

# Zakhring



**Population:**

320 (2000)  
380 (2010)  
440 (2020)

**Countries:** India

**Buddhism:** Tibetan

**Christians:** none known

## Overview of the Zakhring

**Other Names:** Meyor, Charumba

**Population Sources:**

249 in India (1981 census)

**Language:** Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Unclassified

**Dialects:** 2 (Lower Zyphe, Upper Zyphe)

**Professing Buddhists:** 100%

**Practising Buddhists:** 100%

**Christians:** 0%

**Scripture:** none

**Jesus film:** none

**Gospel Recordings:** none

**Christian Broadcasting:** none

**ROPAL code:** ZKR

Much confusion surrounds the tiny, little-known Zakhring tribe of north-east India. They inhabit the hilly terrain and the banks of the Lohit River in the Walong and Kibithoo area (Hayuliang Subdivision) of the Lohit District in Arunachal Pradesh.

The 1981 census returned a figure of just 14 Zakhring people. However, 235 additional people identified themselves under the ethnic name 'Meyor', which is a synonym for the Zakhring. Together, then, the total population for this group was 249. In the years since the 1981 census the population for the Zakhring is thought to have surpassed 300. To further complicate their identification, various sources note that neither Zakhring nor Meyor is the name these people use for themselves. In their own language they call themselves Charumba.

Regardless of their small size and the multiplicity of names, the Indian government has granted official status to this group as a Scheduled Tribe, under the name Zakhring.

Scholar Dutta Choudhury says the Zakhring arrived from the north (Tibet) in two waves of migration—the first in the late 1800s and the second wave a few years later in the early 1900s.<sup>1</sup> These two separate migrations may explain why such a small group of a few hundred people speak two distinct dialects, which the *Ethnologue* labels Lower Zyphe and Upper Zyphe.<sup>2</sup> When they first

arrived in the Lohit District they 'had to face bitter opposition from the Mishmis. However, the Zakhring migrants overcame

the opposition and settled in and around Walong.<sup>13</sup>

The Zakhring enjoy close relationships with the Tibetans and Monpa, and intermarriage with these groups is encouraged. Many Tibetan refugees live nearby. In both the 1971 and 1981 censuses, 100 per cent of Zakhring people declared themselves to be followers of Buddhism. Zakhring art reflects their origins in Tibet and their faith in Tibetan Buddhism. The Zakhring 'paint scrolls and murals, make wooden images of Buddha and produce some

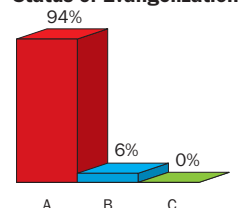
hand painted wooden objects and masks'.<sup>4</sup> Elements of the pre-Buddhist Bon religion seem to have been retained by the Zakhring. 'The Zakhring's Buddhism is tinged with beliefs in animism and shamanism. Their shamanistic priest is known as *kahu* who practises witchcraft. He is often called in to cure a person suffering from a disease. Besides Lord Buddha and the Bodhistatvas, the Zakhrings also have a community deity or village deity known as *Yong* or the deity of the hills. Thus each village has a separate *Yong*.'<sup>5</sup>

The tiny Zakhring tribe must rank as one of the most unreached Buddhist people groups in the world. They are isolated in a small area that has little or no access to gospel witness. There has never been a known Christian among the Zakhring. One Christian source states, 'They are a small and insignificant tribe mostly dependent on others. They do not have a Bible nor literature of their own. They are in need of development.'<sup>6</sup>



Dwayne Graybill

## 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