



Jon Arnold

Location: Four hundred Haqkhu people inhabit the ethnically diverse town of Pangsau, which sits within Lahe Township in far western Myanmar’s Sagaing Region. Most, if not all, Haqkhu people live in the village of Loklai, which contained at least 26 Haqkhu households in 2012. The Haqkhu are one of dozens of distinct tribes crammed into the special Naga Self-Administered Zone that forms the mountainous boundary between Myanmar and India. Established in 2008, the zone measures only about 100 miles (162 km) from north to south and an average of 30 miles (50 km) east to west, yet within that narrow strip live dozens of distinct Tangshang and Naga tribes.

Identity: The remarkably complex ethno-linguistic makeup of the region inhabited by the Haqkhu and in the adjacent Naga Hills on the Indian side of the border confused British officials who were tasked with conducting demographic surveys of the area. One writer expressed sympathy for their efforts to “make sense of the ethnographic chaos they perceived around them. Hundreds, if not thousands, of small villages

seemed to be somewhat similar to each other but also very different, by no means always sharing their customs or political systems.... Lacking sharp changes in ritual, dress, building styles, or even language, any line of demarcation was arbitrary.”¹

Language: The only known linguistic survey of the Haqkhu people occurred in 2012, when 200 individuals were surveyed and data collected of their language.² After analyzing their findings, the scholars decided the Haqkhu vernacular shared similarities with three other languages or dialects: Bote, Haqkhun, and Lama. Hopes were expressed that if these groups ever desired to have a written language, a single orthography could be created to suit all four groups. On the other hand, Haqkhu shares only a fleeting connection to other Tangshang varieties spoken in Lahe, and people must often use Burmese to communicate with individuals from other tribes.

History: For those who know them, Tangshang people are admired for their friendliness and good character, especially to guests

whom they are honor-bound to protect while they are under their roof. A visitor said of the tribal people in this region: “They are magnificent! You must see and live among them to believe this simple statement.... By nature, they are very sensitive, wary, inward-looking, volatile, and very proud. There cannot be a better friend once he has identified his friend, and there cannot be a worse foe once he feels deceived and let down.”³

Customs: The positive side of Tangshang society is further seen in this glowing appraisal of their customs and hospitality: “Deep inside their inscrutable exterior and penetrating eyes is tremendous warmth, great geniality, sharp intellect, and immense goodwill.... No house is locked in the villages. No guest goes without a present, be it an egg, a piece of pork, a banana, or a dried fish. A typical man gets terribly homesick, cannot live away from his wife, children, and friends, and loves every inch of his fields, jungle, and fishing streams.”⁴

Religion: Today, approximately nine out of every ten Haqkhu are Christians. Once they hear and understand the Gospel, many Tangshang are attracted to Jesus Christ because He is a mighty warrior, as they have always aspired to be. Their former animistic ways gradually fell away as more people converted to Christianity several decades ago, as they simply saw no point in continuing the empty and costly rituals anymore. In the mid-1990s, the Burmese junta tried to forcibly convert some Tangshang to Buddhism at gunpoint, but their actions just served to harden the resolve of the people to reject Buddhism and surrender their lives to Christ.

Christianity: Although the Gospel was first brought to the area by Kachin missionaries in 1906, most tribes in Lahe Township were completely ignorant of Christianity until 1980. Without a Bible of their own, most believers in Lahe are forced to use the Burmese Scriptures, although only about half of the people can read Burmese.



Population
in Myanmar:
400 (2024)

Location:
Sagaing Region

Language Family:
Tibeto-Burman

Main Religion:
Christianity (90.0%)

Christians:
360 (90.0%)

OVERVIEW

Population:
400 in Myanmar
(2024 Asia Harvest)

Other Countries:

Other Names:
Haqkhu Tangshang

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

Language:
Naga Tangsa, Haqkhu
[unclassified]

Dialects:
0

Scripture:
None

Jesus film:
None

Global Recordings:
None

People ID: 22516

