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Location: Numbering 1,750 people, the Para Naga tribe inhabits seven villages in mountainous Leshi Township, within the Naga Self-Administered Zone in western Myanmar's Sagaing Region. Leshi, which sits at an elevation of 5,000 feet (1,524 meters), is home to many small tribes, with the Kokak Nagas just to the west the Para Naga's nearest neighbors. Although their identity and language are now different, the Para acknowledge relations with the 23,000 Pochury Naga people, who inhabit 27 villages across the border in the Indian state of Nagaland.

Identity: The name Para is derived from the word Parasar, which means "new settlers" and stems from a belief that their ancestors fled after the Tangkhul Nagas in India attacked them. Four brothers scattered in different directions, with the youngest finding his way across the border to Myanmar, where he founded the Para tribe—who are also known as Jejara, meaning "peaceful people." The Para are not acknowledged by the government, but have been conveniently lumped together for administrative purposes with more than a dozen other tribes and languages under a broad Naga banner.

Language: The Para Naga vernacular enjoys vigorous use in the community and is spoken by all tribe members. It is not closely related to any other language

in Myanmar, and surveys have shown that it contains just 23% lexical similarity with Longphuri Naga and 17% with Makury Naga.¹ This means the Para Naga must revert to Burmese to communicate with those tribes and with other ethnic groups.

History: According to their own accounts, "The Para entered Myanmar along the Nantaleik River to the north of Leshi and across the foothills of Mt. Saramati [the highest peak in the Naga Hills at 12,553 feet (3,826 meters) above sea level].... They recognize a relationship with at least 11 villages in Nagaland, particularly the village of Laruri."² The widespread ritual of headhunting in this part of Asia was also practiced by the Para Nagas, who "anointed enemy heads with pig fat when they were brought in. A spike was driven through the heads and they were ultimately displayed on a wall of the chief's house."³

Customs: The Para Nagas were one of many tribes in the region to tattoo the faces of girls. Distinctive patterns were also "marked on the head with soot or charcoal during funeral ceremonies, as the deceased would not be able to enter the land of the dead without this mark."⁴ Many caves containing pots full of the remains of the dead are scattered throughout the hills around Leshi. After a funeral, "great care was taken that the head of the deceased should not be seen, so it was covered with a white cloth."⁵ A three-stage betrothal custom

called Lai-Sui-Sui was practiced by the Para Nagas, starting with "the engagement of babies by exchanging their carry clothes. The second stage happened when the boy and girl were ten years old, with the boy's family needing to offer a dowry of six male and one female pig to the girl's family. The marriage took place when the couple were around 14 or 15 years old."⁶

Religion: For countless generations, the Para Nagas zealously sacrificed to spirits, believing it was essential to preserve societal harmony by maintaining a balance between the spiritual and physical worlds. Many superstitions were observed, including searching for omens and direction through divination, especially the study of chicken bones. These practices faded away after Christianity was introduced to the Para Nagas in 1950.

Christianity: Although most Para Naga people are professing Christians today, the influence of the Gospel among them appears to be weaker than among most other Naga tribes. All Para Naga churches are Baptist. Using the Roman orthography, Scripture portions were first translated and published into Para Naga in 2022, and work is currently underway to translate more books of the Bible into their mother tongue. Previously, Burmese Bibles were used in church services, even though most elderly believers could not understand them.



Population
in Myanmar:
1,750 (2025)

Location:
Sagaing Region

Language Family:
Tibeto-Burman

Main Religion:
Christianity (65.0%)

Christians:
1,140 (65.0%)

OVERVIEW

Population:
1,750 in Myanmar
(2025 Asia Harvest)
1,500 (2004 SIL)

Other Countries:

Other Names:
Bara Naga, Jedgar, Jejara, Khamngan Naga, Parasar Naga

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

Language:
Naga, Jejara [pzn]

Dialects: 1

Scripture:
Portions 2022

Jesus film:
None

Global Recordings:
None

People ID: 12659

