

The Rawngtu Chin of Myanmar



Rawngtu people mainly live in southern Chin State, Myanmar. The Rawngtu villages in Mindat Township are Weilong, Shitwanu, Shitwatha, Lungsum, Lungpum, Kyonnam, Kyannam, Boishi, and Leishi. They also live in the villages of Thala and Yinma in Htilin Township in Magwe Division. The Rawngtu claim some villages in Matupi Township as part of their people group as well, but the people in these villages do not seem to consider themselves Rawngtu; these villages are Phaneng, Hmuntung, Ramting, Changpyang, Vuitu, Hticong, and Yakam in Matupi Township. There are perhaps 5,000 Rawngtu in all.

The Rawngtu language varieties include Kyonnam, Weilong, Shitwanu, and Boishi. The lexical similarity between the Rawngtu villages is over 90%. Intelligibility testing (using RTT) shows that comprehension of the Kyonnam variety among the other Rawngtu varieties is quite high.

The attitudes of Rawngtu speakers in Mindat Township toward literature in the Kyonnam variety of Rawngtu seem to be positive. People from the Rawngtu villages in Mindat Township seem to accept the existing Rawngtu orthography, which is based on that variety. However, not many literature materials have been produced yet using the Rawngtu orthography.

Vitality of the Rawngtu language appears to be very strong. However, the unity of the Rawngtu language community was not very strong at the time of this survey. Community unity has been weakened by the rift between the Baptist Church and the Church of the Living God. The community will need to rebuild unity before a language development project will be able to succeed among them.

Primary Religion:

Christianity

Disciples (Matt 28:19):

99%

Churches:

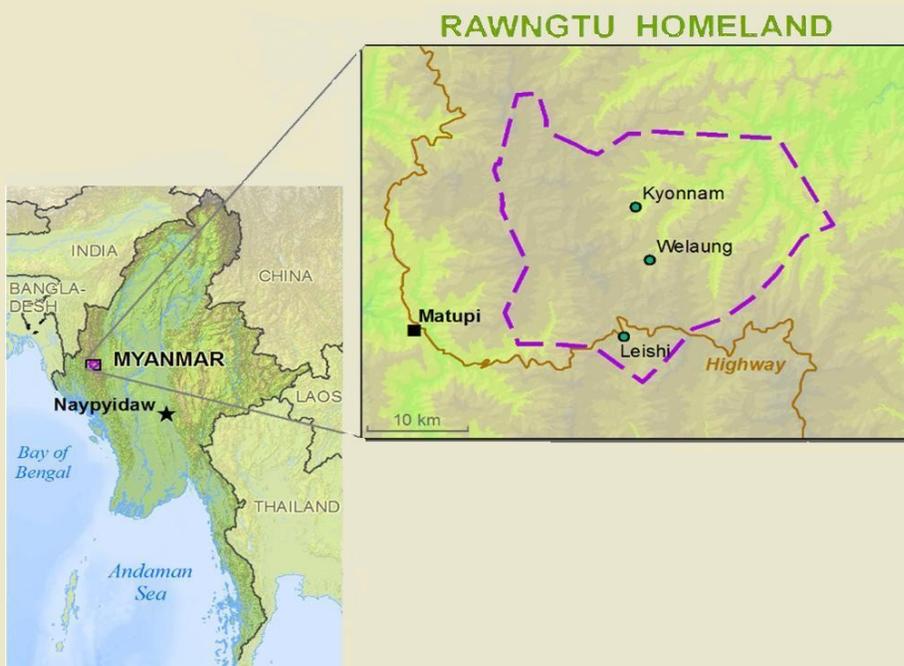
many

Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):

Portions of Scripture

Population (date):

5,000 (2007)



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Have They Heard The Gospel?

Call Themselves Christian 99%

Believe In Jesus As God And

Only Savior 99%

Believe In The Local Traditional Religion 1%

Have Not Heard Who Jesus is 0%

Attitude to Christianity Very Receptive

Attitude to Religious Change Very Receptive

Number of Churches

Comment

All the Rawngtu people of Chin State are Christians. In the past, all of the Rawngtu were Baptist. However, recently, a new denomination called the Church of the Living God has come and currently many of the Rawngtu belong to this denomination. Unfortunately, there is no unity between these two denominations.

Is The Word Of God Translated?

Not yet. The Rawngtu have a writing system for their language developed by Rev. Reng Toi in 1999 – 2000. Currently, the Rawngtu literacy office is located in Kyonnam village and the leaders are Rev. Reng Toi and Rev. David. There are songbooks, hymn books, primer books, and New Testament scripture portions (Matthew 26:6 -13 and Luke 18:9-14) currently available in the Rawngtu language. So far, the Rawngtu literature activities have been exclusively Baptist.

Other Forms Of Gospel Presentation

Available

Recordings No

Literature No

Films/videos No

Radio No

TV No

Comment

There are a wide variety of materials available in Burmese [mya] that could be used among the Rawngtu Chin, although the community's comprehension of Burmese as a whole is not very adequate.

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Any Hindrances to Scripture

Distribution?

The survey team found that there is a need for vernacular literature development for the Rawngtu people. However, the community is not completely ready for literature development due to disunity. Community unity has been weakened by the rift between the Baptist Church and the Church of the Living God. Rebuilding unity among the people will depend on the dedication of the leaders of the two churches to resolve their issues for the good of their own community. At the time of the survey, there was no collaboration between the Christian denominations regarding language development and the existing orthography. In the past, efforts for literature development seem to have enjoyed the support of the whole Rawngtu community. Later, however, literacy activities seem to have lost momentum when the denominational and community unity deteriorated. However, there are signs that unity of the Rawngtu community can be regained over time, as both church leaders and community leaders begin to realize the benefits of unity.

In order to have a successful literature development program, the Rawngtu leaders will need to work together to make their literature committee more representative, including involving members of both denominations and people from more Rawngtu villages. They will need to rebuild community unity, especially between denominations. If unresolved, the current division among the Rawngtu community will severely hamper the literature development program.

The Rawngtu people should also reach out to other villages that they want to include in the Rawngtu literature program because they consider them to be Rawngtu. For instance, the villages of Boishi and Leishi in Mindat Township do not seem to feel that they are part of the existing Rawngtu literature development efforts, even though other Rawngtu villages in Mindat Township consider them to be Rawngtu.

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Group Description

Economics

Subsistence Type

Agriculturalists

Education

Language of Instruction Early Years

Burmese

Language of Textbooks Early Years

Burmese

Language of Instruction Later Years

Burmese

Language of Textbooks Later Years

Burmese

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Status of Christianity

Religion Population

Religion 1	Ethnic religions
Adherents	1%

Religion and Response

Resistance/Receptivity	Very receptive
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Scripture

Scripture Use	
Comment	

In the Rawngtu churches, they use the Burmese [mya] Bible, and most of the service is also conducted in Burmese. The Rawngtu have very few scripture portions in their language so far..

Reason for Urgent Need of Translation	
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The survey team found that there is a need for vernacular literature development for the Rawngtu people. However, the community is not completely ready for literature development due to disunity. The Kyonnam variety appears to be the best variety for Rawngtu language development. Most of the Rawngtu people in Mindat Township seem to understand the Kyonnam variety of Rawngtu well. They also indicated that they accept the existing Rawngtu orthography, which is based on the Kyonnam variety of Rawngtu. In order to have a successful literature development program, the Rawngtu leaders will need to work together to make their literature committee more representative, including involving members of both denominations and people from more Rawngtu villages. However, before beginning translation, the Rawngtu will need to rebuild community unity, especially between denominations. If unresolved, the current division among the Rawngtu community will severely hamper the literature development program. The Rawngtu people should also reach out to other villages that they want to include in the Rawngtu literature program because they consider them to be Rawngtu. For instance, the villages of Boishi and Leishi in Mindat Township do not seem to feel that they are part of the existing Rawngtu literature development efforts, even though other Rawngtu villages in Mindat Township consider them to be Rawngtu.

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Comment

At present, however, there is not enough data to determine the extensibility of Rawngtu literature to other related groups in Chin State or to the Rungtu or Taungtha [tte] speakers in Magwe Division. It should be noted that the people from the villages of Boishi and Leishi in Mindat Township expressed that they do not feel included in the existing orthography development. The attitude of the people from the villages of Hmuntung, Ramting, Changpyang, and Hticong in Matupi Township toward the Rawngtu people in Mindat Township is also not clear. It may also be difficult to directly use the Rawngtu language materials for the Rungtu or Taungtha speakers in Magwe Division. Lexical similarity between Rawngtu and Taungtha is below 70%, which indicates that comprehension between the Rawngtu in Chin State and the Rungtu or Taungtha in Magwe Division is unlikely. The attitude of the Buddhist Rungtu speakers toward the Christian Rawngtu speakers in Chin State still needs to be studied.

Missions and Churches

Organization #1

Country of origin

Baptist Church

Myanmar

Organization #2

Country of origin

Church of The Living God

Myanmar