

The Rakhine of Myanmar



The Rakhine people speak a nonstandard variety of Burmese [mya]. They live throughout Rakhine State, Myanmar, mainly in the townships of Sittwe, Ponnagyun, Kyauktaw, Mrauk Oo, Kyauk Phyu, Man Aung, Taunggup, and Thandwe. There are approximately 730,000 Rakhine people. Many other minority people living in Rakhine State and nearby Paletwa Township (Chin State) can also speak Rakhine as their second language.

The Rakhine people are fishermen and agriculturalists. Almost all of the Rakhine people are staunch Buddhists. Some outreach is being done among them by local evangelists and missionaries from other people groups within Myanmar. Since the Rakhine people speak a nonstandard variety of Burmese, they would probably be able to adequately use the Burmese [mya] Bible for written literature. However, it would be beneficial to produce evangelistic materials (such as audio-visual materials, songs, tracts, etc.) in the Rakhine language.

There are many different Rakhine dialects/varieties. However, comprehension within Rakhine State of the prestigious Sittwe dialect seems to be high. The main dialect areas seem to include: Sittwe (Akyab) and Mrauk-U; Chaungtha (north of Mrauk U); Yangbye (Rambree, Yanbe, Yanbye, Yangye) and Kyaukphyu; and Man Aung/Chebuda Island.

The Rakhine were formerly known as Arakan or Arakanese.

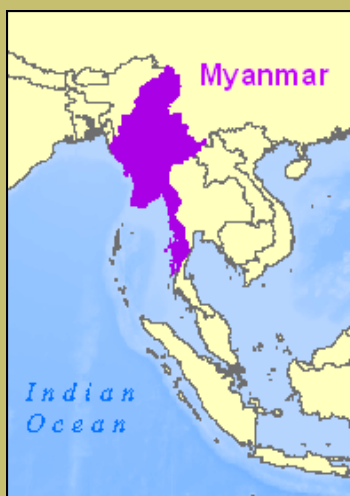
Primary Religion:
Buddhist

Disciples (Matt 28:19):
0.1%

Churches:
Few

Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):
No

Population (date):
730,000 (2011)



RAKHINE HOMELAND



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Have They Heard The Gospel?

Call Themselves Christian	0%
Comment	About 0.1%
Believe In Jesus As God And Only Savior	0%
Have Not Heard Who Jesus Is?	98%
Number Of Pastors	There are a few Rakhine pastors, some of whom live in Yangon and some doing outreach in Rakhine State
Number Of Missionaries Working	Some local evangelists from other groups within Myanmar
Attitude to Christianity	Very resistant
Attitude to Religious Change	Very resistant
Have They Responded to the Gospel?	Very suspicious and resistant to any outreach effort.
Number Of Churches	Few
Comment	There are a few churches in Sittwe, Kyauktaw, and Kyauk Phyu Towns, although there are not many Rakhine attendees, mainly people from other minority groups
Is The Word Of God Translated?	No, although they could use the standard Burmese [mya] materials for reading. However, it would be beneficial to produce evangelistic materials (audio-visual, songs, etc.) in the Rakhine language.
History of Christianity	Year Began -1600s
By Whom	Portuguese missionaries
Significant Event	Christian outreach among the Rakhine began in the early 1600s with Portuguese missionaries (Leider 2002b:137), and continued with American Baptist, Anglican, and Roman Catholic missions in the 1800s (Kang 1996:157, Cady 1976:67). Missions work has been slow and difficult, however, among the Rakhine (Charney 2002:213), and the “church growth process is [still] slow.” Today, there are not more than 200 Rakhine believers in the biggest town of Sittwe (Kang 1996:157). Local evangelists from other ethnic groups within Myanmar have done outreach and evangelistic activities among the Rakhine people as well, but the response has been very little.
Other Forms of Gospel Presentations	
Available	
Comment	There are a wide variety of materials available in standard Burmese [mya] that could be used among the Rakhine people

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Status of Christianity

Religion Population Percent

Religion #1	Buddhism
Percent Adherent	99%

Religion & Response

Resistance / Receptivity	Very resistant
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Scripture

Uncertain Need Explained	For written materials, the Rakhine people should be able to use standard Burmese [mya] materials adequately. However, for evangelistic and outreach purposes, it would be very beneficial to have materials (such as audio-visual materials, songs, etc.) produced in the Rakhine language.
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Missions and Churches

Organization #1	Local evangelist
Country of Origin	Myanmar
Main Ministry	Evangelism