



Being Chikim

Location: With a population of approximately 6,500 people, the Khuano are distributed among 13 villages in two non-contiguous areas of Tedim Township in western Myanmar’s Chin State. Two villages (Muallum and Cingpikot) are located west of Tedim, with the 11 other villages situated east of the town. The area, and almost all of Chin State, is mountainous with deep valleys split by gushing rivers. The Khuano territory is bordered by or is near many other Chin tribes, including the Teizang, Tedim, Dim, Saizang, Vangteh, and Siyin.

Identity: For most of their history the Khuano have been viewed as a subgroup or clan of the dominant Tedim Chin people, whose language is spoken by over a quarter of a million people in Myanmar. The Khuano, however, have always viewed themselves differently and wear their own

traditional dress. Recently, a linguistic study of Chin State listed Khuano as a distinct variety.¹

Language: Further research is needed to ascertain how the Khuano vernacular relates to Tedim and other Chin languages. It is part of the northern Chin branch of the Tibeto-Burman language family. Many Chin tribes have a legend to help explain why they had no script in the past. They say that long ago when the peoples of the world were given written languages, the man whose job it was to carry the script back to his people fell asleep, and “while lost in his dreams, some stray dogs came along and devoured the hide on which the language was written.”²

History: Centuries of conflict and bloodshed have afflicted the Tedim region, with a famous chief named Khanthum subduing many Chin

tribes, including the Khuano. Khanthum died in 1840 but was succeeded by his son, Zapau, who founded the village of Tedim.³ Before the British colonial era, great swathes of Chin territory were controlled by Shan princes, which led to decades of conflict. Battles continued after the British took over Burma, with some of the most intense clashes taking place in the Tedim area. The nearby Siallum Fort is a reminder of one fierce battle in 1889.

Customs: Hunting has always played a key role in Chin society due to the abundance of wild animals that inhabit the thick forests. A man was said to be “very proud when he killed a tiger, an elephant, or a vulture, and such occasions were times of great celebration. Killing an elephant was to achieve maximum masculinity. Among birds, the hornbill was the most highly prized, and the killing of it was celebrated with a ceremony which raised a man’s social status.”⁴

Religion: Although today the overwhelming majority of Khuano people are followers of Jesus Christ, a remnant still holds on to their animistic past in some remote villages, where spirit-appeasement rituals are practiced. A small number of urban Khuano have begun to identify as Buddhists in recent decades, possibly in a bid to further their careers in the civil service, education, or other government departments.

Christianity: The majority of Chin people in the Tedim area repented of their sins and converted to Christ over the last century, and today approximately nine out of every ten Khuano people are Christians. Dr. J. H. Cope and his wife, Elizabeth, arrived in Tedim in 1910 and served the Chin people for 30 years. Education was a key part of their mission strategy, and many schools were opened that taught both the Bible and general subjects to the eager children.⁵ Although portions of the Bible were first translated into Tedim Chin in 1915, more than six decades elapsed until the full Bible was finally published in 1977.



Population in Myanmar: 6,500 (2024)

Location: Chin State

Language Family: Tibeto-Burman

Main Religion: Christianity (85.0%)

Christians: 5,525 (85.0%)

OVERVIEW

Population: 6,500 in Myanmar (2024 Asia Harvest)

Other Countries:

Other Names: Khuano Chin

Location: Chin State: Tedim Township in Tedim District

Language: Chin Tedim [ctd]

Dialects: 0

Scripture: Tedim Chin Bible 1977
New Testament 1935
Portions 1915

Jesus film: Chin, Tedim

Global Recordings: Chin, Tedim #138

People ID: 22530

