

Approximately 1,000 members of the Na ethnic group live in the Gumsing, Taying, Esnaya, Lingbing, Tongla, Yeja, Reding, Redi and Dadu villages of the Taksing Circle in the Upper Subansiri District of Arunachal Pradesh, India. The Na area—which is lined with beautiful pine trees—is situated at an altitude of 2,300 metres (7,500 ft.) above sea level. The Subansiri River, known locally as the Nyrsi, flows through the western part of their habitation. Because of the high altitude, the Na area is cold all year round.

The 1981 Indian census did not list a separate population for the Na, but in 1995 a Na village headman stated that there were 978 people in the community.<sup>1</sup> The earlier 1971 census did have a category for the Na, but they returned a figure of only 238 people.

The Na say that their progenitor was a god named Shiju. 'As stated by the people themselves, there was a placed called Lung in the north, which is at a distance of three to four days by foot from Taksing.

The Chadar clan of the community first migrated to Taksing and settled there. They were followed by other people via the Sari route.<sup>2</sup>

After arriving in their present location in India the Na were oppressed by the Tibetans, who objected to them leaving Tibet. This may suggest that the Na were formerly serfs of the Tibetans, before they fled to safety. 'It was the Nishings who took the initiative to bring about amity between the Tibetans and the Nas. . . . Consequently the Nas even started barter trade with the Tibetans.<sup>3</sup>

The Na language falls within the Tani branch of the Tibeto-Burman family. It is related to Tagin, a language spoken by more

than 30,000 people in Arunachal Pradesh. The Na speak their language in their own villages, but they use Hindi to communicate with outsiders. Some of the educated Na are able to speak English.

Although all Na people claim that they follow Tibetan Buddhism, their religious practices seem more akin to shamanism and spirit appeasement than to orthodox Buddhism. One source notes, 'They worship various spirits at home. The *nyibu* (shaman) is called for the rituals. One of their

prominent deities is called *Yulo*.

Earlier lamas were also called to drive away evil spirits by reading the *chhu* (sacred prayers) from the Buddhist scriptures. The Nas visit the monastery at least once a week for prayers. The lamas are now called for religious functions and festivals.<sup>4</sup>

Almost every part of Na society is strongly influenced by these Buddhist-shamanist beliefs and practices. Even when selecting a partner for marriage,

the Na summon a shaman to perform divination to determine whether the match will be blessed by the spirits. 'The final selection of the groom and bride depends on confirmation through the divination of eggs and chicken liver.<sup>5</sup> The shaman kills a chicken and inspects the lines and patterns on the liver. He is supposed to be able to predict the future by these signs.

There are no known Christians among the Na people. Their remote area has experienced very little gospel witness throughout history. A recent source states that there are 975 Christians out of a total population of 50,086 in the the Upper Subansiri District,<sup>6</sup> but most of these Christians are from the Adi and Tagin people groups.



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**Population:**

1,060 (2000)  
1,230 (2010)  
1,440 (2020)

**Countries:** India

**Buddhism:** Tibetan

**Christians:** none known

**Overview of the Na**

**Other Names:** Na-Tagin, Nga, Nah

**Population Sources:**

978 in India (1995, K S Singh)

**Language:** Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, North Assam, Tani

**Dialects:** 0

**Professing Buddhists:** 100%

**Practising Buddhists:** 55%

**Christians:** 0%

**Scripture:** none

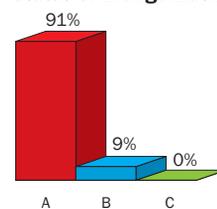
**Jesus film:** none

**Gospel Recordings:** none

**Christian Broadcasting:** none

**ROPAL code:** none

**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