



Location: Numbering 5,500 people, the small Lente tribe inhabits the four villages of Lente, Thungthil, Vomthauk, and Sumhrang in central Chin State. The Lente villages cover a tiny area just several miles in length, situated just south the town of Falam. Lente territory is surrounded on every side by larger neighboring tribes, with the Taisun and Zanniat to the north, the Khualsim to the east, and the Laizo to the west. Further south, the territory of the Lai (Hakha) Chin stretches many miles into the distance.

Identity: Numbering 1,611 people in the 1931 census which labeled them “Lyente,” the Lente have spent the next nine decades being regarded as a mere dialect group of the Falam Chin, even though they have always proudly viewed themselves as a unique community with a sense of shared history and culture. Both inside Myanmar and around the world, few people bother to understand the ethno-linguistic complexity and rich variety of the

61 tribes lumped together under the broad label of “Chin.” The name Chin itself has never been used by these groups in their own language. It is a Burmese term meaning “basket,” believed to have been applied to the dozens of tribes in today’s Chin State after an early Burmese official traveled to the region and saw women carrying baskets on their backs.

Language: A 1983 survey by the Summer Institute of Linguistics found there were 4,000 Lente speakers at the time. Although they can speak standard Falam, Lai, and other Chin varieties, the Lente vernacular was considered distinct enough for a Christian ministry to produce audio Gospel messages specifically in Lente. Lente is considered part of the Central Lai branch of the Tibeto-Burman language family.

History: Village chiefs have long played a prominent role among the Lente people. Traditionally, “the chief had political and judicial

powers, and he controlled to various degrees the daily lives of the people. Land division, disposal, and redistribution within the village boundary were his responsibilities, and the village headman collected taxes and dues for the chief. The headman was usually assisted by his councillors, the number of which was determined by the number of village houses.”¹

Customs: Lente village is renowned in western Myanmar for “supplying practically the whole of the Chin Hills with pots, especially large, glazed vessels, and has become famous for its pottery.... This hamlet does little else and every woman in the village is an artisan. While the men take no part in moulding the vessels, they help carry them to the kiln and are the sales agents in disposing them, as each will stack ten or twelve of the smaller pots in a long basket, which the peddler then carries on his back as he goes from village to village selling his wares. On the other hand, Chins form almost a continuous line trekking to Lente village to buy their own selection of pots, especially the larger ones.”²

Religion: The 1931 census revealed the strong grip that spirit worship had on the tribe, with 1,582 of the 1,611 Lente people declaring their religion as animism. The other 29 people identified as Christians. Today the situation has flipped, with almost all Lente people professing to follow Jesus Christ, while just a few animists cling to the religion of their forefathers.

Christianity: Although Gospel audio resources have been produced in their specific dialect, the Lente Christians use the Falam Chin Scriptures. After portions of the Bible were first translated in 1933, a long wait ensued before the Falam New Testament was completed in 1951, and a further generation elapsed before the full Bible was finally published in 1991. The Jesus film is also available in Falam Chin and has been instrumental in helping new and nominal believers understand the teachings and life of Christ.



Population in Myanmar: 5,500 (2024)

Location: Chin State

Language Family: Tibeto-Burman

Main Religion: Christianity (95.0%)

Christians: 5,230 (95.0%)

OVERVIEW

Population: 5,500 in Myanmar (2024 Asia Harvest) 4,000 (1983 SIL) 1,611 (1931 census)

Other Countries:

Other Names: Lente Chin, Lyente

Location: Chin State: Falam Township in Falam District

Language: Chin Falam, Lente [cfm]

Dialects: 0

Scripture: None

Jesus film: None

Global Recordings: Chin Falam: Lente #8766

People ID: 22539

