

Tangsa, Tikhak



Population:

530 (2000)
620 (2010)
730 (2020)

Countries: India
Buddhism: Tibetan
Christians: 50

Overview of the Tikhak Tangsa

Other Names: Tikhak

Population Sources:

409 in India (1981 census)

Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Jingpho-Konyak-Bodo, Konyak-Bodo-Garo, Konyak

Dialects: 0

Professing Buddhists: 60%

Practising Buddhists: 25%

Christians: 9.4%

Scripture: Tangsa New Testament 1992

Jesus film: none

Gospel Recordings: none

Christian Broadcasting: none

ROPAL code: NST12

The 1981 census of India listed a population of just 409 Tikhak Tangsa people (186 males and 223 females). They live in the Manmao, Nampong, Miao and Bordumsa circles of the Changlang District in south-eastern Arunachal Pradesh, India. A few of them also live in the Dibrugarh District of Assam.

The Tikhak are one of 15 different Tangsa tribes in India,¹ totalling 16,475 people according to the 1981 Indian census. Several Tangsa groups are also located across the border in western Myanmar. Among the 15 Tangsa groups in India, only two could be considered majority Buddhist:

the Tikhak and the Yongkuk. The rest are Hindus, animists and Christians, and so have not been included in this book. In alphabetical order, the other Tangsa groups in India are the Havi (98% Hindu); Jugli (66% Hindu); Kimsing (62% Christian); Lungchang (95% animist); Lungphi (60% Hindu); Lungri (88% Hindu); Morang (46% Hindu, 38% Christian); Mosang (65% Hindu); Muklom (52% animist); Ronrang (98% Christian); Sangwal; Sankey (75% Christian); and the Tonglim (animist).²

The name *Tikhak* reportedly can mean either 'proficient basket makers or those who produce a peculiar coughing sound'.³ They originated further to the east in a place called Mukcha in the Patkoi Range. About 150 years ago, for reasons unknown, they migrated away from their homeland to their present location.

One way to distinguish the Tikhak from other Tangsa tribes is by their dress. 'The men's lower dress called *impayan* (a

handwoven *lungi*) has red, green, brown and white squares. The women's lower dress *naitak* (also a handwoven *lungi*) has different vertical stripes intersected by broad horizontal black stripes. The men also use the *takot-khuka* (kind of head dress).'⁴



Dwayne Graybill

There is some confusion regarding the religious beliefs of the Tikhak Tangsa. The 1981 census returned 60 per cent of them as Buddhists, 32 per cent as Hindus, 6.3 per cent as Christians and 1.7 per cent as followers of 'other religions' (i.e., animism). At the time of the census, six out of every ten Tikhak Tangsa people stated that they were Buddhists. Other reports seem to imply that most Tikhak people are animists. 'The Tikhak religion consists of beliefs in different benevolent

and malevolent spirits. The community believes in the concept of a god named *fra* or *pra*. No worship or sacrifice is offered to the *fra*. They worship the house deity called *Matai* once a year for the well-being of the family. *Lumrong* is worshipped for the protection of their entire area from natural calamities. . . . The *tumsa* (priest) is an expert in detecting evil spirits, in diagnosing and curing diseases, in predicting the future, and in presiding over the worship ceremonies. Thus he is respected by all. . . . A large number of Tikhaks have embraced Christianity, while some of them profess Buddhism.'⁵

Although for now the Tikhak Tangsa are classified as a majority Buddhist group, they are surrounded by Christians. Close to 50 per cent of the Tangsa people overall are now Christians. The Tangsa New Testament was published in 1992, although it is not known if the Tikhak Tangsa are able to read it.

