



**Population**  
in Myanmar:  
34,000 (2025)

**Location:**  
Sagaing Region

**Language Family:**  
Tibeto-Burman

**Main Religion:**  
Buddhism (60.4%)

**Christians:**  
200 (0.6%)



Jeremy Graham

**Location:** The 34,000 Taman people inhabit western Myanmar's Sagaing Region. For centuries their main center has been the village of Tamanthi, situated within Homalin Township on the right bank of the Chindwin River.<sup>1</sup> Tamanthi is the gateway to a huge wildlife reserve containing more than 30 species of mammals, including elephants, gaur, black bears, leopards, tigers, and rhinoceros.<sup>2</sup> The village is also near the planned multi-purpose Tamanthi Dam. About three centuries ago, "gardens were planted in Tamanthi, and other nearby villages in the area produce pickled tea."<sup>3</sup> The Taman have long been recognized as one of Myanmar's ethnic groups, with a population of 829 in the 1901 census increasing to 1,190 by 1931.

**Identity:** Not to be confused with the unrelated Tamang people of Nepal, the Taman no longer appear on most lists of groups in Myanmar, although they retain their ethnic identity. Because Christian research tends to be dominated by linguistics, people groups like the Taman that have lost their language have been forgotten, as language is often used as the sole qualifier of whether a group exists or not. Early scholars suggested the Taman were a mix of Burmese and Shan people.<sup>4</sup>

**Language:** The Taman language is now extinct. By the 1930s it was

functionally dormant, although the last known Taman speaker died as recently as the 1990s. News of the demise of the Taman language led to a spike in interest by scholars. In 2016, a Japanese linguist found an 83-year-old woman who could still remember some Taman phrases and a short song, but nothing else.<sup>5</sup> Today, all that remains of the Taman language is a list of 75 words collected in 1911. Most Taman speakers have shifted to using Burmese or Tai Laing.<sup>6</sup>

**History:** The Taman say they originally came from China. When "a flood drowned most of them, the survivors fled to the hills before again descending to the plains where they settled near Tamanthi."<sup>7</sup> A key turning point in Taman history occurred when their homeland was attacked by Kachin raiders in the 18th century. The Taman fled in different directions and over time were absorbed into the groups they lived among. Another tribe, the Malin, lived near the Taman but no trace of them can be found today. A 1934 article said: "The Tamans and Malins have now almost ceased to exist as separate tribes. They have become Shan-Burmans, have adopted their dress and Buddhism, and are intermarrying with them freely."<sup>8</sup>

**Customs:** A 19th century missionary explained the plight of tribes such as the Taman as they feel the weight of assimilation:

"They are poor and scattered everywhere and are divided in every direction: at the sources of the waters, and in the glens above them. When they fall among the Burmese, the Burmese make them slaves. So, they live on one stream beyond another.... Further, the young females have to secrete themselves and blacken their faces; for if they do not, Burmese officers will drag them away and make them prostitutes. Young females dare not appear openly."<sup>9</sup>

**Religion:** For countless generations the Taman were animists who served a host of demons. A visitor in 1911 observed: "They profess Buddhism, but have hardly, if at all, begun to forsake their earlier religion. They are regarded with some fear by their neighbors on account of their supposed magical powers."<sup>10</sup>

**Christianity:** Missionaries struggled to make inroads with the Gospel among the Taman both before and after they lost their language. At the time of the 1931 census, 1,188 of the 1,190 Taman people identified as Buddhists with just two Christians in their midst. Because the Taman no longer appear on most Christian lists, few people have heard of this group or have prayed for their salvation. The Taman people remain unevangelized and unreached, although a small number are believed to be Christians today.

## OVERVIEW

**Population:**  
34,000 in Myanmar  
(2025 Joshua Project)  
1,190 (1931 census)  
829 (1901 census)

**Other Countries:**

**Other Names:**  
Htalu, Htamandi

**Location:**  
Sagaing Region: Homalin Township in Homalin District

**Language:**  
Taman [tcl] (extinct)

**Dialects:**

**Scripture:**  
Burmese Bible 1835  
New Testament 1832  
Portions 1815

**Jesus film:**  
Burmese

**Global Recordings:**  
Burmese #195

**People ID:** 15224

