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Location: With a population approaching 20,000 people, the Cho inhabit a large area of southeast Chin State centered around Mindat Township and more than 60 surrounding villages.¹ A single Cho village is also located within Matupi District. In Chin State, the Cho area is bordered by six other Chin tribes: the Zotung and Rawtung to the north; Kaang and Daai to the west; and Daa Yindu and Ng’ga to the south. Each group has been profiled separately in this book. Outside Chin State, Cho communities are found in Pakokku District in neighboring Magway Region.

Identity: For over a century, the Cho have been recognized as a distinct ethnic group in Myanmar. During the British colonial period, they were listed as the “Chinbok” people, with a population of 19,396 in the 1931 census. Chinbok is considered a deeply offensive name, meaning

“rotten” or “stinking” Chin.² “Muun” is the name used by many other tribes to describe this group. Muun is thought to be the name of a mountain in the Hlet Long area, but that name has never been used by the people themselves. Their autonym is Cho or K’cho.

Language: The Cho language, which consists of three dialects and is used extensively in their villages, is part of the Cho-Asho branch of the Tibeto-Burman linguistic family and is related to Daai. Cho is also spoken as a second language by the Daai, Kaang, and Rawngtu tribes.

History: The Cho are renowned for their custom of tattooing the faces of girls at puberty. Legend has it that the practice started after “a Burmese king traveled to the region. He was so impressed by the women’s beauty that he kidnapped one to take as a bride. Because of this, families began to tattoo their daughters to ensure they would not

be taken away. Other tales say that the tattooing was done for beauty and, perhaps more plausibly, to differentiate the tribes in case one was kidnapped by another.”³

Customs: Although the Burmese and other ethnicities often look down on them and call them derogatory names, the Cho are proud of their traditional culture, and they zealously preserve it. In recent decades they have opened their area to outsiders so they can share their culture with them. Their women’s facial tattoos typically have “B” or “D” shapes on their cheeks, with “Y” marks on their foreheads. Because of their dramatic appearance, several articles and websites have excellent pictorial studies of the Cho.⁴ Cho houses usually have just one room, therefore “All activities take place on the floor where food is prepared and eaten. Mats are rolled out nightly for sleeping and then rolled up or stacked away during the day. Because the floor is the center of home life, it is grossly impolite to enter a house while wearing shoes. The family often dines outdoors.”⁵

Religion: At the time of the 1931 census, which returned a population of 19,316 Cho people, all of them identified as animists except 82 Buddhists. No one declared themselves to be a Christian. Now, almost a century later, the religious landscape is mixed among the Cho, with an even split between professing Christians and those who practice Buddhism and animism. Many continue to make offerings to the spirits just as their forefathers did for centuries. Shamans, try to discern direction for the community through divination and astrology, including the careful study of eggs to try to read the future.

Christianity: Approximately half of Cho people profess to be Christians today, although many are part of nominal Baptist and Catholic churches. Pentecostals have also exerted influence in the Mindat area. The full Bible (using the Roman script) and the *Jesus* film have been available in the Cho language since 2019.⁶



Population in Myanmar: 18,500 (2024)

Location: Chin State, Magway Region

Language Family: Tibeto-Burman

Main Religion: Christianity (51.0%)

Christians: 9,435 (51.0%)

OVERVIEW

Population: 18,500 in Myanmar (2024 Asia Harvest) 17,000 (2011 Ethnologue) 19,396 (1931 census)

Other Countries:

Other Names: Chinbok, Chin Mun, Chin Muun, Cho Chin, K’cho, K’cho Chin, Mindat, Mun, Muun, Ng’meen, Ng’men

Location: Chin State: Mindat and Kanpetlet townships in Mindat District; Matupi Township in Matupi District; Magway Region: Saw and Tiliin townships in Pakokku District

Language: Chin, Muun [mwq]

Dialects: 3

Scripture: Bible 2019 New Testament 1999

Jesus film: Chin, Muun

Global Recordings: Chin Mun #5067

People ID: 13866

