



Jane Sweeney

Location: Another small and little-known tribe that has remained hidden in Myanmar for centuries are the 600 Ringkhu people, who dwell in villages in what the government calls the Shinbwiyan Sub-township, which really is just a moderately sized village. Shinbwiyan is part of the larger Tanai Township in Kachin State. Tanai Township was part of Myitkyina District until 2022, when the government constituted it as part of the new Tanai District. The Ringkhu people are scattered across several villages in the area, including Tarung, Takhet, Thayatit, and Lakyabum. A small number of Ringkhu people also live in the Pangsau area of Sagaing Region.

Identity: The Ringkhu are yet another people group that has never appeared on any lists of Myanmar’s ethnicities until now. Although the various Naga and Tangshang tribes in Myanmar, including the Ringkhu, had a reputation as fierce warriors and

head hunters in the past, the groups are also famous for the warm hospitality they display to outsiders. A visitor at the dawn of the new millennium reported: “The people were the most congenial imaginable, their hospitality and simplicity almost too good, their pride in tradition exemplary, and their style and sense of beauty remarkable.”¹

Language: In 2012, linguists who visited the part of Kachin State inhabited by 240 Ringkhu people reported that the Ringkhu vernacular belongs to a group comprising ten other dialects, each of which is also a tribe profiled separately in this book. The dialects related to Ringkhu are Gaqchan, Gaqyi, Hasa, Henching, Khalak, Kochung, Lakki, Lungkhi, Rasa, and Shangti.² These languages and dialects are part of the Naga group of the Tibeto-Burman family, although speakers would have great difficulty communicating with

most people across the border in Nagaland, India.

History: The Ringkhu probably originally lived further west near the Indian border where most Tangshang tribes are still located, but the difficulties of life there caused many families to seek a new homeland. They traveled east to Shinbwiyan, where they settled down on more productive land. In the 1960s and 1970s, when Ringkhu people in Sagaing heard reports that their counterparts were thriving, more families packed up their belongings and moved to Kachin State.

Customs: The legendary hospitality of tribes like the Ringkhu was detailed by a foreign visitor, who wrote: “Everywhere we went, people heaped presents on us: blankets begun months earlier when they heard we were coming, warrior hats with precious hornbill feathers, drinking mugs, and jewelry. All were given from the heart without expectation of anything in return. Countless varieties of food were prepared and handed to us on banana leaves or carved wooden plates. One felt ungrateful sometimes at not being able to eat more.”³

Religion: All Ringkhu people used to be animists, appeasing many spirits that they considered protective guardians. If they offended those beings, disaster or disease could befall their community, so no effort was spared in making offerings and sacrifices in a bid to placate them. Christianity first came to the Sagaing border area in the 1950s, and the light of the Gospel gradually dawned on all the tribes there, including the Ringkhu.

Christianity: Later, when most Ringkhu people migrated to Kachin State, they came under the influence of Buddhists for the first time. With the Burmese government offering inducements to families who convert to Buddhism, many Ringkhu families abandoned Christianity, although around two-thirds of Ringkhu people today still profess to follow Jesus.



Population
in Myanmar:
600 (2025)

Location:
Kachin State, Sagaing Region

Language Family:
Tibeto-Burman

Main Religion:
Christianity (65.0%)

Christians:
390 (65.0%)

OVERVIEW

Population:
600 in Myanmar (2025 Asia Harvest)

Other Countries:

Other Names:
Rangkhu, Ringkhu Tangshang

Location:
Kachin State: Tanai Township in Tanai District; Sagaing Region: Lahe Township in the Naga Self-Administered Zone

Language:
Naga Tangsa, Ringkhu [unclassified]

Dialects:

Scripture:
None

Jesus film:
None

Global Recordings:
None

People ID: 22556

