



Jane Sweeney

**Location:** The 1,200 Bote people live in Pangsa town, in the Patkai Hills that extend along the Myanmar-India border within the recently created Naga Self-Administered Zone. Their main village, Yawkon, contains at least 48 Bote households, while a smaller number live in the neighboring Thao 1 village. The nearby Pangsa Pass, although only 3,727 feet (1,136 meters) in altitude, has for centuries proved difficult for migrating tribes to navigate as they seek to travel to new lands in India. As a result, the Pangsa area has become a “choke point” where many tribes have settled down.

**Identity:** The Bote are one of over 70 distinct groups within the Tangshang cluster of tribes. They, in turn, are historically and culturally part of the Naga ethnicity, which spreads hundreds of miles into Nagaland and into much of northeast India. Incredibly, the Bote are just one of 25 tiny Tangshang tribes that have been identified living in and

around Pangsa town, with each group speaking its own dialect and holding a distinct identity.<sup>1</sup> Some Tangshang groups have communities that made it across the Patkai Hills into India in the past century, where collectively they have been officially recognized by the Indian government as the Tangsa Scheduled Tribe.

**Language:** Little is known about the Bote language, except that it is unwritten, and the spoken vernacular appears to be most closely related to the Haqkun, Haqkhu, and Lama varieties. Outside of this circle of communities, the Bote struggle to be understood and often must use Burmese or English to communicate with people from other ethnicities. Although most elderly people can only speak their own language, many Bote youth desire to learn Burmese so they can function in today's Myanmar.

**History:** The Bote and other Tangshang tribes in Pangsa are not originally from the area but

are descended from families that migrated there during the past two centuries as they fled oppressive governments, war, famine, and headhunting. Finding themselves hemmed in by rivers and mountains, they settled down at the base of the Patkai Hills and formed small communities. During the 13th century, the powerful Ahom tribe also marched through the area as they settled many areas of Assam in northeast India.

**Customs:** Most Bote people lead simple lives, raising livestock and growing their food, while some have obtained government jobs in the nearby towns, where they have come under the influence of the Burmese. The people hold several key festivals each year to pray for and celebrate an abundant harvest. Bote men wear the traditional red hats adorned with bear fur and wild boar tusks that identify many Naga and Tangshang tribes in the region, and they are rarely far from their sharp spear and machete-like dao, which is used both for protection and for working in the fields.

**Religion:** Approximately eight out of ten Bote people are professing Christians today, with small numbers of animists still holding to their old traditional beliefs. The Gospel first came to the area in the 1950s, with brave Chin evangelists from the south and Kachin and Lisu from the north risking their lives to bring the light of Christ to the head-hunters. Despite great hardship, the kingdom of God was established among the Bote Tangshang, and it slowly began to flourish into a beautiful harvest, with church fellowships established in every village.

**Christianity:** With no Scripture or Gospel resources of any kind available in the Bote language (or any other dialect they are familiar with), it has been difficult to lay a solid foundation of biblical faith among this small but distinct people group, and some have been enticed to convert to Buddhism to accept benefits from the Myanmar government.



Population  
in Myanmar:  
1,200 (2024)

Location:  
Sagaing Region

Language Family:  
Tibeto-Burman

Main Religion:  
Christianity (80.0%)

Christians:  
960 (80.0%)

## OVERVIEW

Population:  
1,200 in Myanmar  
(2024 Asia Harvest)

Other Countries:

Other Names:  
Bongtai, Bote Tangshang,  
Butay, Hteinpa, Nokpa, Nukpa

Location:  
Sagaing Region: Pangsa town  
in Lahe Township, Naga Self-  
Administered Zone

Language:  
Naga Tangsa, Bote  
[unclassified]

Dialects: 0

Scripture:  
None

Jesus film:  
None

Global Recordings:  
None

People ID: 22495

