them. The dialect of Khmer spoken in Cambodia across the north is very similar to the dialect in Thailand, though in Thailand many Thai words are also used.

The Khmer have been in the lower northeast of present-day Thailand even longer than the Thai. There are many Khmer ruins dating from the pre-Angkor and the Angkor period in the three provinces and beyond, notably at Phanomrung (Buriram), still with concentrations of Khmer-speaking communities nearby.

A linguistic survey carried out in the 1960s discovered that Buriram province was approximately 75% Khmer-speaking, Surin 90% and Sisaket 70%. These figures may have changed since then, but the broad coverage of the language can still be found in each of the provinces.

In Thailand, many Khmer are migrant laborers, especially in the dry season, and can be found on construction sites in Bangkok and in fruit and sugar-cane plantations in other parts of the country. Many of the young people from the region are now working in factories in and around Greater Bangkok.

## What are their lives like?

The Northern Khmer are traditionally rice farmers, following the rhythm of the monsoon which can be notoriously fickle, with one village able to plant crops

while another suffers drought. They are also skilled timber-cutters and house builders, and many Khmer women weave silk and cotton cloth during the dry season. Due to lack of ground water, only small-scale agriculture is possible, apart from raising cattle or buffaloes.

Their food is distinctively Khmer with the popular, *somlor* (soup), and liberal use of *prohok*. Music is also very much part of their culture with the Khmer violin and *pleng kaurum* (Khmer folksong) at the centre of village life and celebrations. They dress much like the Thai, but with distinctive colors and patterns in their sarongs.

## What do they believe?

Outwardly they are followers of the Thai national religion of Theravada Buddhism, with a strong admixture of spirit-worship and divination which is performed by the *kruu*, who may be either a monk or a layman. The Khmer are known (and sometimes feared) within Thailand for their powers of witchcraft and sorcery. As well as Buddhist festivals, they also hold a festival to the spirits of the dead known as *Prachum Ben*. Most Khmer houses have a spirit-shelf near the house, and another inside the house with items placed there by the *khruu*.

## What are their needs?

In Thailand, the Northern Khmer come at the bottom of educational success, and alcoholism among both men and women is a major problem in many families. Their greatest need is to hear the Gospel presented in a way they can understand.

# Pearic Cluster



|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Population        | Less than 10,000                       |
| Major Religion    | Animism                                |
| Language          | Chong, Por, Samre, Saoch, Somray, Suoy |
| Percent Christian | 0%                                     |
| Bible Translation | None                                   |



## Who are the Pearic Peoples of Cambodia?

**T**here are six small people groups in Cambodia which are linguistically related: the Chong, the Por (Peur, Pear), the Samre, the Saoch, the Somray and the Suoy (Suy). These groups are both linguistically and ethnically distinct from the Khmer majority. Together they total less than 10,000, with some of the groups numbering just a few hundred. The Chong people are also found in Trat and Chantaburi Provinces in Thailand. Historically, they were early inhabitants of Cambodia and probably pre-dated the Khmers. During the Angkor period it is quite likely that some of these groups served as slaves. They were also known as cultivators and gatherers of cardamom. The Khmer Rouge severely persecuted some of these groups. Some lost their traditional lands during the decades of conflict. Presently they are scattered in pockets west of the Mekong River. Most also speak the national language, Khmer, and are becoming increasingly assimilated into Cambodian society. Many younger people from these groups now use only Khmer. In some cases only a few elderly people still speak the language. It is likely that in a generation these unwritten languages will become extinct. Information about these groups is very limited. A recent survey trip for the Chong failed to find any people from that group. Although there are historical references to them, they may no longer be present in Cambodia.

## What are their lives like?

They live in small, remote, isolated villages that are often located in heavily forested areas. Mostly they practice subsistence rice farming. Their fields are usually some distance away in the forest and every couple of years or so they will move them. They are very dependent on the monsoon rains and in

flood or drought they will face food shortages. They also grow a few vegetables and bananas, and gather forest products such as resin, firewood and charcoal. Some still live in the Cardamom mountains and collect cardamom from the forest. They mostly live in humble, short stilted, one room houses with the roofs made from leaves and walls made from leaves, bamboo and occasionally wood. They dress similarly to rural Khmers which is basically western style. Most are non-literate. Educational opportunities are quite limited and conducted in the national language, Khmer.

## What do they believe?

The Pearic people are primarily animistic. They worship Neak Ta or Arak whom they believe are powerful spirits which can harm them and require sacrifices to appease them. They often practice traditional medicine which is a mixture of spiritism and the use of medicinal plants gathered from the forest. However, most of these practices are not helpful and some are even harmful. They are very superstitious and live in great fear of the spirits. For example, those who live next to the Cardamom forest have very specific “rules” about how they must behave while collecting cardamom in the forest.

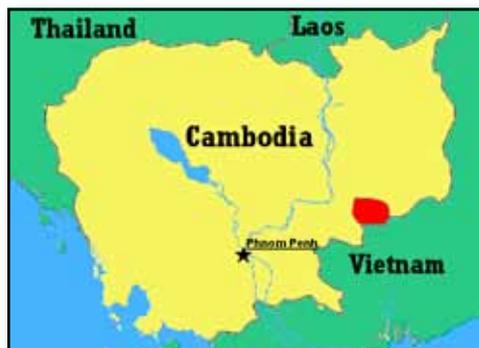
## What are their needs?

They are extremely poor and looked down upon by the Khmer majority. They lack access to education and health care. With no known believers in Cambodia, they most importantly need someone who will take them the Good News.

# Stieng



|                   |               |
|-------------------|---------------|
| Population        | 6,000         |
| Major Religion    | Animism       |
| Language          | Stieng        |
| Percent Christian | More than 15% |
| Bible Translation | None          |



## Who are the Stieng?

**T**he Stieng people live on the Vietnamese border between Memut in Kompong Cham province, Snoul in Kratie province and Kao Sema in the Mondolkiri province. There are approximately 6,000 Stieng in Cambodia, and nearly 50,000 in Vietnam. They speak two distinct dialects: Budip and Bulo.

The majority of the Stieng live near Snoul, Kratie in Cambodia. During the French colonial days, the Stieng enjoyed much autonomy in Indochina. When the post-colonial borders were drawn the minority groups' villages were not considered hence the border was drawn right through the Stieng ancestral territory. Today most Stieng have relatives on both sides of the Vietnamese-Cambodian border.

During the Vietnam war, the Stieng area was a hotbed of military activity. It was in the Stieng region where the Americans invaded and where the majority of B-52 carpet bombing was centered. Nearly every Stieng family lost multiple family members in the war between the USA and Vietnam. Under the Khmer Rouge, the Stieng were often considered American spies and again faced much harsh treatment and persecution.

On 2 December 1978 when the Khmer and Vietnamese forces invaded to topple the Khmer Rouge, the first invasion was launched in Snoul.

## What are their lives like?

Most of the Stieng do not grow rice, but rather have plantations. In these plantations black pepper, cashew nuts and durian are the main crops. They also rely heavily on hunting and wood cutting in the jungles around their homes.

Most Stieng still live in traditional houses which are made from the leaves of palm trees. The roof

structures are quite different from those of other tribes, thus their houses are easily recognizable. Because the Stieng live very close, or even inter-mingle with the Khmer, they are often indistinguishable by the untrained eye.

## What do they believe?

The Stieng, like all peoples of Cambodia are highly animistic. While some have adopted Khmer Buddhism, others retain purely animistic practices. There are approximately 1,000 Stieng Christians in Cambodia, with many thousands of Christians in Vietnam. Indeed, the Gospel entered the Stieng area in Cambodia in the late 1980s and early 1990s through Vietnamese-Stieng evangelists. Today, all the Stieng pastors became Christians through cross-border inter-tribe evangelism.

## What are their needs?

The Stieng have never been appreciated or respected. They live in close proximity to other majority groups such as the Khmer, Vietnamese and Cham and therefore most speak fluent Khmer. They still, however, seek to retain the use of their language at home. The current "land-rush" in Cambodia has cost the Stieng once again as they are forced to leave their ancestral lands, having whole sections of the jungle given to private companies. It is on this jungle that they have made their livelihood for generations. There is no education in the Stieng language, and most purely Stieng villages do not have schools or medical facilities available. Therefore, education is a primary need.

# Tampuan



|                   |              |
|-------------------|--------------|
| Population        | 32,000       |
| Major Religion    | Animism      |
| Language          | Tampuan      |
| Percent Christian | Less than 1% |
| Bible Translation | In Process   |



## Who are the Tampuan?

**T**he Tampuan are a people group who inhabit the hilly northeastern province of Ratanakiri. They occupy about 70 villages, mainly to the east of Banlung, the provincial capital. They speak their own language which is related to other groups in the area, such as Krung and Brao, as well as to Bahnar in Vietnam.

## What are their lives like?

The Tampuan are traditionally subsistence farmers, practicing swidden agriculture. They will clear a section of forest, typically about one hectare (about 2.5 acres), which they will plant with upland rice for 3-5 years before clearing a fresh field and leaving the former field to lie fallow for 15-20 years before returning to it once more. They augment their food supply by gathering tubers in the forest, raising pigs, cattle and chickens, and hunting and trapping small forest animals.

In recent years, significant changes in their lifestyle have begun with a large migration of lowland Khmer into the province. With pressures on their traditional lands and destruction of forests, many are now turning to cash crops, particularly cashews, to secure sufficient income to meet their needs caused by declining rice yields and increasing difficulty in hunting and gathering. Their traditional dwellings are also changing, with many more wooden houses replacing their traditional thatched bamboo dwellings.

Rice wine plays a significant part of their lifestyle. Each family makes several jars each year. It is consumed freely at every celebration, with drunkenness being a common problem.

## What do they believe?

The Tampuan are animistic in their religion, believing in spirits of the forest, rocks, mountains and rivers, as well as the spirits of the deceased. Animal sacrifices are still commonplace. They take place at set times of the year, such as before sowing, before harvest and when the harvest is complete, as well as at other times such as weddings, funerals or when someone is sick. The Tampuan will consult witchdoctors in order to ascertain how to deal with sicknesses (what sort of sacrifice the spirits require) and for other matters. They also believe that the spirits communicate with them in dreams to tell them what to sacrifice, to give permission to clear a section of forest or to warn them. Some still practice trials by ordeal in order to judge disputes - these involve such ordeals as pouring boiling water onto the protagonist's hands. If they are innocent they will not be harmed.

The younger generation is much less inclined to follow the animistic ways of their parents. The old rituals are being gradually abandoned.

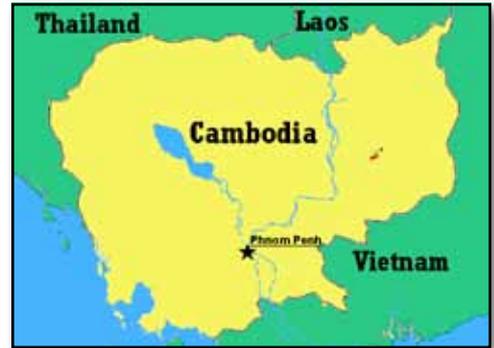
## What are their needs?

With such rapid changes and the threats to their livelihood, the Tampuan are finding their communities fragmenting and crime increasing. Health and nutrition standards remain far below national averages. Also, the Tampuan are less responsive to the Gospel than the other minority groups in the northeast. They need to be awakened to the truth of the Gospel. Of those who have believed, only a small number are playing an active role in building up the church, and few are well grounded in the truths of the Bible. A Bible translation project has recently begun.

# T'moan



|                   |               |
|-------------------|---------------|
| Population        | 700           |
| Major Religion    | Christian     |
| Language          | T'moan        |
| Percent Christian | More than 50% |
| Bible Translation | None          |



## Who are the T'moan?

**T**he T'moan people are one of the most remote tribes in all of Cambodia. They are located in Northern parts of Kratie and Mondolkiri provinces. There are approximately 650-700 T'moan people. They live in five different villages which are centered around their extended families. They are governed by the male tribal elders.

They have very little contact with Khmer and as such very few can speak Khmer, but they do have limited contact with the Mel, Kraol, Bunong and most significantly the Jarai. Their language is more closely related to the Kraol people.

There are no roads to the villages and most of their villages are not listed on any Cambodian Government map. There are no schools, health centers or government offices among any of the T'moan tribal villages.

## What are their lives like?

The T'moan people were formally semi-nomadic but stayed generally in the remote forests of the northern Kratie province. They were nomadic not because of following wildlife or moving their fields, but because of spirits which would cause problems or sicknesses in the village. When the jungle spirits were offended, they would burn the village and move to a new location to start a new village. The T'moan do not cut timber, living in bamboo houses made without nails.

The T'moan divide the responsibilities of life by gender and age. Old men work in the deep jungles looking for food and farming, women care for the young children and young men stay together in a special house in the center of the village where they will live until they find a wife to marry. During courtship, the young men try and sneak into a girl's house at

night. A young man is successful in "courtship" when the girl accepts him into the house. If he is caught he must pay a fine to the village and is often required to be married.

The T'moan live in bamboo houses on stilts which are organized in a circle or long rectangle. As they have no access to modern medical care there are many sick people and malnutrition is common. All sicknesses are handled through village "spirit doctors". Death from sickness is very common.

## What do they believe?

Until recently the T'moan were purely animistic. They are still uninfluenced by Buddhism. In 2006 the two main villages received Christ (some 400 people). Currently the T'moan are more than 50% Christian, with the other villages still to be reached.

Traditionally, being animistic and fearing the spirits, they hold annual sacrifices where they might slaughter several water buffalo or cows. For sicknesses or spells they will frequently sacrifice chickens and pigs.

## What are their needs?

Minorities in Cambodia are often treated very poorly unless their village becomes assimilated to the Khmer way of life, including religion and language. The T'moan people consider themselves the "minority of minorities". There are no roads to the villages, no schools and no access to clean water. They desire to be educated so that they may be more a part of the Cambodian society. Because of their remoteness and lack of education, outsiders often take advantage of them and their ignorance.

# Vietnamese



|                   |              |
|-------------------|--------------|
| Population        | 1,000,000    |
| Major Religion    | Buddhism     |
| Language          | Vietnamese   |
| Percent Christian | Less than 1% |
| Bible Translation | Yes          |



## Who are the Vietnamese?

**T**he Vietnamese come to Cambodia for many reasons. Some have lived here for generations. Vietnamese began migrating to Cambodia as early as the seventeenth century. In 1863, when Cambodia became a French colony, many Vietnamese were brought to Cambodia by the French to work on plantations and occupy civil servant positions. During the Lon Nol Regime (1970-1975) and Pol Pot regime (1975 -1979), many of the Vietnamese living in Cambodia were killed. Others were either repatriated or escaped to Vietnam or Thailand. During the ten year Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia from 1979 until 1989 many of the Vietnamese who had previously lived in Cambodia returned. Along with them came friends and relatives. Also, many former South Vietnamese soldiers came to Cambodia fleeing persecution from the communist government. Today, due to the high unemployment rate in Vietnam, many Vietnamese come to Cambodia looking for work.

## What are their lives like?

While many Vietnamese come to Cambodia looking for a better life, few find it. Due to Vietnam's ten year occupation of Cambodia, most Cambodians harbor a deep distrust and dislike of the Vietnamese. Most Vietnamese in Cambodia live in poverty with inadequate food and housing and no access to clean water. Many are without land, living in floating villages on the lake or rivers. They earn their living as fishermen, sellers and laborers. Diseases such as tuberculosis and AIDS are spreading among the people. They have limited access to medical care and educational systems. However, there is a growing number of middle-class Vietnamese. They own restaurants, computer shops, beauty salons or other small businesses.

Most Vietnamese maintain their own language, culture and traditions, with little integration into Khmer culture.

## What do they believe?

If asked, a majority of Vietnamese would claim to be Buddhist. However, though most Vietnamese would identify themselves as Buddhist, they are unfamiliar with the teachings and practices of Buddhism. The Vietnamese follow Mahayana Buddhism, not the Theravada Buddhism of Cambodian.

The more important religious practices of the Vietnamese center around ancestor worship and animism. Food and beverage are regularly offered to deceased relatives and other spirits. On special holidays, paper votives representing money and gold are burned and sent to the deceased ancestors. It is their belief that these spirits have the ability to influence the lives of the living, so they must be appeased. They live in constant fear that an unappeased spirit will bring misfortune upon them and their families.

## What are their needs?

The majority of the Vietnamese of Cambodia live in extreme poverty. They lack clean water, sanitation facilities, schools, basic health care and jobs. Many Vietnamese are considered stateless, nor recognized as citizens of either Cambodia or Vietnam. But their greatest need is the joy and hope that comes in knowing Christ. Many of the Vietnamese have never heard the name of Jesus. Pray that God will send harvesters to this field and open doors to the Gospel among the Vietnamese of Cambodia.

# Segment Spotlight: Vietnamese Floating Villages

## Who are they?

The Vietnamese of the floating villages migrated to the Tonle Sap Lake of Cambodia as fishermen. The majority of the families have lived in their communities for four or five generations. Despite living in Cambodia for such an extended period, most are not fluent Khmer speakers. The Vietnamese of the floating villages live and work peacefully with the Khmer people. Most continue to speak Vietnamese at home and in the neighborhood.

They are very family-loyal and community-oriented; though unrelated, younger folks address their elders as aunts, uncles, etc. The men in the village are often found sitting together, drinking hot tea and talking about fishing. Often when a mother dies in child-birth and the father cannot care for the newborn, a neighbor adopts the child.



## What are their lives like?

The Vietnamese of the floating villages move in accordance with the ebb and flow of the water. They construct their floating homes from a variety of materials: simple bamboo frame with roofs of coconut leaves, bundles of bamboo and/or emptied oil barrels. Some live on larger boats.

Traditionally fishermen, some villagers own bigger boats and employ helpers for longer trips. Most, however, go out on small paddle boats with their family members for up to three or four days. In most cases, children accompany to help paddle while adults cast nets, bait hooks on the lines, or deploy other fishing tools. To supplement their income, families

raise fish in half-submerged cages, pigs in floating pig pens, chickens and ducks over fish cages or grow vegetable on rafts. They use lake water for everything: washing, bathing, cooking and drinking. Often the lake water is polluted and contaminated with human waste.

## What do they believe?

Most of the Vietnamese of the floating villages claim to be Buddhists or ancestor worshippers. However, animistic beliefs are inter-twined. They live in fear of ghosts and spirits, believing the spirits can harm the living with sickness, disease and even death. When sick, family members seek spiritual mediums to determine which deceased relative caused the illness and make the appropriate appeasement offerings. The folk stories of the

Vietnamese describe the creator god as the Most High of all beings who possesses ultimate authority over all creation.

## What are their needs?

Life is hard for the Vietnamese of the floating villages. Over-fishing and water contamination decreases their livelihood. The thought of living on land is very scary to most, as fishing is the only skill they know well. Beside basic daily and healthcare needs, the Vietnamese of the floating villages need deliverance from a fear of spirits and deceased relatives. Their knowledge of the Most High Creator is general and limited. They need intimate knowledge of the Creator/Redeemer God.



## Fast Facts

**Population:**  
40,000

**Major Religion:**  
Buddhism and Animism

**Language:**  
Vietnamese

**Percent Christian:**  
Less than 1%

**Bible Translation:**  
Yes







Myanmar

Thailand

Laos

Cambodia

Vietnam