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Location: The tiny Cyolim tribe, numbering about 900 people, inhabit only a few villages in northwest Myanmar's Sagaing Region. Their two largest villages appear to be Hulong (25 households) and Khamtai (19 homes) near the town of Pangsa in Lahe Township. Many Tangshang communities in the area are mixed, with families from several tribes living in a single village, so it is difficult to obtain a precise population for groups like the Cyolim. Pangsa is nestled among rugged forested mountains near the Indian border in a sensitive military area that is strictly off-limits to foreigners and most Myanmar nationals alike. There are few roads in the area, and even motorcycles were unable to traverse the terrain until the first crude motorbike tracks were constructed in 2010, which people living in the developed world may need to see to believe.¹

Identity: The Cyolim are also referred to as the Cholim, while across the border in India they were officially known as the Tonglim tribe. They numbered just 72 people in the 1981 Indian census but have

since vanished from records, and are now likely counted in the generic Tangsa population of that nation. Tangsa is the name used for the Tangshang people in India. The Cyolim people proudly retain their culture and enjoy singing traditional songs that tell the story of their journey as a people.²

Language: Little is known about the Cyolim language except that it is related to a group of nine other Tangshang varieties spoken by different tribes, each of which has been profiled separately in *Operation Myanmar*.³

History: In the headhunting era, a man who had taken human heads was seen as a great hero and the most eligible bachelor in the village. Since the practice was banned in the 1980s, many Tangshang men display a haul of monkey heads instead of the skulls of their human victims. The Cyolim traditionally kept the corpse of deceased people inside their home for a day before burying the body beneath the house. Some of the deceased person's clothing and favorite food were hung in a basket outside the front door.

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Customs: Tangshang men from different tribes tend to wear similar headdresses, which consist of black bear fur flanked by the tusks of a wild boar. Often, the beak of a hornbill bird is also added. These items are symbolic of a man's hunting prowess, which is considered crucial for helping him obtain an attractive wife. Living in an isolated part of Myanmar that contains an abundance of wildlife, including elephants, tigers, leopards, and deer, for centuries the Tangshang have relied on hunting and fishing for their sustenance. One source says: "Their diet consists of all kinds of meat except that of dog, snake, cat, and tiger. Beef and pork are relished. Rice is the staple food. Vegetables are simply boiled in water and salt is added for taste. Boiled eggs, potatoes and arum, roots, tubers and jungle fruits are also consumed. Sai (rice beer) and black tea are common drinks."⁴

Religion: Headhunting, along with many other former practices, ended after the Tangshang people began converting to Jesus Christ. The Gospel was first proclaimed among them when Kachin Jingpo missionaries visited them in 1906,⁵ although significant breakthroughs didn't occur until the 1960s. Before their conversion, the Cyolim practiced a form of primitive animism, with spirit priests functioning as mediators between the community and the demonic realm.

Christianity: Like almost all other Tangshang tribes in Myanmar, the majority of Cyolim people are professing Christians, with most attending Baptist or Catholic churches. Many Tangshang believers have struggled to completely renounce their former spirit-worshipping ways, while some have embraced Buddhism. A New Testament known as the Hawa translation was published in the Moshang language in 2000. Although Moshang is related to Cyolim, differences between the two vernaculars are such that the Cyolim Christians are unable to use it.



Population in Myanmar:
900 (2024)

Location:
Sagaing Region

Language Family:
Tibeto-Burman

Main Religion:
Christianity (85.0%)

Christians:
765 (85.0%)

OVERVIEW

Population:
900 in Myanmar
(2024 Asia Harvest)

Other Countries:
100 in India

Other Names:
Cholim, Cholum, Cyolim
Tangshang, Tawlum, Tolum,
Tonglim, Tonglum, Tulim,
Tulum, Tyolim

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

Language:
Naga Tangsa, Cyolim
[unclassified]

Dialects: 0

Scripture:
None

Jesus film:
None

Global Recordings:
Naga Tangshang:
Cholim #14612

People ID: 22503

