



Photo: Jon Arnold

Location: Numbering only about 200 people, the Nahen tribe is one of the smallest people groups in Myanmar. They live in the Pangsa area of Lahe Township along the border between western Myanmar and northeast India, although there is no indication that they are also found within India. Ten Nahen households are located in Naungyan village, while others dwell in the small community of Pangsa itself.

Identity: The Nahen, who are also known as Langpan, are part of the broader collection of tribes that adopted the label of "Tangshang" in 2003. Despite their tiny population, the Nahen possess their own group identity and speak a dialect that is only partly intelligible with the speech of other tribes in the area. Until now the Nahen people have been hidden from view by being lumped together with other groups in the ethnographic thicket that exists in this complex part of Asia.

Language: A team of linguists visited the Pangsa area in 2013 and surveyed 65 Nahen people. They concluded that the Nahen dialect is part of a group of Tangshang varieties they called Ole. The group includes Cyamkok, Cyampang, Haqpo, and Lumnu.¹

Each of these dialect groups also represents a tribe that has been profiled separately in *Operation Myanmar*. The Nahen language shares only a 52 percent lexical similarity with Shecyu,² which is considered a premier dialect for Scripture translation among Tangshang peoples.

History: A linguist opined on why so many small dialect groups exist in a small area in this part of Myanmar: "Due to fighting among Tangshang villages, there was often little interaction with people beyond one's own community, and no sense of a group identity larger than the village. This isolation led to profound linguistic differences among many of the ancestral villages. More recently, however, leaders have attempted to band all the villages in this region together under a common grouping called Tangsa in India and Tangshang in Myanmar. Migration is also helping to promote a common identity."³

Customs: The Nahen share many cultural similarities with other groups in the mountains of western Myanmar. Tribes with which they have friendly relations and frequent contact include the Drancyi and Kon, and to a lesser extent, the Gagha. Linguistically, only men from the Kon and Kotlum tribes seem able to understand

the Nahen, possibly because they have more exposure to their dialect through trade.⁴

Religion: Before the light of the Gospel dawned on this remote area in the 1970s and 1980s, all tribes, including the Nahen, were animists, living in fear of a complex array of spirits that had to be placated to maintain a spiritual balance in their communities. After abandoning their former animistic ways, almost all Nahen people are Christians today.

Christianity: A Chin pastor reportedly created a Nahen alphabet in the first decade of this century, as he wanted them to be able to read the Bible in their own language. A primer was printed and taught to Nahen people living in Khamti Township, but as of 2011 it had not yet been taught in Lahe, where the majority of Nahen people live.⁵ Some Christians think a combined Ole Bible translation could be produced to meet the spiritual needs of the Nahen and other related dialect groups. One scholar expressed his hope: "Before printing books, leaders from the different Ole-related varieties should meet together to build unity among themselves and decide on one variety that they all agree to use for their literature development."⁶



Population
in Myanmar:
200 (2025)

Location:
Sagaing Region

Language Family:
Tibeto-Burman

Main Religion:
Christianity (90.0%)

Christians:
180 (90.0%)

OVERVIEW

Population:
200 in Myanmar
(2025 Asia Harvest)

Other Countries:

Other Names:
Langpan, Nahim, Nahin, Nashen

Location:
Sagaing Region: Lahe and Nanyun townships in the Naga Self-Administered Zone

Language:
Naga Tangsa, Nahen [unclassified]

Dialects:

Scripture:
None

Jesus film:
None

Global Recordings:
None

People ID: 22547

