



**Population:**

1,250 (2000)  
1,600 (2010)  
2,050 (2020)

**Countries:** Bhutan, India

**Buddhism:** Tibetan

**Christians:** none known

**Overview of the Dakpa**

**Other Names:** Dakpakha, Dagpa, Dap, Takpa

**Population Sources:**

1,000 in Bhutan (2001, G van Driem [1991 figure]) also in India

**Language:** Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Himalayish, Tibeto-Kanauri, Tibetic, Tibetan, Eastern

**Dialects:** 0

**Professing Buddhists:** 100%

**Practising Buddhists:** 80%

**Christians:** 0%

**Scripture:** none

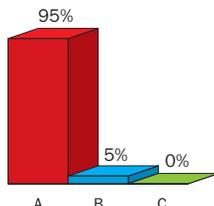
**Jesus film:** none

**Gospel Recordings:** none

**Christian Broadcasting:** none

**ROPAL code:** DKA

**Status of Evangelization**



**A =** Have never heard the gospel  
**B =** Have heard the gospel but have not become Christians  
**C =** Are adherents to some form of Christianity

According to one 1991 source, 1,000 Dakpa people live in the far eastern part of Bhutan as well as adjoining areas of Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh, India. In Bhutan, the Dakpa inhabit the villages of Phongme, Caleng, Yob'inang, D'angpholeng and Lengkhar near the small outpost of Radi, in the Trashigang District.

Radi, which sits at 1,630 metres (5,350 ft.) above sea level, hardly qualifies as a town. 'There are no shops or eating places

in Radi; it is just a quiet cluster of houses and a primary school at a bend in the road.'<sup>1</sup> Around Radi, the custom of weaving raw silk into a fabric called *menzimatra* or *lungserma* has been practised for centuries. From Radi it is just nine kilometres (five and a half mi.) from the Dakpa village of Phongme. One guidebook says, 'Beyond Radi the road worsens and climbs through forests interspersed with barren hillsides. This stretch of road is frequently closed by

landslides and is usually impassable during the rainy season because it becomes a sea of deep mud. There is a tiny shop and a small *goemba* [monastery] at Phongme. The *goemba* is less than 150 years old and there is no monk body; the caretakers are elderly women. The central statue is of Chenrezig with 1000 arms and 11 heads.'<sup>2</sup>

Few people have ever heard of the Dakpa because most publications list them as part of the Brokpa.<sup>3</sup> One scholar, however, has listed the differences between the two groups, 'The Dakpas . . . like the Brokpas, are itinerant yakherds, but Dakpa is a

language of the Bumthang group. Although Dakpas and Brokpas share the same characteristic hat known as a *zhamu* and outer garments, there are some differences between the native costumes of the Brokpas and Dakpas. For example, the Dakpas wear *dorma* "trousers", not the *pishu* "leather leg guards" and the *kanggo* "thick white woolen apron covering the loins" worn above the *pishu*, which Brokpas often wear instead of trousers.'<sup>4</sup>



Dwayne Graybill

Linguistically, the Dakpa language belongs to the Eastern Tibetan branch of Tibeto-Burman, very different from Brokpa which is a Southern Tibetan language. Despite their small size and remote location, the Dakpa language was first studied by B H Hodgson in 1853.<sup>5</sup>

Although the Dakpa adhere to Tibetan Buddhism, they 'bear allegiance to the reformed Gelup or "Yellow Hat" order of Buddhism which had become victorious in Tibet and not to the

"Red Hat" order which is the official state school of Mahayana Buddhism in Bhutan'.<sup>6</sup> In this way the Dakpa are similar to the Sherdukpen tribe and some of the Monpa groups of Arunachal Pradesh, across the border in India. This came about because while the Bhutanese managed to resist Tibetan attacks throughout the 1700s, thus holding onto their 'Red Hat' traditions, Tawang in India became a vassal state of Lhasa. The part of Bhutan now occupied by the Dakpa people was formerly part of the Tawang District.

There has never been a known Christian among this remote and unique tribe.