



Being Chikkim

Location: Boasting a population of 35,000 in western Myanmar, the Thado live near the Indian border. Most are scattered among Naga and Tangshang people in several townships of the Sagaing Region, while 21 Thado villages are located in Tonzang District in the northeastern part of Chin State. The 2011 Indian census returned 217,000 “Thadou” people distributed across five states, primarily in Manipur but also in Assam, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura. The Indian government has divided the Thado into eight subgroups, each of which is considered distinct and granted status as a Scheduled Tribe. A modest number of Thado people also live in Bangladesh, where they are counted as part of that country’s Mizo (Lushai) ethnic group.

Identity: Although the Thado have long been recognized as one of Myanmar’s ethnic groups, in India the situation is complicated by the fact that many Thado subgroups have been counted as part of the official Kuki tribe. Many Thado

despise the term “Kuki,” which they consider to be an artificial colonial label created by the British, who originally called them “Cuci” and later “Kookie.”¹ If those subgroups are included, the overall Thado population in India would be in excess of 330,000.²

Language: In Myanmar the Thado language is most closely related to Tedim Chin, Teizang, and Zokam, and most people can also speak Burmese and English. In India 11 dialects of Thado have been identified, most of which are recognized by the Indian government as distinct Scheduled Tribes.

History: The Thado were renowned as fierce warriors during the era when most Chin tribes were fighting each other, before they were systematically disarmed by the British authorities. The Thado also engaged in the slave trade by seizing people during raids. After the British outlawed slavery in 1891, they rescued 135 (mostly Burmese and Naga) slaves and returned them to their home

areas.³ The Thado continued to resist colonial rule, however, so in 1918 the British sent 2,400 soldiers who burned entire villages to the ground and subdued the Thado.⁴ Hundreds of weapons were confiscated, which brought great hardship and hunger to the Thado communities, as their guns were primarily used for hunting.

Customs: For centuries the Thado practiced the diabolical custom of head-hunting. A historian wrote: “The Thado people placed the highest value on the heads of children, since capturing them would require the warrior to enter the enemy’s village.... Heads were hung from the village ‘head tree,’ and after a successful head-hunt the Thado ate a meal with hands still covered with the blood of their enemies.”⁵ Everything changed when the Thado converted to Christ and found peace in God. While they retain their fighting nature, today the Thado prefer to wage war against spiritual darkness as they seek to extend the kingdom of God.

Religion: After centuries of being enslaved to spirits, in 1894 the Gospel arrived among the Thado people in Manipur on the Indian side of the border through the preaching of Scottish missionary William Pettigrew. He remained in Manipur until 1933, although the focus of his outreach was the Tangkhul Naga tribe.

Christianity: The Gospel took a generation longer to work its transformative power among the Thado in Myanmar than it did among them in India. The 1931 census of Burma returned 6,319 Thado people, of whom 6,317 identified as animists and just two as Christians. Today, at least 70 percent of Thado people in Myanmar are Christians, while the 2011 Indian census found that a staggering 98 percent of Thado people declared themselves to be followers of Jesus Christ. The Thado Bible was published in India in 1971, and close relationships between believers on both sides of the border have helped the Thado in Myanmar access the Scriptures for themselves.



Population in Myanmar: 35,000 (2025)

Location: Sagaing Region, Chin State

Language Family: Tibeto-Burman

Main Religion: Christianity (70.0%)

Christians: 24,500 (70.0%)

OVERVIEW

Population: 35,000 in Myanmar (2025 Asia Harvest) 33,100 (2017 J. Leclerc) 6,319 (1931 census)

Other Countries: 217,135 in India Also in Bangladesh

Other Names: Chin Thado, Khongchai, Khongjai, Khongsai, Kuki Chi Thado, Kusamei, Lusuong, Makheng, Thado-Pao, Thado-Ubiphei, Thaduo, Thangkumsa

Location: Sagaing Region: Khamti and Homalin townships in Khamti District; Tamu Township in Tamu District; and Leshi Township in the Naga Self-Administered Zone; Chin State: Tonzang Township in Tonzang District

Language: Chin, Thado [tcz]

Dialects:

Scripture: Bible 1971 New Testament 1942 Portions 1924

Jesus film: Chin, Thado

Global Recordings: Thadou: Kuki #759

People ID: 11270

