

Daniele Romeo



**Location:** With a population of 36,000 people, the Senthang are one of the larger Chin tribes in Myanmar. They are distributed throughout more than 50 villages in three states. Most inhabit 35 villages within Hakha Township in Chin State, with another two villages in Thantlang Township on the border with Mizoram, India. Further east, 15 Senthang villages are in Gangaw Township within the Magway Region, and just two villages sit across the northern border in the Sagaing Region. In Chin State, the mountainous Senthang area is bordered by several tribes, with the Lai Chin and Tawr to the north; Zophei and Lautu to the west; and Zotung to the south.

**Identity:** The Senthang are a distinct tribe within the broad Chin ethnic cluster. They were first recognized by the government a century ago, returning a population of 7,319 in the 1931 census. The Senthang communities in Chin State tend to be more cohesive and enjoy more vigorous use of their language, while those living about 75 miles (121 km) away in the Magway Region are more assimilated to Burmese culture and language.

**Language:** Senthang consists of four dialects, all of which have a high rate of mutual intelligibility. In Chin State, many Senthang people also speak Lai (Hakha) Chin, especially the older generation, while most younger people are fluent in Burmese. Senthang is one

of five languages belonging to the Maraic branch of Tibeto-Burman, along with Mara, Lautu, Zotung, and Zyphre.

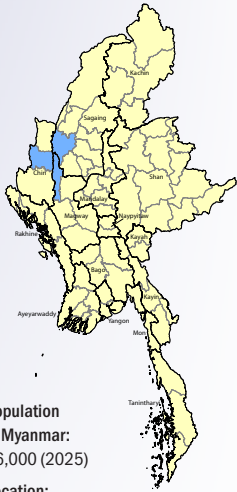
**History:** Soon after a socialist-military government was established in Myanmar in 1962, the economy fell apart. People in Chin State suffered from “a shortage of basic necessities such as salt, sugar, milk, cooking oil, and rice.... The government’s unrestrained printing of money in 1971-72 created inflation at an astronomically high level (1,000 percent), so that everyone, especially hill peasants who had no cash income, faced a formidable problem just to exist. People could no longer afford the traditional slaughtering of animals for weddings or funerals. The people managed to survive the shortages of clothing and other necessities by bringing expensive smuggled goods from India and Thailand.”<sup>1</sup>

**Customs:** Senthang culture has struggled to retain its distinctiveness during decades of societal upheaval. In 2021, the Burmese military attacked the town of Thantlang, burning most homes and buildings to the ground. A pastor who tried to douse the flames was shot dead. Thantlang and many other areas remain ghost towns after more than 10,000 people fled the violence.<sup>2</sup>

**Religion:** For countless generations the Senthang people worshiped spirits, with the 1931 census

returning all 7,319 Senthang as animists without a single Christian among them. Today, an estimated 80 percent are Christians, with several thousand Senthang Buddhists in the Magway Region due to the influence of the many Burmese people there.

**Christianity:** Baptist missionaries Arthur and Laura Carson were the first to introduce Jesus Christ to the area when they arrived in Hakha Township on March 15, 1899. Progress was initially slow, and it took five years to win their first convert before revival suddenly broke out in 1906. In one place, a group of men going fishing were overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit. As they prayed to God, “they started crying, dancing, and singing, and completely forgot about their fishing.... The revival wave soon covered the whole country. The people were by nature fond of singing, and with the revival new songs were composed and sung to easy-to-learn tunes.... Services were simple. Someone might recite a portion of the Gospel he had heard somewhere, prayers were offered, and the meeting given over to the signing of hymns. As they were filled with happiness, services could last a whole night.”<sup>3</sup> Although today nearly 30,000 Senthang people are Christians, they do not have the Scriptures in their own language and must use Hakha Chin, Burmese, or English Bibles to understand God’s Word.<sup>4</sup>



**Population in Myanmar:** 36,000 (2025)

**Location:** Chin State, Magway Region, Sagaing Region

**Language Family:** Tibeto-Burman

**Main Religion:** Christianity (80.0%)

**Christians:** 28,800 (80.0%)

OVERVIEW

**Population:** 36,000 in Myanmar (2025 Joshua Project) 33,000 (2007 SIL) 7,319 (1931 census)

**Other Countries:**

**Other Names:** Hsemtang, Sak, Sentang

**Location:** Chin State: Hakha and Thantlang townships in Hakha District; Magway Region: Gangaw Township in Gangaw District; Sagaing Region: Kale Township in Kale District

**Language:** Chin, Senthang [sez]

**Dialects:** 4

**Scripture:** None

**Jesus film:** No

**Global Recordings:** Chin, Senthang #5140

**People ID:** 14857

