

The Abellen Ayta of Philippines



The Abellen Ayta belong to the Negrito group scattered in 15 small communities in the provinces of Zambales and Bataan northeast of Manila. Early settlers who came from the South China Sea into the costal lowlands of Luzon Island, found a group of small-boned, dark-skinned people with features similar to those of Africa’s pygmies.

More aggressive settlers have slowly pushed these docile, peace-loving Ayta people into the mountains and foothills of central Luzon, where they live off forest products and shifting their limited planting to new garden spots each year. But social upheaval and discrimination are still problems as modern life threatens their culture and traditions.

The Ayta roam the mountains for edible fruits, nuts and hunt wild animals. They are a semi-nomadic group moving from mountain to mountain. Because of this lifestyle, few of the Ayta go beyond two or three years of school. Their main food sources are banana blossoms, bamboos, root crops and local vegetables.

In the aftermath of Mt. Pinatubo’s eruption in 1991, Christian groups began consistent outreach to the Ayta-speaking people who live in the Abellen region, but few have come to the Savior. Scripture in the language they speak among themselves can offer them real hope—the God who never changes in the midst of fear and uncertainty. Ayta Abellen speakers need to understand God’s love for them in the face of ridicule and ostracism.

Primary Religion:

Animistic

Disciples (Matt 28:19):

Unknown

Churches:

Unknown

Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):

NT in progress

Population (date):

3,000 (2008)



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Have They Heard The Gospel?

Is the Word of God Translated?

Computer adaptation of a neighboring translation is being used to translate the New Testament into Ayta.

Hindrances to Scripture Use

Literacy rate is very low among the people.

How Have They Responded to the Gospel?

Church services are usually in a major language. This gives the people the false impression that the local spirits speak their language but God does not.

Other Forms of Gospel Presentations

Radio programming and Bible storytelling.

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Group Description

Literacy

Literacy rate

25%

Social and Culture

Self Image

Depressed

Comment

The Ayta are a semi-nomadic group moving from mountain to mountain. They roam the mountains for edible fruits, nuts and hunt wild animals. The eruption of the volcano Mt. Pinatubo in 1991 disrupted an already nomadic life. Because of this lifestyle, few of the Ayta are able to study beyond Grade 2. They are an animistic group, believing in omens, taboos and spirits inhabiting the land, rocks, trees and rivers. Their main food sources are banana blossoms, bamboo, root crops and local vegetables.

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Status of Christianity

Religion and Response

Comment

All kinds of sicknesses are attributed to spirit activity. Kagun 'animal sacrifice' is the ceremony of offering animals to the spirits in the hope that the sick will recover.

Current Needs

The Ambala have very low self esteem compared to the low land groups. This is partly due to the color of their skin and kinky, curly hair. The glaring difference is reflected in their language: referring to themselves as "kulot" meaning 'curly' as opposed to "unat" meaning 'straight' when referring to other non-Ayta people. This low self esteem can only be remedied when they know Jesus who does not discriminate between people