

# Kaike

One of the most interesting and little-known parts of Asia is the Dolpa District in the Karnali Zone of north-west Nepal. Massive Himalayan peaks look down on a landscape containing many unresearched ethnic groups and languages. One such language is called Kaike. According to linguist David Bradley, in 1997 Kaike was spoken by 2,000 people in Nepal.<sup>1</sup> The primary location for this group is the village of Tichurong. Three nearby villages are known in Nepali by the names Sartara, Tupara and Densa.

The main source of information about this small language group comes from George van Driem, who profiles Kaike in his comprehensive *Languages of the Himalayas*. He notes, 'A Tamangic language spoken by approximately two thousand people in several villages of Dolpa District . . . is known by the name Kaike.'<sup>2</sup> There has been no grammatical study done of Kaike, although the American anthropologist James Fisher compiled a list of 600 Kaike words in 1971.<sup>3</sup>

Several small Buddhist groups that require further study to determine whether they qualify as distinct ethnolinguistic identities live east

of the Kaike area. These include Nyishangba, Narpa and Gyasumdo. One source states, 'The speakers of these three Tamangic dialects practice the Bon religion as well as Mahayana Buddhism and have for centuries formed part of the Tibetan



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cultural sphere.'<sup>4</sup> The small tribes in this remote part of the world's largest mountain range rarely travel out of their own area. As a result, other people in Nepal have developed ethnic stereotypes, calling them *Manang*

after a little-visited valley populated by Tibetan Buddhists. In Kathmandu, 'this term is used indiscriminately to designate any large-bodied male of Tibetan appearance with a tendency to bouts of rage and acts of violent crime. The term is also applied to any seedy or unscrupulous youth of Tibetan appearance, even if the lad in question may not have the foggiest notion about where the Manang valley is located.'<sup>5</sup>

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Kaike people have developed a certain insecurity. Even their unique language has been the object of scorn and ridicule. James Fisher has said that other ethnic groups have mocked the Kaike language so that the people now 'view Kaike in low regard because it is felt to be unsophisticated and unexpressive. [The Kaike people have] very low cultural self-esteem.'<sup>6</sup>

The light of the gospel has yet to shine in most of the villages and homes in this impoverished and remote part of the world. The presence of Maoist rebels in western Nepal has complicated evangelistic efforts and made many of the inhabitants of the area fearful of visitors.

There are no known Christians among the Kaike people. No Scripture or gospel messages have yet been translated into their language. For countless generations they have worshipped Buddha, completely oblivious to the existence of Jesus Christ.



**Population:**  
2,140 (2000)  
2,650 (2010)  
3,280 (2020)

**Countries:** Nepal

**Buddhism:** Tibetan

**Christians:** none known

## Overview of the Kaike

**Other Names:** Tarali Kham, Tarali Magar, Tichurong, Ticherong, Ka-ne, Khanigaon

**Population Sources:**  
2,000 in Nepal (1997, D Bradley)

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

**Dialects:** 0

**Professing Buddhists:** 100%

**Practising Buddhists:** 85%

**Christians:** 0%

**Scripture:** none

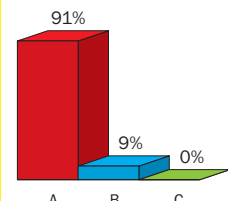
**Jesus film:** none

**Gospel Recordings:** none

**Christian Broadcasting:** none

**ROPAL code:** KZQ (Kaike) and TCN (Tichurong)

## 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