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Location: Six hundred members of the Khalak tribe live in northern Myanmar’s Kachin State, concentrated in the town of Shinbwiyan, which lies within Tanai Township. About 15 Khalak households are found in the village of Takhet, which they share with 40 Rasa and 30 Lungkhi families, while a small number of Khalak families dwell in Shinbwiyan town, which local Tangshang people know as Tawa Gaq in their language. The area is characterized by rolling hills with semi-evergreen forests, watered by moist, tropical weather.

Identity: The Khalak (also spelled Hkalak) are one of only six Tangshang tribes out of more than 50 in Myanmar that are located outside the Sagaing Region. They have never previously appeared on any lists of Myanmar’s people groups. One source briefly mentions that Khalak people live across the border in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, where they are considered part of the official Longphi Tangsa Scheduled Tribe.¹

Language: The Khalak vernacular is believed to be part of a larger Lungkhi language group that includes as many as 13 Tangshang varieties in Myanmar, including Gaqchan, Gaqyi, Hasa, Henching, Kochung, Lakki, Lungkhi, Rasa, Ringkhu, and Shangti. Each of these languages and dialects is also a tribe that has been profiled separately in *Operation Myanmar*.

One study found that Khalak is most closely related to four other tribes in Shinbwiyan: the Gaqchan, Lakki Lungkhi, and Shangti. The leaders of all five groups have expressed an interest in developing their own Lungkhi Bible translation team.²

History: In 2015, a team of linguists found that 53 out of 91 Tangshang people they interviewed in the town of Shinbwiyan were born in the mountainous Nanyun area to the northwest in neighboring Sagaing Region before they relocated to Shinbwiyan, which increasingly became a popular place for groups to migrate to due to its relatively easy access and fertile land. Because of its strategic location along the Stilwell Road, an airbase was built at Shinbwiyan during the Second World War as the allies helped China repel the advance of the Japanese. In October 1943 the Chinese Expeditionary Force successfully captured the town and repelled the Japanese. The area was severely rocked by the massive 7.7 earthquake in March 2025, which left many homes destroyed.

Customs: Beef, pork, chicken, and fish are the main sources of protein among the Khalak people, but it is forbidden to eat the meat of dogs, cats, tigers, and snakes. Vegetables grown in the area include sweet potatoes, pumpkins, cucumbers and beans, while their diet also includes mangoes, jackfruit, pineapples and oranges.

In India, the men’s dress “consists of a shirt, checkered *lungghi*, and a turban.... Both men and women wear various kinds of ornaments. On ceremonial occasions the men wear a bamboo cap beautifully decorated with feathers.”³

Religion: Before many Khalak people converted to Christianity, numerous animistic rituals and superstitions were practiced among them, with births, weddings, funerals, and other key community events intricately tied to spirit worship. One visitor noted: “Their traditional customs and beliefs have changed drastically. They feel better off after conversion to Christianity. A poor man can get married now, which was rather impossible in the past when a high bride price was required. Moreover, unnecessary expenditure on ceremonies has decreased.”⁴

Christianity: After they moved to their current location in Kachin State, the Khalak people were influenced by Kachin Christians who live in their area. As a result, an estimated 80 percent of Khalak people today are professing Christians, including those who attend a few Catholic churches. They continue to need the Scriptures in their heart language, as it appears earlier plans to translate the Bible never progressed. A small number of Khalak people follow Buddhism or cling to the Animism of their ancestors.



Population
in Myanmar:
600 (2025)

Location:
Kachin State

Language Family:
Tibeto-Burman

Main Religion:
Christianity (80.0%)

Christians:
480 (80.0%)

OVERVIEW

Population:
600 in Myanmar
(2025 Asia Harvest)

Other Countries:
100 in India

Other Names:
Hkalak, Khalak Tangshang, Khilak

Location:
Kachin State: Tanai Township in Tanai District

Language:
Naga Tangsa, Khalak [unclassified]

Dialects:

Scripture:
None

Jesus film:
None

Global Recordings:
None

People ID: 22527

