



The Eastern Khumi Chin of Myanmar

The term Eastern Khumi is used to describe the speech varieties of Nisay, Nideun, Lemi, Khongtu, Likhy, and Rengsa spoken in the Sami region. The Eastern Khumi people groups live in the Sami region of Paletwa Township, Chin State, Myanmar. The landscape of their area is mountainous. The village situation is quite complicated, since many of the villages in this area are mixed, with several people groups living together. However, some villages have only one group living in them.

The Eastern Khumi people speak related dialects and can understand each other's dialects well. The groups in this Eastern Khumi region generally understand one another's languages well due to both linguistic relatedness and frequent contact because of geographical proximity. The population of each of the Eastern Khumi people groups is quite small, less than 3,000 people per group.

Most of the Eastern Khumi people can speak and understand Kaladan Khumi [cnk] to some extent. However, most of them cannot read Khumi literature, and the Khumi Bible is hard for most of them to understand.

Most of the Eastern Khumi people expressed considerable interest in reading and writing their own varieties. In fact, many of the Eastern Khumi groups have had at least some literature development. The Nisay, Lemi, and Likhy groups are currently working on language development activities. Almost all the Eastern Khumi people expressed considerable interest in having a Bible translation in their own varieties. They do not seem very willing, however, to use another group's literature. The majority of the Eastern Khumi people are Christians. There are a wide variety of church denominations among them. They are currently using Khumi [cnk] and Burmese [mya] Bibles in their churches.

Primary Religion:

Christianity

Disciples (Matt 28:19):

95%

Churches:

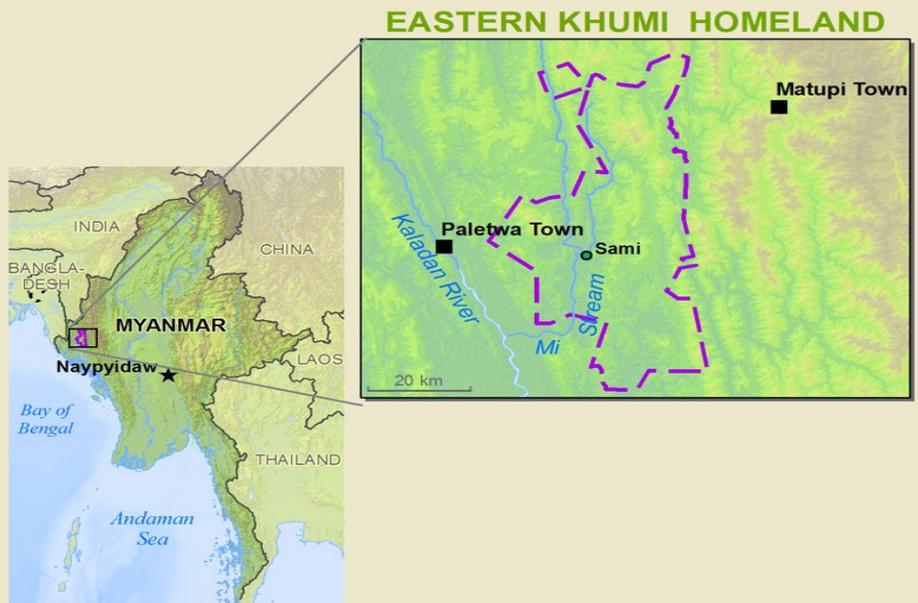
many

Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):

portions in several dialects

Population (date)

12,000 (2011)



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Have They Heard The Gospel?

Call Themselves Christian 95%

Believe In Jesus As God
And Only Savior 95%

Believe In The Local Traditional
Religion 5%

Have Not Heard Who Jesus is 0%

Number Of Churches 0

Comment

Among the Eastern Khumi Christians, there are many denominations, such as Baptist, Anglican, Evangelical Free Church of Myanmar (EFCM), Evangelical Reformed Church (ERC), Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Church of Jesus Christ, Church of Christ, Missionary Baptist Church of Myanmar, Believer Church of Jesus Christ, Evangelical Revival Church, Gospel Baptist, Church on the Rock, etc.

Is The Word Of God Translated?

Around 1973, an orthography under the name Ta-aw was started that was intended to cover the groups Khenlak, Khongtu, Nisay, and Rengsa. The orthography was based on the Khenlak language. They published primers and songbooks with this orthography. Around 1980, a disagreement over the orthography created a split into two groups: Khenlak versus Khongtu and Rengsa. Today, the Ta-aw Language Committee includes groups from both Matupi and Paletwa Townships. The Ta-aw New Testament is currently available and is being used in some Rengsa churches. These portions and songbooks have been done independently and were not published by any Bible organization. The Evangelical Free Church of Myanmar (EFCM) is currently using these materials. Some Nisay church leaders have developed a basic orthography in which they made simple booklets of worship songs for their group. Nideun subjects reported that their orthography was developed by Rev. Song Thein in around 1990, using a roman-based alphabet system. However, there are no books available currently in this orthography. The Lemi orthography was developed by Rev. Sangkhaw and Dr. Helga So-Hartmann in 2000. Currently, some Bible portions (Gospel of Luke and Acts), songbooks, prayer books, creation stories, Good News tracts, and primers are available. Likhy subjects reported that their orthography was developed by Saya Peter Kamaw around 1998.

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There are songbooks available in this orthography. The Likhy also have a Literature Committee based in Sami. Rengsa subjects reported that the Rengsa orthography was created in 1970 by Mr. Hlaw Pung. Currently, a hymnbook and the book of Luke are available in this orthography. Rev. Tin Maung, currently living in Yangon, did the translation.

Forms Of Gospel Presentation

Available

There are a wide variety of materials available in standard Burmese [mya] and in Khumi [cnk] that could be used among the Eastern Khumi people.

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Group Description

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 Buddhism 2%
Religion 2 Ethnic Religions 3%

Religion Response

Resistance/Receptivity Very receptive

Scripture

Scripture Use

Comment

Currently using Khumi Chin NT [cnk] and Burmese Bible [mya] in their churches

Uncertain Needs Explained

There has been language development and Bible translation in several of the Eastern Khumi varieties already. SIL and Dr. Helga So-Hartmann have been involved in Lemi Bible translation. However, there is a need for promotion or adaptation of the existing Lemi literature to be usable among the other Eastern Khumi varieties. Promotion and unity-building will be necessary for the Eastern Khumi groups to work together cooperatively for literature development. In general, the Eastern Khumi groups understand each other's varieties well and have frequent contact with each other. They do not seem very willing, however, to use another group's literature. We recommend that the ready and interested Eastern Khumi varieties should be invited to participate in language development, working together as a cluster to help each other. More mobilization efforts should be done among these groups, encouraging them to join in a cooperative literature development project and accepting input from them in a partnership (as much as possible) for a cluster-approach translation program.

Reason for Urgent Need of Translation

The survey results shows that Eastern Khumi Chin people showed strong interest in having materials written in their own languages and they are also seem enthusiastic to learn to read and write and have Bible translation in their own languages.

Comment

Eastern Khumi people seem to have a strong desire to have the Bible in their own languages. Most of the Eastern Khumi subjects reported that they currently read the Bible in Burmese and Khumi, but they cannot understand these Bibles well. Scripture use is fairly limited at present. In some areas, the Bible is used as a charm. Conducting Scripture use workshops for pastors and Christian leaders could be a helpful tool to increase the impact of future Scripture production.