

Approximately four hundred people belonging to the Brokpa ethnic group in Bhutan speak a distinct language called Brokkat. There are more than 6,000 other Brokpa people in Bhutan who speak a language called Brokpake. Although they are culturally and ethnically related to the Brokkat-speaking Brokpa, the two languages are so different that speakers from each group cannot communicate if they only use their own vernaculars.

The Brokkat Brokpa inhabit 'an estimated seventy-odd households in Dur, roughly

The respected Dutch linguist George van Driem was the first scholar to identify and study the Brokkat Brokpa language. He notes, 'Brokkat is what the Brokpas of Dur call their language. . . . The nomadic Brokpa yakherds in northern Bumthang have all been linguistically assimilated to the Bumthang speaking majority. Curiously, only the Brokpas who have taken up a sedentary lifestyle and live in the conglomeration known as Dur have retained their language.'<sup>3</sup>

Brokkat Brokpa is part of the Southern Tibetan branch of the Tibeto-Burman language family. There are seven languages in Bhutan that fall within the Southern Tibetan classification, one of which is the main Brokpa language. Van Driem, however, insists that Brokkat 'is distinct from the Brokpa language of Mera and Sakteng, and the language does not seem to have been very heavily infiltrated by loanwords from Bumthang. Many of the words in the language do not show the apophony typical for Central Tibetan dialects. . . . The Brokpas of Dur refer to [the national language] Dzongkha as *Ngalongkha*, although the Bumthang term *Mengkat* is also used. Interestingly, the Brokpas of Dur refer to their Bumthang speaking neighbours as *Monpa* and to the Bumthang language as *Monkat* "Monpa language".<sup>4</sup>

All Brokkat Brokpa families profess Buddhism as their religion. For countless centuries Buddhism has been their way of life, and the religion is intricately woven into their cultural fabric.

Christianity has made little impact in the valleys of north-central Bhutan. Few members of this group have ever heard the name of Jesus Christ. Missionary endeavour in Bhutan only really began in 1960, when Bhutan ended its policy of isolation. Indian Christians entered the country as development workers, and Bhutanese students travelled abroad to study. Some returned home as Christians, and the gospel has slowly started to take root.



**Population:**  
370 (2000)  
480 (2010)  
620 (2020)  
**Countries:** Bhutan  
**Buddhism:** Tibetan  
**Christians:** none known



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two thirds of which are Brokpa households and one third of which are Bumthang households'.<sup>1</sup> Dur is within Bhutan's Bumthang District, in the north-central part of Bhutan. Bumthang is known as the cultural heartland of Bhutan. The district consists of four valleys 'dotted with palaces, ancient temples and monasteries. . . . [It] is believed to be the first part of Bhutan to be inhabited, with evidence of prehistoric settlements in the Ura valley of Bumthang and the southern region of Khyeng. These and many other valleys were separated principalities ruled by independent kings.'<sup>2</sup>

## Overview of the Brokkat Brokpa

**Other Names:** Brokskad, Brogpa, Brokpa of Dur

**Population Sources:**

300 in Bhutan (2001, G van Driem [1991 figure])

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

**Dialects:** 0

**Professing Buddhists:** 100%

**Practising Buddhists:** 65%

**Christians:** 0%

**Scripture:** none

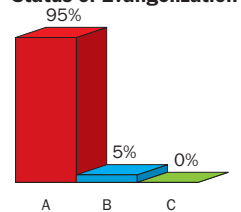
**Jesus film:** none

**Gospel Recordings:** none

**Christian Broadcasting:** none

**ROPAL code:** BRO

## 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