



Population in Myanmar: 4,000 (2025)

Location: Kachin State

Language Family: Tibeto-Burman

Main Religion: Christianity (60.0%)

Christians: 2,400 (60%)

OVERVIEW

Population: 4,000 in Myanmar (2025 Asia Harvest)

Other Countries:

Other Names: Hakhu, Hkaku

Location: Kachin State: Sumprabum Township in Putao District

Language: Jingpho [kac]

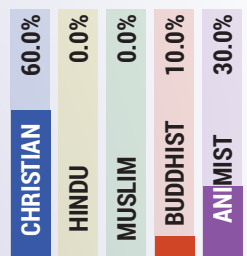
Dialects:

Scripture: Jingpo Bible 1927
New Testament 1912
Portions 1895

Jesus film: Jingpho

Global Recordings: Jingpho #175

People ID: 22657



Religious adherence



CFEM

Location: An estimated 4,000 members of the Hkaku people group live in northern Myanmar's Kachin State near the Chinese border. Their exact population and locations are uncertain today because most Hkaku have assimilated to the Kachin Jingpo group. However, a 1997 book stated that "the Hkaku inhabit the Mali Hka and N'Mai Hka valley areas...practising shifting cultivation in the forests and on mountains."¹ These locations lie within Sumprabum Township in Putao District, in the northernmost part of Kachin State nicknamed the "Northern Triangle." The Hkaku share their area with members of the Rawang, Lisu, and other ethnic groups. Herman Tegenfeldt, who wrote the definitive history of the Kachin Baptist Church in 1974, noted: "The Jingpo of the Hukawng Valley and of the area stretching north of Myitkyina are referred to as Hkakhus. In dialect and dress, they are different from the Jingpos of the south."²

Identity: The name Hkaku means "up-river people." Historically,

they were an offshoot of the larger Kachin Jingpo group that developed their own identity and dialect due to geographical separation. The Hkaku have long been acknowledged by the Myanmar government as one of the nation's 135 ethnic groups.

Language: The Hkaku dialect was formerly known as Northern Kachin, but over the past century, the differences between it and standard Jingpo have gradually eroded. Today, linguists consider Hkaku to be one of seven dialects of Jingpo, although they still exist as a people group with their own clothing and sense of identity. Other Kachin Jingpo dialect groups that were documented during the British colonial era but which have now been linguistically absorbed include the Htingmai, Mungchi, N'hkum, and Shatam.

History: The town of Sumprabum, which means "jungle grass mountain" in Jingpo, is strategically located on the Bhamo to Myitkyina Road and, as such, has been a much-desired strategic possession for both

sides in the Myanmar civil war. The Kachin Independence Army seized control of the town when they overran the Burmese junta's 46th Infantry Battalion base in May 2024,³ but an announcement by the Chinese government in 2025 that they would assist the junta in the war has led to fears that Chinese airstrikes and more powerful weapons will tip the balance of power back to the Burmese military.

Customs: In the past, Hkaku women loved to adorn themselves with large patlokan amber earrings, which were shaped like a bullet and protruded more than four inches (10 cm) from the women's earlobes. Although the earrings are still found throughout northern Kachin State, few women find it practical to wear them due to their size and weight.

Religion: Countless generations of Hkaku people passed into eternity as spirit-worshiping animists before a movement among them commenced in the 1930s, resulting in a trickle of people coming to faith in Jesus Christ. The trickle soon grew to a steady flow, however, with the Baptists considering their most important breakthroughs in the 1930s to be "the opening of the Bible School and the beginning of the Hkaku work. Many people were brought into the church, and an indigenous leadership emerged."⁴

Christianity: Although many Kachin Jingpo churches reported a decline during the 1940s due to the deprivations of war, the Hkaku areas saw "increased growth where the initial planting of the Gospel in the pre-war years began to show definitive results during the tumultuous and difficult war. Strong Christian leaders, including a number of chiefs, had much to do with continuing substantial growth."⁵ God continues to be esteemed by most Hkaku people today. They use the Jingpo Bible in their meetings, and a remnant of zealous believers among this blessed tribe have endured decades of hardship, war, and attacks on their faith.