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Location: Surrounded by tropical evergreen forests in western Myanmar’s Sagaing Region, the 900 Cyamcyang people live in Nanyun Township in the Naga Self-Administered Zone. A further 1,300 live across the border in the northeast Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, where they have become a wealthy mercantile group with many political contacts.

Identity: The Cyamcyang are just one of dozens of distinct Tangshang tribes in Myanmar. In India, however, where they are officially known as the Kimsing, this group has been granted status as one of India’s Scheduled Tribes. The people themselves have requested their autonym (self-name) be used, which is Cyamcyang (sometimes spelled Chamchang). In India, the name Kimsing was given to them by the Assamese, and they have subsequently appeared in most mission lists under that name. In Myanmar, the name Tangshang is a relatively recent name, created by combining the beginning of the given names of two renowned chiefs, Tangnyu Vang

and Shangnyu Vang. This fresh identity has helped Tangshang tribes deal with the government for the good of their communities without needing to go through the powerful Naga hierarchy.

Language: Although it is spoken by relatively few people, Kimsing, which is part of the Tibeto-Burman language family, is considered the premier dialect of Tangsa in India. In Myanmar, the Cyamcyang vernacular is most closely related to Shecyu, but when communicating with people from other ethnic groups, the Cyamcyang often must use Burmese or English to be understood.¹

History: The dozens of Tangshang tribes in Myanmar are within the Naga cultural sphere, but in recent decades they have sought to distance themselves from the larger Naga tribes and have developed their own identity and name. For decades the rugged border area where the Tangshang live has seen much violence and bloodshed, as armed Naga and Tangshang insurgents operate on both sides of the border against the governments

of India and Myanmar.

Customs: Inhabiting mountains with an abundance of wildlife, including tigers, leopards, bears, elephants, deer, and wild boar, Cyamcyang men are expert hunters, while women are admired for their weaving and basketry skills. Typical meals of meat and fish are supplemented by maize, sweet potatoes, ginger, garlic, and mustard leaves. The mild weather enables them to grow a variety of fruit, including bananas, oranges, mangoes and pineapples.

Religion: For many generations, Cyamcyang people on both sides of the Myanmar-India border lived under the control of chanquse (spirit priests) and talwal (diviners), but today almost all Cyamcyang are Christians, with only a small number of families holding on to their animistic rituals. In the mid-1990s the Burmese junta tried to force some Tangshang men to convert to Buddhism at gunpoint, which created a steely determination among the people to never embrace the religion of their oppressors. Because of translation difficulties and lack of availability, some Cyamcyang church leaders have Burmese or Kachin Bibles, but few can understand those languages.

Christianity: Although the Kimsing Bible has been available in India since 2014, most believers among this tribe in both Myanmar and India cannot understand the translation. One scholar lamented, “I have never seen the Kimsing Bible in use anywhere with the sole exception of the Baptist church in Nongham, where the Baptist headquarters is located. One Baptist pastor even went so far as to say that it was ‘useless’ because most people do not understand Kimsing well.”² These problems have upset other Tangshang tribes who reject the Kimsing translation and want their own Bible. The Baptist church leaders have resisted their requests, however, which led to a number of churches breaking away from the Baptists.³



Population
in Myanmar:
900 (2024)

Location:
Sagaing Region

Language Family:
Tibeto-Burman

Main Religion:
Christianity (93.0%)

Christians:
837 (93.0%)

OVERVIEW

Population:
900 in Myanmar
(2024 Asia Harvest)

Other Countries:
1,294 in India (2011 census)

Other Names:
Chamchang, Cyamcyang
Tangshang, Kemsing,
Khemsing, Kimsin, Kimsing

Location:
Sagaing Region: Nanyun
Township in the Naga
Self-Administered Zone

Language:
Naga, Kemsing [nst]

Dialects: 0

Scripture:
Bible 2015
New Testament 1992
Portions 1979

Jesus film:
Naga, Tase

Global Recordings:
Naga, Tase: Khemsing #14596

People ID: 17135

