



Jane Sweeney

Location: Although they have a population of only about 1,600 people, the Gaqlun are one of the larger Tangshang tribes in northwest Myanmar. They inhabit two main villages within the Sagaing Region near the Indian border. The highest concentration of 79 Gaqlun households is found in Taka village in Nanyun Town. Others live in mixed communities with people from other Tangshang tribes. Nanyun is designated a “sub-township” by the government and forms part of Lahe Township in the Naga Self-Administered Zone.

Identity: The Gaqlun have been tucked away in their isolated location and have never previously appeared on any lists of Myanmar’s people groups. The name this group uses for both their tribe and language is Lonyung, but all other ethnic groups in the area know them as the Gaqlun, after the name of their original village. The Sagaing Region is home to dozens of small Tangshang tribes, each of which has its own customs and dialect. Because of the remoteness of this mountainous area, many people have no citizenship cards and are

effectively stateless.

Language: In 2012, a team of linguists visited the Gaqlun area and surveyed 553 people in 79 households.¹ Although they speak their own vernacular, the researchers placed Gaqlun in a group of three other Tangshang varieties, along with Drancyi, Gaqha, and Raraq. This link suggests historical connection between the four tribes, who may have been a single group centuries ago before they fragmented into different tribes today. Outside of this collection of four related dialects, Gaqlun is markedly different from other Tangshang varieties in Myanmar, causing speakers to use Burmese to communicate with people from other tribes.

History: It is agreed that the first people from this tribe founded Gaqlun village in the Dunghi area, but over the years most families moved away, and now only nine or ten Gaqlun families remain in their original location. The area is economically impoverished, with the 2014 census finding that almost half of adults had never received any formal education,

not even at primary school.

Nanyun is a rural area with a young population. In 2014 the median age was just 23.2 years, while the literacy rate of 60.3 percent was lower than in many other parts of the state.²

Customs: Almost all Gaqlun families live in simple wooden or bamboo homes with thatch roofs. During the monsoon season, people often use large, dark-brown shields made of finely woven rattan (pictured) that help protect them from the driving rain and wind. Agriculture, forestry, and fishing are the main industries in Nanyun, while the nearly complete lack of infrastructure is shown by the fact that 55 percent of people in 2014 used candles as the primary source of lighting in their homes, with just 10 percent connected to the electric grid.³

Religion: After countless generations of being enslaved by evil spirits through animistic rituals and offerings, most Tangshang people, including all Gaqlun, have accepted Christianity. Not only do all Gaqlun people now profess faith in Jesus Christ, they all belong to Baptist churches, with no other denomination among them. Church buildings in Gaqlun villages serve as places of both worship and community gatherings where key decisions are made.

Christianity: With all Gaqlun people identifying as Christians, the greatest need is for believers to understand the faith, but progress is thwarted by the complete lack of Scripture or other Christian resources in a language they can easily understand. Gaqlun shares only a 56 percent lexical similarity with Shecyu, which is considered a premier dialect that linguists hope will influence many Tangshang tribes for the Gospel. Even if a Bible is produced in the Shecyu language, however, the Gaqlun will not be able to understand it at all, a fact that reflects the complexity of the linguistic situation in this multi-ethnic part of Asia.



Population
in Myanmar:
1,600 (2024)

Location:
Sagaing Region

Language Family:
Tibeto-Burman

Main Religion:
Christianity (100.0%)

Christians:
1,600 (100.0%)

OVERVIEW

Population:
1,600 in Myanmar
(2024 Asia Harvest)

Other Countries:

Other Names:
Galawn, Galun, Gaqlun, Gaqlun
Tangshang, Lonyung

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

Language:
Naga Tangsa, Gaqlun
[unclassified]

Dialects: 0

Scripture:
None

Jesus film:
None

Global Recordings:
None

People ID: 22511

