



Location: With a population of approximately 3,000 people, the Hnise tribe inhabit six villages in Paletwa Township in western Myanmar's Chin State. Paletwa borders Rakhine State to the south and the countries of Bangladesh and India to the west and north, respectively. The Hnise people live near several other Chin tribes, with their territory bordered by the Mro-Khimi to the south and west; the Kanise to the north, the Daai to the east, and the Songlai to the south. Other Chin groups live slightly further away.

Identity: Although they have lived in their present location for many generations, the Hnise people have never been researched and listed as a distinct people group until now, as small tribes like this tend to be overlooked or combined with other tribes into artificially constructed ethnicities. Although they do acknowledge historic and cultural links to other Chin tribes, the Hnise retain their identity and are proud when outsiders are aware that they are a distinct people group.

Language: Although all Chin languages are part of the large Tibeto-Burman linguistic family, little is known about the Hnise language and how it relates to other varieties spoken in the area, including the similarly named Kanise vernacular spoken immediately to the north. The six villages inhabited by the Hnise people are Ta Lon Kone, Tat Chaung, Auk Chaung, Ei Wa, Lan Dan, and Te Chaung Wa.

History: Like numerous ethnic groups throughout Asia, some Chin tribes retain an ancient flood legend that has been passed down through the generations. Some also possess stories that echo the biblical account of the Tower of Babel. One narrative says: "Many centuries ago all the Chins lived in one large village, where they all spoke the same language and had the same customs. One day, at a big council, it was decided that the moon should be captured and made to shine permanently. In consequence, the construction of a tower was begun, which was to reach to the moon....

The people gradually acquired different manners, languages, and customs.... Hence the different clans and tribes varying in language and customs."¹

Customs: Marriage, especially within their tribe, has been honored among the Chin people even before they embraced Christianity, with one missionary observing: "Marriage within the clan is rigidly forbidden, but one is not completely inhibited from marrying outside the tribe. Forbidding to marry within the clan is not based on blood kinship but on clan solidarity. With some tribes, only the oldest male member of the family inherits, while with others, inheritance depends upon the youngest son."²

Religion: Historically the Hnise were spirit-worshipping animists, with Buddhist influence from the Rakhine people to the south. Whereas Christianity first spread through northern and central Chin State in the early 20th century, the message of salvation took longer to reach the Hnise area. As the Gospel gradually spread, the tribe turned to Christ en masse and have remained Christians to the present day.

Christianity: Early Christian work among many Chin tribes was dominated by the American Baptists, but in subsequent decades many other denominations have entered the region and planted churches. This has caused division in various ways. Whereas the Baptists had strictly forbidden their members to drink alcohol because of the hold it had on their communities, Catholics had no such prohibitions. In many areas growth among the Baptist churches slowed as many people joined the Catholics and continued to drink zu (rice beer) and engage in their traditional feasts. Although all but a small number of Hnise families are professing Christians today, no Scripture or other Christian video or audio resources exists in the Hnise language, and it is unclear what Bible the Hnise believers use.



Population
in Myanmar:
3,000 (2024)

Location:
Chin State

Language Family:
Tibeto-Burman

Main Religion:
Christianity (98.0%)

Christians:
2,940 (98.0%)

OVERVIEW

Population:
3,000 in Myanmar
(2024 Asia Harvest)

Other Countries:

Other Names:
Hnise Chin

Location:
Chin State: Paletwa Township
in Paletwa District

Language:
Chin, Hnise [unclassified]

Dialects: 0

Scripture:
None

Jesus film:
None

Global Recordings:
None

People ID: 22523

