

FALAM CHIN

ဖလမ် င်ချင်း



Population in Myanmar:
77,000 (2024)

Location:
Chin State

Language Family:
Tibeto-Burman

Main Religion:
Christianity (95.0%)

Christians:
73,150 (95.0%)

OVERVIEW

Population:
77,000 in Myanmar (2024 Joshua Project)
28,031 (1931 census)

Other Countries:
47,000 in India
1,000 in Bangladesh
Also in Australia, United States

Other Names:
Fallam, Halam, Hallam Chin, Kwangli, Riam, Yahow

Location:
Chin State: Falam Township in Falam District

Language:
Chin, Falam [cfm]

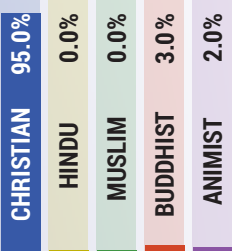
Dialects: 9

Scripture:
Bible 1991
New Testament 1951
Portions 1933

Jesus film:
Chin, Falam

Global Recordings:
Chin, Falam #19401

People ID: 16900



CFEM

Location: An estimated 77,000 Falam Chin people live in and around Falam District in western Myanmar's Chin State. The town of Falam sits at 4,500 feet (1,372 meters) above sea-level near the border with Mizoram, India. Approximately 50,000 Falam people also live in northeast India, where they are officially labeled "Halam." Most live in the state of Tripura, although others are found in Assam and Mizoram. In recent decades, thousands of Falam Chin people have successfully migrated to countries such as Australia and the United States.

Identity: In their own language, the Falam Chin traditionally called themselves "Riam," which simply means "human beings." In Myanmar, 11 tribes are linguistically linked to the Falam language. Because those tribes live in the Falam District they are automatically labeled "Falam," even though many of them are distinct groups with their own names and customs. These tribes have been profiled separately in *Operation Myanmar*.¹ Coincidentally, in India the Falam are also divided into 11

officially-recognized Scheduled Tribes, although they are not the same groups as in Myanmar. Those 11 groups will all be profiled in the upcoming *Operation India* series.²

Language: Most Falam Chin youth, and some older people, can read the Falam script. Although the Falam Chin Bible was published in 1991 and is used by many Christians, there has been a push for groups with different dialects to have their own Bible translations, as fresh spiritual life has invariably come to churches when believers have read God's Word in their heart language for the first time.

History: Although Falam is a small town with only about 10,000 people, it has played a large role in the history of Chin State. The British took control of Falam in 1892 and turned it into a major hub for their regional operations. For decades, armed clashes broke out in the area as various Chin tribes combined to resist colonial rule. Today, several key government agencies have offices in Falam, including the departments of forestry, health, agriculture, customs, and education.

Customs: In the past, the Falam Chin had many unique customs that caught the attention of the early missionaries, including one called "dancing the corpse," where the dead were held up by two bamboo poles as a circle of people danced around them.³ Falam life has been disrupted by decades of violence in the region, especially since the outbreak of the Myanmar civil war in 2021. Reports of random killings and rape have become common, with the Burmese junta even launching airstrikes against Baptist churches in Falam in 2023.⁴

Religion: The animistic beliefs practiced by the Chin in Falam for centuries is evidenced by many of their legends. Rih Dil is a small heart-shaped lake near the Indian border that Chin people believed was a corridor to the Chin heaven, a place called Pialral. All souls had to pass through the lake to reach Pialral. When the Falam people were enslaved to demons, "Every kind of sickness was ascribed to the influence of supernatural beings and evil spirits. Their animistic belief made trees, forests, streams, and rivers the abode of all kinds of deities. Christian faith has radically changed this belief, helped remove the superstitions, and transformed their way of life."⁵

Christianity: In India, it is thought the Welsh Presbyterian Mission led the first Falam man to Christ in 1925, and the New Zealand Baptist Mission commenced work among them in 1943. Momentum increased as more turned to Christ in the 1960s, and today almost all Falam Chin people are followers of Jesus Christ. It has been said: "the impact of Christianity in the socio-economic and cultural life of the Falam tribes was profound. It has brought enlightenment to the minds of common people...centered around the themes of the love of Jesus Christ, good neighborliness, tolerance, and non-violence. Christian teaching has brought radical change in their thinking and tamed the temperament of Falam Chin people."⁶ The town of Falam now serves as the headquarters of the entire Chin Baptist Convention.