



Jon Arnold

Location: The Shangti are one of the smallest people groups in Myanmar, with a population of just 250 people. They live in and around the small town of Shinbwiyan in Tanai District, within northern Myanmar's Kachin State. One of their main villages is called Tarung. Shinbwiyan was a key place on the Stilwell Road, constructed by the United States during World War Two to stem the advance of the Japanese imperial Army. Today much of the road is overgrown with weeds, but locals ride motorcycles on parts of it to get to other villages.¹ A small number of Shangti people live further west in the Pangsau area of Sagaing Region, where most of the community in Kachin State migrated from.

Identity: The Shangti are one of only six Tangshang-related tribes out of more than 50 in Myanmar that are located outside of Sagaing. The term "Tangshang" was coined in 1983 by a collection

of tribal leaders in a bid to gain recognition and political help from the government, who refused to deal with each tribe individually. Culturally, the Shangti and other Tangshang groups are part of the larger Naga ethnicity, which consists of dozens of distinct tribes and languages across a wide area of northeast India and western Myanmar.

Language: In 2013, researchers surveyed 110 Shangti people in Shinbwiyan and concluded that five Tangshang dialects (Gaqchan, Khalak, Lakki, Lungkhi, and Shangti) were similar. Leaders from those five groups expressed an interest in developing their own Lungkhi Bible translation team.²

History: Shinbwiyan has become a popular place for Tangshang groups to migrate to due to its relatively easy access and fertile land. A team of linguists in 2015 found that 53 out of 91 Tangshang people they interviewed in Shinbwiyan were born in the

mountainous Nanyun area of neighboring Sagaing Region before they packed up and moved to Shinbwiyan.

Customs: One of the few published sources to ever mention the Shangti people noted how their method of succession when appointing village headmen differs from that of other tribes: "The rule of succession was generally from father to eldest son, so the position was kept within the lineage, but this was not always the case. Among the Shangti, the position was passed on in the first instance to the brother of the deceased headman, and the son of the deceased would only inherit if there was no brother available."³

Religion: Animism reigned among the Shangti people for hundreds of years, with an elaborate sacrificial system created in a bid to placate a host of spirits. Failure to do so was believed to bring disaster on the community. While some Tangshang tribes in the area held several annual sacrificial ceremonies at which buffaloes were offered, the Shangti rituals "were small in scale. Only chickens were sacrificed and some liquor drunk. The *pue vi* festival was celebrated after harvesting in December."⁴

Christianity: The 1960s and 1970s saw many Tangshang tribes in Myanmar believe in the Gospel, and in many cases community leaders ordered that all members of their tribe should become Christians. The Shangti have probably been influenced by Kachin Jingpo Christians who live in their area. Baptist and Catholic churches are particularly numerous among the Kachin. Alas, the desire expressed more than a decade ago by five tribes, including the Shangti to have a common Bible translation does not appear to have been acted on, and the attitude of Western Bible translation ministries during that time has shifted away from providing the Scriptures to less populated groups. If they are ever to have a Bible in their heart language, the Shangti believers will probably need to do it themselves.



Population in Myanmar:
250 (2025)

Location:
Kachin State,
Sagaing Region

Language Family:
Tibeto-Burman

Main Religion:
Christianity (80.0%)

Christians:
200 (80.0%)

OVERVIEW

Population:
250 in Myanmar (2025 Asia Harvest)

Other Countries:

Other Names:
Sangtai, Sangti, Shangri, Shangthi, Shangti Tangshang

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

Language:
Naga Tangsa, Shangti [unclassified]

Dialects:

Scripture:
None

Jesus film:
None

Global Recordings:
None

People ID: 22558

