

The Cham of Cambodia

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Long ago, the Cham had a strong empire, called Champa, located in southern Vietnam. Now, the Western Cham live near Cambodia's major cities, including Phnom Penh. Their villages can also be found along the Mekong River. They speak Western Cham, a language that uses an old script similar to the alphabet in which many modern Indian languages are written. Today, the remaining Cham survive by farming, fishing, building boats, and light commerce. Bombing, civil war and war with the Vietnamese have brought an end to the once thriving agricultural economy. The soil is not fertile, but the plains flood every rainy season. This overflow is full of fish while it lasts, and leaves rich alluvial deposits when it recedes.

Cham villagers are extremely poor, and their settlements always appear to be temporary. Their diet of fish, rice, and vegetables is adequate, but most other necessities of life are severely lacking. The typical home has few adornments and domestic utensils.

The Cham in Cambodia have preserved some of their original traits, such as the position of authority held by the maternal uncle. However, for the most part, they are entirely integrated into the Cambodian lifestyle and many now speak Khmer (Cambodian). Cham society is matrilineal (line of descent is traced through the women). This is due to the fact that more men than women were killed between 1975 and 1979, creating a skewed sex ratio. Women now must perform the duties that once belonged to the men.

At the climax of the Champa Empire, two cultural influences predominated: the Hindu culture of India and the Islamic culture of the Malay. Consequently, both cultures with their associated religions can still be found among the Western Cham.

Primary Religion:

Islam

Disciples (Matt 28.19):

< 1%

Churches:

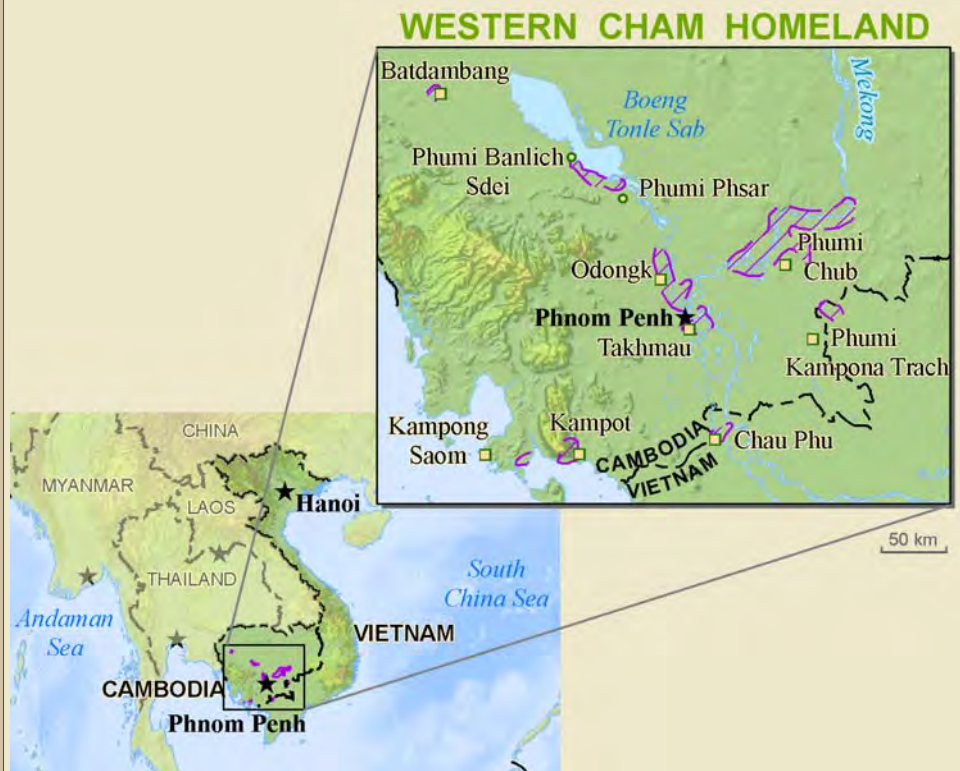
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Scripture Status (Matt 28.20):

None in Western Cham

Population (date):

288,400 (2000)



The Cham of Cambodia

Item Name	Item Note	
Have They Heard The Gospel?		Profile Summary
Call Themselves Christian (%)	<1%	
Believe In Jesus As God & Only Savior (%)	< 1%	
Prophet/Good Man, But Not God's Son (%)	88%	
Have Not Heard Who Jesus is (%)	86%	
Number Of Missionaries Working	2	
Number Of Churches	1	
Comment (Churches)	There is at least one church. There may be two.	
Is The Word Of God Translated?	There is no scripture available in Western Cham.	
Any Hinderance To Scripture Distribution?	Literacy is unknown.	
Forms Of Gospel Presentation Available (Summary)	There are none.	
What Kind Of Missionaries Are Needed?	Bible translators, and possibly a literacy program manager.	
Population All Countries		Group Description
World Population For This People	261,500	
World Population (Date)	2000	
Countries Where People Group Lives		Group Description
Country Name	Cambodia	
Geography & Environment		Group Description
Location	In Cambodia, the Cham are located throughout the country. Cham villages can be found in 21 of the 22 provinces.	
Country	Cambodia	
Longitude	E105	
Latitude	N12	
Comments (Geography & Environment)	The latitude and longitude indicate the central location for the many Cham villages.	
Language & Linguistics		Group Description
Primary Language	CHAM, WESTERN	
Alternate Language Names	CHAM	
Alternate Language Names	TJAM	
Attitude Towards Mother Tongue	Very receptive	
Second Languages	Khmer	
Comment (Second Language)	Many speak Khmer better than Cham.	
Neighboring Languages	KHMER, CENTRAL	
Active Language Programs	No	
Literacy		Group Description
Comment (Attitude to literacy)	Most would be interested.	
Literacy Attitude	Very receptive	
Active Literacy Program	No	
Publications In Vernacular	There are no publications in the MT.	
Economics		Group Description
Subsistence Type	Agriculturalists	
Subsistence Type	Fishers	
Average Annual Income	USD 300 for all Cambodia.	
Occupation	Farming, fishing and boat building.	

The Cham of Cambodia

Item Name

Income Sources

Item Note

Occupation.

Products / Crafts

Boats.

Community Development

Group Description

Diet (Quality)

Good

Shelter Description

Homes are made of split bamboo and are elevated above the ground to protect against flooding.

Infant Mortality Rate

76 per 1000 births for all Cambodia.

Life Expectancy

Male 55 years; Female 60 years (for all Cambodia).

Comment (Community Development)

In general, the Cham communities are very poor, lacking most facilities that are necessary for a good life.

Society & Culture

Group Description

Family Structures

Cham society is matrilineal.

Authority / Rule

The position of authority is held by the maternal uncle.

Cultural Change Pace

Medium

Identification With National Culture

Similar

Identification With National Culture

Integrated

Comment (Identification with National Culture)

Some villages are more integrated than others due to the loss of identity they suffered during the rule of the Khmer Rouge.

Self Image

Neutral

Comment (Self Image)

Self image has recently improved due to the government's promise of ethnic freedom.

Media

Some Cham music is still used.

Local Language Broadcasting

> 1 hour daily

History Of People Group

Long ago, the Cham had a strong empire, called Champa, located in southern Vietnam. Although Champa was always at war, it flourished until the late 1400s. In 1471, Champa was invaded and destroyed by the Vietnamese, and most freemen and aristocrats fled to Cambodia. Only recently has there been a revival of Cham national pride, spurred on by governmental promises of ethnic freedom. Cambodia thrived until 1969, when civil war between the government and the Communist Khmer Rouge threw the country into turmoil. Hundreds of thousands of Cambodians died while the Khmer Rouge ruled (1975-1979). From the beginning, the Cham were singled out as a minority group and subjected to annihilation because they practiced Islam. Captured and removed from their homes, they were forbidden to speak their native language and forced to eat pork, which is an abomination to Muslims.

Church Growth

Status of Christianity

Reached Status

Evaluated

Reached Classification

Unreached

Religion & Response

Status of Christianity

Religious Practices & Ceremonies

A special tradition is the burying of their dead twice. Immediately after death, the person is buried in a temporary grave. After a year has passed, his bones are removed and taken to a permanent place to be buried with his rings.

Attitude To Christianity

Somewhat resistant

Current Needs

Bible translation.

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Item Name

Items For Prayer

Item Note

- Pray that the missions agencies will be granted God's wisdom and favor.
- Ask the Lord to call additional long-term laborers who are willing to go to Cambodia and share Christ with the Western Cham.
- Pray that Jesus will begin to reveal Himself to the Western Cham through dreams and visions.
- Ask God to strengthen, encourage, and protect the few known Western Cham Christians.
- Pray that God will raise up qualified linguists to translate the Bible into the Western Cham language.
- Pray for God's Spirit to take authority over the spiritual principalities and powers that are keeping the Western Cham bound.
- Ask God to raise up prayer teams who will faithfully stand in the gap and intercede for these precious people.
- Ask the Lord to raise up strong local churches among the Western Cham.

Scripture

Status of Christianity

Translation Status

Definite

Available Scripture

None

Reason For Urgent Need Of Translation

There are at least 25 Christians with no Bible. Scripture in the mother tongue could encourage local evangelism.

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Literature

No

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Recordings

No

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Film/Videos

No

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Radio

No