

# Kuy



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



## Who are the Ku?

**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.