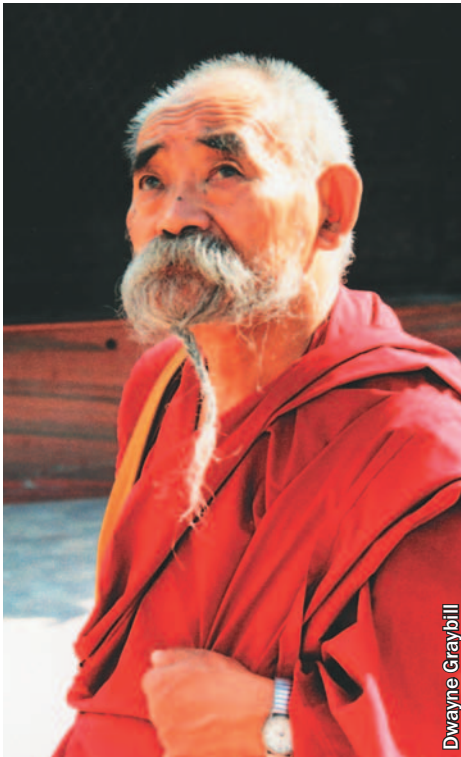


# Chimtan

The Chimtan ethnic group is one of the smallest in Nepal, with a population of approximately 300 people. Despite their tiny size, the Chimtan have been acknowledged as one of the 61 official people groups of Nepal (although many researchers believe the true number of ethnolinguistic groups in Nepal to be 130 or more). Just why the Chimtan have been officially recognized, while many other larger and more obvious groups have not, remains a mystery.

Chimtan people 'are the inhabitants of one of the Panch (five) Gaun or villages between Kagbeni and Tukche in the District of Mustang. Their village is known as Chimada or Chimang. They call themselves Thakalis, and have affinity of language and culture with the Thakalis. Though Buddhists, they also practice shamanism. There are two branches of Chimtans—Bhamphobe and Dhyalkipal Phobe.'<sup>1</sup> The Chimtan language is part of the Tamangic branch of the Tibeto-Burman family.



Dwayne Graybill

Mustang District is in the Dhawalagiri Zone of north-central Nepal. They share the area with the Loba (who for centuries had their own kingdom), as well as with Tibetan refugees, Thakali and members of other small ethnicities such as the Chhairottan and Baragaunle.

One of the most interesting customs shared by many of the groups in Mustang is 'the asking of forgiveness after having captured or eloped with a man's daughter. In both cases the girl is kept in the house of one of the boy's relatives either within or outside the village. On the second day some relative

or boy is sent (with consent of the captured girl) with a bottle of beer to the house of the girl's parents to apologize. The messenger does not go directly to the house, but stops at a distance of about 100 yards and shouts at the top of his voice, begging forgiveness for the offence and asking the parents to accept the new relationship. Then he walks 50 yards closer and repeats the same plea a second time. Finally he enters the house, anticipating a quarrel or even a fight. The whole day is spent in brawling, abusing each other, or even fighting with knives. In certain cases it takes

as long as seven days to calm the offended parents of the girl. Once this is done the payment can be presented and the wedding ceremony proceeds immediately.'<sup>2</sup>

Almost all people living in Mustang follow the Tibetan Buddhist religion, although strong elements of shamanism and Bon (the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet) are intertwined with their beliefs.

This is true of the Chimtan's ceremonies. Some of the obvious differences between Bon

and Tibetan Buddhism are that temples and other sacred places are encircled in a counter-clockwise direction by worshippers, 'in direct opposition to Buddhist tradition. That is, the Bon believer must walk to the right of his shrine, whereas the Buddhist approaches from the left. Likewise, the Bon prayer wheels are spun clockwise, the Buddhist counter-clockwise.'<sup>3</sup>

The gospel has not made any impact among the Chimtan people yet. Most are still waiting to hear about Jesus for the first time.



**Population:**  
300 (2000)  
370 (2010)  
460 (2020)  
**Countries:** Nepal  
**Buddhism:** Tibetan  
**Christians:** none known

## Overview of the Chimtan

**Other Names:** Chimada, Chimang, Chimtan Tibetans

**Population Sources:**  
300 in Nepal (2000, P Hattaway)

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

**Dialects:** 0

**Professing Buddhists:** 100%

**Practising Buddhists:** 55%

**Christians:** 0%

**Scripture:** none

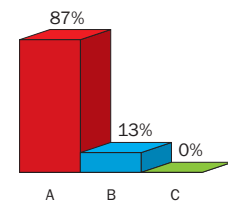
**Jesus film:** none

**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