



Marc Dozier

**Location:** Numbering a modest 2,400 people, the Kokak Nagas inhabit ten villages in the southern part of Leshi Township in western Myanmar's Naga Self-Administered Zone, which was established in 2010. Their main village, Koki, is often mistakenly thought to be their tribal name by other people in the area. The Kokak Nagas live high in the mountains, where the soil is often rocky and unproductive. Due to deforestation, villagers must haul firewood up from lower altitudes. Although their villages are located only about 50 miles (80 km) from the border, there is no evidence of a Kokak community inside India.

**Identity:** The Kokak Nagas are known by a variety of names, including Guga, Koki, Konke, and Kukee. Interestingly, the Kokak are said to be culturally and tribally part of the larger Tangkhul Naga group, but their language is very distinct from Tangkhul. On a broader level, the Kokak are part of the Naga race, which consists of more than 100 different tribes and languages spread over a wide area of northeast India and western Myanmar.

**Language:** Kokak Naga, which has been studied by a Japanese linguist,<sup>1</sup> is not closely related to any other language. Research has found that Kokak shares a low

lexical similarity with other Naga varieties in the area: 23% with Akyauung Ari Naga, 22% with Para (Jejara) Naga, and just 19% with Tangkhul Naga.<sup>2</sup> This is significant because, although many people consider Kokak to be a subgroup of Tangkhul, the vocabulary of the two groups reveals that only about one in every five words comes from a shared origin. Most Kokak people can now speak Burmese as a second language.

**History:** While outsiders consider the Kokak to be part of the multi-faceted Tangkhul community, many of the groups now under the Tangkhul banner were originally distinct tribes that were subjugated during battles. Scholar J. D. Saul remarked that “between these groups there was constant friction, with each vying for control over the greatest number of tributary villages.... Whatever the allegiances of different villages, the Tangkhul region was never fully at peace, and villagers raided each other and took heads indiscriminately.”<sup>3</sup>

**Customs:** Although the Kokak have a similar appearance to the Tangkhul, “the males only adopted the Tangkhul hairstyle around the 1860s, and the women to this day tattoo their bodies with elaborate patterns peculiar to them and not used by the Tangkhul.... These people are not Tangkhul and they speak a different language.”<sup>4</sup> Kokak

warriors were “once noted for the great length of their spears, being up to 12 feet (3.6 meters) in length, and with a blade that was longer, broader, and of different shape from those of their neighbors.”<sup>5</sup>

**Religion:** Fear of demons and a focus on appeasing spirits to ensure peace and prosperity formed the basis of centuries of animistic rituals practiced by the Kokak Nagas. Many customs reflected their beliefs. For example, they “believed that tattoo marks offered some sort of spiritual protection and conferred protective abilities in warfare.”<sup>6</sup> Although most Naga people in Myanmar eschew Buddhism, some animists and nominal Christians have converted to the religion of the Burmese majority out of expediency, as professing Buddhists receive certain government benefits and opportunities that Christians cannot obtain.

**Christianity:** Today, an estimated 70 percent of Kokak Naga people are Christians. Because their language has never had a written form, no Scripture exists in their language, making it difficult for Christians to mature in the faith. The only Gospel resource known to exist in the Kokak language is an audio recording, but it appears to be rarely used, and many Kokak people seem unaware of its existence.



**Population**  
in Myanmar:  
2,400 (2025)

**Location:**  
Sagaing Region

**Language Family:**  
Tibeto-Burman

**Main Religion:**  
Christianity (70.0%)

**Christians:**  
1,680 (70.0%)

OVERVIEW

**Population:**  
2,400 in Myanmar  
(2025 Joshua Project)  
2,000 (2004 SIL)

**Other Countries:**

**Other Names:**  
Goga, Guga, Kokak, Koki, Koki Naga, Konke, Kouka, Kukee

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

**Language:**  
Naga, Kokak [nxk]

**Dialects:**

**Scripture:**  
None

**Jesus film:**  
None

**Global Recordings:**  
Naga, Kokak #23213

**People ID:** 20580

