

Approximately 700,000 to 900,000 Eastern Tamang people live in the eastern and central parts of Nepal, concentrated in and around the nation's capital Kathmandu and in numerous villages in the north-east, south and east of the city.¹ There are also several thousand Tamang people living in India, in the lower Teesta valley and Rangit valley of Sikkim, as well as in parts of West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh.² Three thousand Tamang reportedly live in south-west Bhutan.³ A small diaspora community of Tamang people reportedly lives in western Myanmar. The majority of the Tamang prefer to live on hills between 1,500 and 2,200 metres (4,920 to 7,200 ft.) above sea level. Some prefer to live at even higher altitudes, while others have migrated down to the hot plains.

At the time of the 1991 Nepal census, the Tamang returned a total figure of 1,018,252 people—5.5 per cent of Nepal's population. This makes them the second largest tribal group in Nepal after the Magar. Linguists, however, have identified five distinct Tamang languages among them. Each group has been profiled separately in this book, starting with the Eastern Tamang.

The name *Tamang* means 'horse trader'. They are generally very poor people. Many are employed in menial jobs (some are porters in Kathmandu, for example, or stone carriers at the rock quarries). One source notes that 'The Tamangs live in the high hills east, north, south and west of Kathmandu valley. They are commonly seen on the streets of the capital city carrying large basket loads of goods by headstraps, the men and boys dressed in loincloths and long, usually black, tunics . . . always with a *khuhuri* knife stuck at the waistband.'⁴



Gospel Recordings: Nepal

Some scholars have identified as many as 40 different clans among the Tamang in Nepal. Each clan is distinguished by slight cultural and dialect differences.

The majority of Tamang follow Tibetan Buddhism, 'but mix this heavily with animism and somewhat with Hinduism. Their priests, or lamas, have a dominant role in the community and perform ceremonies for funerals, to ensure a certain deity's protection on crops, etc. Perhaps the most powerful person in society is the shaman, however, who

exorcises demons, and interacts with the spirit world.'⁵

Since the 1980s, a tremendous revival has broken out among many of Nepal's ethnic groups, and the Tamang are one of the most blessed in this regard. One Tamang pastor in 1991 reportedly oversaw '43 fellowships with a total congregation of 32,000 people'.⁶ When asked why the Tamang people were so open to the gospel, the pastor responded, 'It is God's time for us. My people were once filled with fear, but when Jesus Christ came,

we were turned from fear to faith. My people worshipped many, many spirits and had to offer continual sacrifices. Even if we were on the verge of starvation we still had to offer our food as sacrifices to the gods. . . . We have to cast out demons all the time. I used to be a lama priest and had a knowledge of the spirits. I can recognize the demonic forces of the different villages. I pray against them and command them to be gone in the name of Jesus.'⁷



Population:

877,800 (2000)
1,086,600 (2010)
1,345,200 (2020)

Countries: Nepal, India, Bhutan, Myanmar

Buddhism: Tibetan
Christians: 70,000

Overview of the Eastern Tamang

Other Names: Murni, Nishung, Lama, Tamanglama

Population Sources:
584,097 to 718,048 in Nepal (2000, B Grimes [based on 1991 census])
3,000 in India (2000, P Hattaway)
3,000 in Bhutan (1995, *Languages of Bhutan*) also in Myanmar

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

Dialects: 3 (Outer-Eastern Tamang, Central-Eastern Tamang, Southwestern Tamang)

Professing Buddhists: 70%

Practising Buddhists: 35%

Christians: 8%

Scripture: Portions

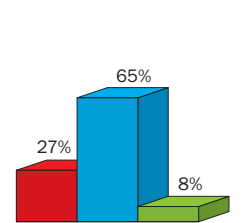
Jesus film: available

Gospel Recordings: Tamang: Eastern

Christian Broadcasting: none

ROPAL code: TAJ

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