

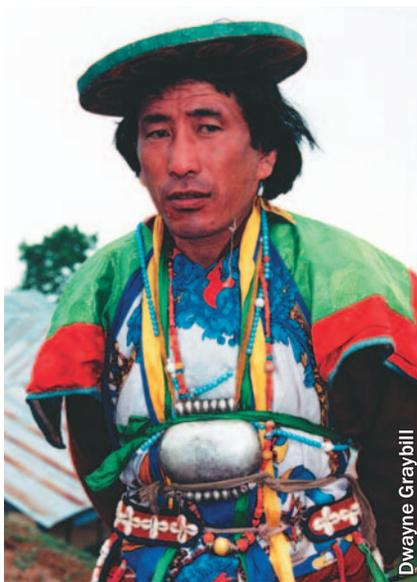
# Tsangla

More than quarter of a million Tsangla people live in the eastern Himalayan Range. The largest numbers (approximately 170,000) are located in eastern and south-eastern areas of the small Buddhist kingdom of Bhutan, especially in Trashigang and Dungsam. More than 50,000 live in neighbouring parts of Arunachal Pradesh, India, especially in the Tawang and Kameng districts,<sup>1</sup> while a further 35,000 inhabit the southern part of Chinese Tibet, particularly in Cona County.<sup>2</sup> Others are scattered far to the north-east in Medog (Motuo) County.

In Bhutan, Tsangla houses 'are made of stone and wood, and are usually built on stilts in dispersed settlements along the mountain slopes. Larger settlements have monasteries called *dzongs*, where prayer flags and prayer wheels are a common sight. A local variety of cattle known as *mithun* is a valued form of wealth and is sacrificed at religious ceremonies. Pigs and goats are also raised to sell and to use as sacrifices.<sup>3</sup>

There is some confusion about the classification of the Tsangla people. Although they are officially recognized as a 'Scheduled Tribe' in India, in China they have been counted as part of the Monba nationality—yet the Monba in China speak two very different languages, designated as

Cona Monba and Medog Monba according to their locations. Cona Monba (Tsangla) is 'quite distinct linguistically'<sup>4</sup> from Medog Monba, in areas of 'phonology, vocabulary, and



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grammar'.<sup>5</sup> The speakers of the two languages struggle to communicate with each other.<sup>6</sup> Tsangla has four tones, while Medog Monba does not contain any tones at all.<sup>7</sup>

Nearly three centuries ago, the Tsangla people migrated across the Himalayas from the Moinyu area in south-east Tibet. The Tsangla in India also claim to have migrated from Bhutan.<sup>8</sup>

Many rural Tsangla practise 'river burial', by which a corpse is cut into

108 pieces and hurled into a rushing river to be washed away. Their Tibetan neighbours consider this to be the lowest form of burial and only use it for children and lepers. Tsangla silversmiths are renowned for their skill in making intricate jewelry and ornaments.

Although most Tsangla are outwardly Tibetan Buddhists, the majority continue to practise shamanistic and polytheistic rituals. The Tsangla believe that all disease is caused by demons. They feel that they are forced to sacrifice their valuable cattle and horses in order to pacify these angry demons so that they will cease to cause the affliction. They also believe that humans can be demons who cause sickness. A boy or girl who marries into a 'demon family' also becomes a demon. Therefore 'demon families' are only allowed to intermarry.<sup>9</sup> In addition to their Buddhist beliefs, each Tsangla villages 'has its *sibdag*, or "god of the soil", which must constantly be appeased, and each house has its god, *tab-lha*, who must not be offended.'<sup>10</sup>

Most Tsangla are unreached and geographically inaccessible to the gospel. A number of Tsangla have heard the gospel, however, due to the existence of short-wave gospel radio broadcasts in the Tsangla language and the recent translation of the Jesus film into Tsangla.



## Population:

255,000 (2000)  
315,100 (2010)  
390,800 (2020)

**Countries:** Bhutan, China, India

**Buddhism:** Tibetan

**Christians:** 100

## Overview of the Tsangla

**Other Names:** Sangla, Tshangla, Cona Monba, Monba: Cona, Cuona Monba, Central Monba, Moinba, Menba, Monpa, Momba, Momba, Menpa, Memba, Southern Monba, Sharchagpakha, Sarchapkha, Shachopkha, Shachobiikha

## Population Sources:

138,000 in Bhutan (2001, G van Driem [1991 figure])<sup>11</sup>  
46,000 in India (1997, India Missions Association)  
30,000 in China (1987, *Language Atlas of China*)

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

Tshangla

**Dialects:** 8 (Northern Tsangla, Southern Tsangla, Matchopa Nagnoo, Chug, Sangla, Kalaktang, Kishpignag, Monkit)

**Professing Buddhists:** 80%

**Practising Buddhists:** 35%

**Christians:** 0.1%

**Scripture:** Portions

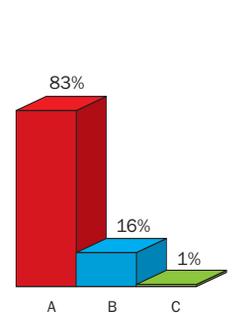
**Jesus film:** Tsangla

**Gospel Recordings:** Bhutanese Tsangla

**Christian Broadcasting:** available (FEBC)

**ROPAL code:** TSJ

## 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