

# Tribal Christianity (and allied castes) in the Himalayas

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Entry tags: Catholic, Protestantism, Dalit Christianity, Tribal Christianity, Himalayan Christianity, Anglican, Christian Traditions, Religious Group

The tribal Christian population of the high Himalayas and low-lying hills spans five countries (India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bhutan and China) and contested boarderlands (Tibet, Sikkim, Aksai Chin and Kashmir, among others). It encompasses approximately 6 million people. The largest Christian tribal populations are 4.9 million converted Baptists, Presbyterians and Catholics in Northeast India and 375,000 Evangelical Protestants in Nepal (a figure sometimes rounded up to 1 million) -- arguably the fastest-growing Christian population in the world. Small but important Christian tribal communities are in Bhutan, Sikkim, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Jammu and Kashmir. The historical timeline of tribal conversion to Christianity depends on the region and date of missionary penetration into the hills. The Portuguese Jesuit João Cabral was arguably the first European to access the Himalayan region in 1627 with missionary designs. Since then, thousands of missionaries have come into the Himalayan region, from the London-based Church Missionary Society (Punjab region through the 20th century) to the recent explosion of South Korean missionaries populating language institutes and centered in the Kathmandu Valley. Indigenous house churches have sprouted up in remote tribal villages. Himalayan tribal Christianity falls into a broad spectrum of official affiliation. Some expressions of tribal Christianity are largely indigenous and invisible; they address local aspirations and offer respite from spiritual affliction and caste discrimination within circumscribed tribal cosmologies and social stratifications. Other expressions of tribal Christianity are hooked into international NGOs and global ideoscapes promoting salvation that are backed by foreign patronage and theological instruction; they are networked through social media platforms and employ a range of conversion techniques associated with Western (and South Korean) Evangelicalism. In some cases, tribal Christianity in the Himalayas allows discriminated-against Dalit groups who are embedded within tribal formations to find self-respect and social validation within the new idiom of salvation and equality under Yesu Masih (Jesus Christ). Although Christians are persecuted throughout South Asia, overt violence against the minority religion is not as strongly evident in the Himalayan tribal range as it is in Pakistan and non-Himalayan India states (especially Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Odisha, where in 2007-08 in Kandhamal District 50 Christians were killed and 95 churches burned down). The rise of right-wing Hindutva politics since 2014 and the disproportionate criminalization of Christian conversion as coercive have pushed Christianity further into the social margins everywhere through India, including the Himalayan tribal belt. As would be expected, Christian tribals in the Himalayas are not strongly unified around their minority religious status; divided by language, geography and often theology and sectarian affiliation, they are sometimes balkanized into subdividing communities. Nevertheless, they are conceptually and anthropologically interconnected as a Pan-Himalayan community of faith, spiritual aspiration and unique forms of theological syncretism.



Date Range: 1950 CE - 2018 CE

Region: Himalayan tribal Christianity (and tribal-allied groups)

Region tags: Asia, South Asia, Nepal, Bhutan, India, North India, Himalayas, Northeast India

The spread of Christianity (predominately Anglican, Catholic and United Evangelical Lutheran) into the

Himalayan region and among tribal and tribal-aligned communities at its greatest extent in the contemporary period.

### Status of Participants:

- ✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

## Sources

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Print sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: Cox, Jeffrey. 2002. *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818-1940*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Source 2: Ripert, Blandine. 2002. "Improbable Globalization: Individualization and Christianization among the Tamangs." In *Facing Globalization in the Himalayas: Belonging and the Politics of the Self*, edited by Gerrard Toffin and Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka, 45-62. London: Sage Publications.
- Source 3: Webster, John C.B. 2007. *A Social History of Christianity: North-west India Since 1800*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Notes: Taken together, these scholarly works describe the historical interplay of Christian missionaries and colonial power in the Punjabi foothills of the Himalayas, the effects of rapidly-rising Christian affiliation among Tamang (loss of traditional authority and increased individualism, among others), and a historical overview of Christianity in a broader context. For other important works on Scheduled Tribal Christianity in South Asia and especially the Himalayas, see: 1. Augustine, Sali. 2011. "Violence against Christians in India: Mobilization of Adivasis and Dalits as the Un-reached and the Foot-soldiers." *The Journal of Sophia Asian Studies* 29(39-54). 2. Hedlund, Roger E. 2000. *Christianity is Indian: the emergence of an indigenous community*. Myslapore: ISPCK. 3. Chaube, S.K. 1999. "The Scheduled Tribes and Christianity in India." *Economic and Political Weekly* 34(9):524-526. 4. Roy-Burman, B K. 1972. "Integrated Area Approach to the Problems of the Hill Tribes of the North-East" in K Suresh Singh *The Tribal Situation in India*. Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. 5. Sinha, Surajit Chandra. 1982. "Tribal Solidarity Movements in India: A Review" in Buddhadev Chaudhuri *Tribal Development in India*. 6. Minz, Nirmal. 1997. *Rise up, my people, and claim the promise: the Gospel among the tribes of India*. Delhi: Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. 7. Christopher, Stephen. 2018. "Dalit Margins: Tribal Belonging and State Recognition in the Western Himalayas." PhD diss., Syracuse University. 8. *Margins of Faith: Dalit and Tribal Christianity in India*. 2010. Edited by Rowena Robinson & Joseph Marianus Kujur. Delhi: Sage Publications.

Online sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1 URL: <https://web.library.yale.edu/divinity/himalayan>
- Source 1 Description: Created in 2008, the Himalayan Mission Archive Collection at the Yale Divinity School Library. It includes the archives of Christian organizations operating in the Himalayas. Included is The Nepal Church History Project, a 1985 Nepalese project to preserve church history; The International Nepal Fellowship, which preserves health-related documents by a Christian medical NGO; the Central Asia Fellowship, founded in 1989 in order to convert Tibetan Buddhists living throughout the Himalayas; and The United Mission to Nepal, an INGO started in 1954 dealing with health and agriculture.
- Source 2 URL: <http://www.bridgeinternational.org/reaching-the-himalayas-for-jesus-christ-by-dawa-singye-bhutia/>
- Source 2 Description: An example of an American-Scandinavian Evangelical NGO. Their motto is "Linking God's People to Reach the Unreached". Although global in scope, it includes posts about Christian

missionary work in the Himalayas -- such as the above testimonial by a Bhutanese former Tibetan Buddhist and his description of the spread of 200 house churches under the auspices of the Free Church of Finland Mission.

– Source 3 URL: <http://www.missioninchurch.org/>

– Source 3 Description: A small-scale, Kathmandu-based missionary group. Founded by David Prasai, it is representative of many such grassroots Christian movements in the Himalayas.

Notes: Taken together, these resources span an archival database of major Christian missionary efforts, an example of Western-backed missionary efforts in the region, and an indigenous missions group focused on small-scale house churches.

## Relevant online primary textual corpora (original languages and/or translations):

– Source 1 URL: [gaddi.in](http://gaddi.in)

– Source 1 Description: A Gaddi-language website for biblical study created by Christian converts among the Hali sub-caste of the Gaddi community.

– Source 2 URL: <http://www.nepalbiblesociety.org/site/>

– Source 2 Description: Based in Kathmandu, NBS is an online resource provided through United Bible Societies (UBS). It went online as an officially-registered NGO in 2007, although it was created in 1975. It provides Nepali-language biblical resources (textual and audio) and gives news and updates regarding Christian observances.

– Source 3 URL: <https://www.facebook.com/nepalichristianmedia/>

– Source 3 Description: A community Facebook page with over 25,000 subscribers of Nepalese Christians. It is described as "a common place where Nepali Christians can share, participate, request prayers and build up their own community profile." The Facebook page has 100s of uploaded videos and pictures showing Nepalese Christian worship conferences and teachings.

Notes: A representative sample of an indigenous effort to promote Christianity within a small tribal dialect (Gaddi), a large-scale effort to promote Christianity in a national language (Nepalese), and a social network of Himalayan Christians.

– Source 1 URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPAoLiZPUvY>

– Source 1 Description: Ladakh Buddhist Association interrogation of a blind Christian Ladakhi who was beaten by locals (allegedly LBA employees) and pressured to reconvert to Buddhism. Such videos are common throughout the Himalayas and are used by both parties: Christians to show persecution and non-Christians (usually Hindus and Buddhists) to show social breakdown due to coercive conversion tactics.

## General Variables

### Membership/Group Interactions

Are other religious groups in cultural contact with target religion:

– Yes



Is the cultural contact competitive:

– Yes

Notes: The Christianization of Himalayan tribal groups often runs into cultural contestation with traditional forms of knowledge and sociality. For example, the Christian Lepchas in Darjeeling District and in southern Sikkim face intense criticism from Buddhist Lepchas (see "Vanishing Lepcha: Change and Cultural Revival in a Mountain Community of Sikkim" by Jenny Bentley in the *Bulletin of Tibetology*).

↳ Is the cultural contact accommodating/pluralistic:

– Yes

Notes: Even in the Lepcha case described above, Buddhists and Christians are still integrated in village dynamics. Virouland (2004) argues that Magar converts in Nepal experience Pentecostalism as congruent with Tibeto-Burman shamanistic possession rituals. Christianity is seen as revitalizing and integrating extant syncretistic practices and not as a conceptual departure. Likewise, Blandine Ripert (2014) cites Nima Ghising, a globetrotting Tamang pastor whose sermons are widely disseminated on YouTube, as arguing for the conceptual crossover of Tamang and Christian themes of malign spirits and the afterlife. These harmonizing aspects of Christianity within a tribal milieu suggests pluralism and accommodation, not cultural rupture and group competition.

↳ Is the cultural contact neutral:

– Yes

Notes: In some cases, Christian conversion is treated neutrally by the dominant tribal community. This may be due to relative ignorance about what Christianity is and how it is practiced (as is the case among Gaddis, a Hindu tribe in Himachal Pradesh). Gaddi tribals are caste Hindus who often disregard the low-status Gaddi groups who convert to Christianity. This disregard is not necessarily negatively coded and can be described as neutral cultural contact.

↳ Is there violent conflict (within sample region):

– Yes

Notes: See Nicholas Gier's "The Origins of Religious Violence" (2014, Lexington Books) for state violence against Bhutanese Christians during the First Shabdrung. On the other hand, alleged violence enacted by Christians in the Himalayas is documented here (<http://christianaggression.org/2016/04/27/the-spread-of-christianity-in-kashmir-and-its-unholy-designs/>). In India, the VHS, BJP and even the Congress in Himachal Pradesh routinely warn the legislature about the danger of Christian conversion and their coercive tactics (warnings that fuel anti-Christian violence).

↳ Is there violent conflict (with groups outside the sample region):

– Yes

Notes: Christians are generally a persecuted minority in India and face extreme violence by Hindu extremists. For a scholarly review of the situation across India, see Chad Bauman's "Hindu-Christian Conflict in India: Globalization, Conversion and the Coterminal Castes and Tribes" (*The Journal of Asian Studies* 72(3):633–53).

Does the religious group have a general process/system for assigning religious affiliation:

– Yes

↳ Assigned at birth (membership is default for this society):

– No

Notes: Although Christian affiliation is based on personal conviction at the theological level, in everyday practice it is often assumed at birth and correlates with caste/clan affiliation. Anglicans and Catholics may be more likely to consider their religious belief default if born into such a family, while Protestants and Evangelicals may emphasize the importance of children taken personal declarations of faith to be formally inducted into the Christian community.

↳ Assigned by personal choice:

– Yes

Notes: Many Evangelical and Protestant tribal Christians emphasize the personal choice of religious conviction and de-emphasize the strong correlation between clan belonging and Christian conversion. In short, caste/clan groups may convert to Christianity en masse and create strong communal ties to the faith that in a sense de-emphasize personal choice.

↳ Assigned by class:

– Yes

Notes: For example, Halis are both the lowest caste and class of the Gaddi community (in Chamba and Kangra Districts of Himachal Pradesh) and the most likely to convert to Protestantism. See Stephen Christopher's PhD dissertation *Tribal Margins*, especially Chapter 4 *Protestant Promises: Spiritual Torment and Aspirational Hermeneutics*.

– Yes

Notes: For example, Halis are both the lowest caste and class of the Gaddi community (in Chamba and Kangra Districts of Himachal Pradesh) and the most likely to convert to Protestantism.

↳ Assigned at a specific age:

– No

↳ Assigned by gender:

– Yes

Notes: Nathaniel Roberts's "To Be Cared For" (2016, 186) describes "two ways of conceptualizing spiritual power" among house churches in Chennai slums: "The first was overt and hierarchical and centered on the person of the pastor. Of equal or greater significance, however, were quasi-autonomous organizational networks among church women". These two bases of spiritual authority – literate and charismatic male pastors hooked into NGOs and church congregants, largely women, who draw on experiential authority and local prestige – exist in a sometimes complementary, sometimes combative dialectic (Roberts 2016, 186). He goes on to attribute the lopsidedness of female Christian devotion to structural dependence on men, poverty, and higher rates of self-reporting worry. Although his work is grounded in Chennai, it

certainly holds true to Himalayan tribal Christian affiliation, as well.

↳ Assigned by participation in a particular ritual:

– Yes

Notes: Tribal Christians in the Himalayas participate in the expected range of rituals of belonging: 1) Baptism (based on Matthew 28:19) as a mode of church initiation that follows in the biblical account of Jesus receiving baptism from John the Baptist; 2) Confirmation as a sacrament of strengthening the grace of the Holy Spirit; and 3) the Eucharist (Holy Communion, *prabhu bhoj* in Hindi) as a monthly affirmation of the Christian community and anticipation of the return of Christ in body. While these rituals often mark Christian/Catholic participation among Himalayan tribals, others emphasize the need for personal conversion through accepting Christ into one's heart. For these Christians (often Evangelicals), testimonials of miraculous conversion are central markers of participation. For example, Hali Christians among the Gaddi community emphasize the conversion testimonial as an important ritual marker of belonging.

↳ Assigned by some other factor:

– Yes [specify]: Class, gender, ritual and personal choice are all important factors in tribal Christian belonging in the Himalayas. In addition, caste and clan are important matrices for understanding conversion among tribals.

Does the religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members:

– Yes

↳ Is proselytizing mandated for religious professionals:

– Yes

Notes: Not exactly mandated, but Christian tribal pastors and leaders often proselytize based on their inner conviction of the importance of salvation. This is often attributed to Matthew 28:19 and the injunction to "make disciples of all nations."

↳ Is proselytizing mandated for all adherents:

– Yes

Notes: Again, biblical passages are proffered among Evangelical and Protestant Christian tribals and tribal aspirants about the need to spread the "good news" of Christianity. Among the Hali Christian converts within the Gaddi community, the case study I know best, adherents were often implored through weekly sermons at house churches to set good examples for Hindu neighbors. The intensity of proselytizing depended on individuals. However, it is not a safe legal environment to conduct missionary work in Himachal Pradesh. Himachal Pradesh is the first Congress-led state to adopt anti-conversion legislation, a move widely understood to be politically motivated. Without a single registered case of forced conversion, Chief Minister Vibhadra Singh warned that "unless checked well in time this practice may erode the confidence and mutual trust between the different ethnic and religious groups in the state" (Tribune News Service, 2006).

↳ Is missionary work mandated for religious professionals:

– No

Notes: Not in the sense of conducting extensive missionary work. Opening a village house church is often the strategy of Christian leaders.

↳ Is missionary work mandated for all adherents:

– No

Notes: Most Himalayan tribal Christians are unable to conduct extensive missionary work, either at home or abroad, due to financial restraints and family responsibilities.

↳ Is proselytization coercive:

– Yes

↳ Does the coercion take the form of physical force:

– No

↳ Does the coercion take the form of economic sanctions:

– Yes

Notes: Not sanctions, but inducements. This is not all the time. I was struck by indigenous Christian tribal communities that offer not economic inducements but rather protection from witchcraft and spiritual torment. However, there certainly are cases of economic and psychosocial pressures put on tribals to convert. Such converted individuals are sometimes dubbed "Rice Christians". This phrase was coined by Thomas Hale Jr, a physician and missionary in Nepal. He described the injustice of converting tribals by exploiting their social condition and offering material allurements (i.e. rice) for conversion.

Does the religion have official political support

– No

Notes: It is more often the case that Himalayan states and nations actively promote anti-conversion laws to prevent the Christianization of predominately Hindu and animist groups. In Bhutan, for example, Article 7 of the 2008 constitution guarantees religious freedom while forbidding conversion "by means of coercion or inducement". Such a clause is often pretext to target Christianity, sometimes without strong cause. A similar law was passed in Himachal Pradesh recently without a registered case of coercive tactics to convert tribals to Christianity.

Is there a conception of apostasy in the religious group:

– No

Notes: In cases where Christian belonging closely parallels clan and caste affiliation, apostasy is rarely (if ever) a matter of public denunciation/abandonment of faith because it is so intimately tied to social networks and social belonging.

## Size and Structure

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (estimated population, numerical):

– Estimated population, numeric: 5500000

Notes: It is very difficult to accurately estimate the population of Christian tribals in the Himalayas. In Nepal, Christianity is the 5th most practiced religion (2011 census) with 375,699 adherents, or 1.4% of the population. But this may be severely under-reported, and others estimate over 1,000,000 Christians in Nepal. Sikkim has 9.9% Christianity (2011 census) -- mostly members of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Sikkim -- approximately 61,000 members. Bhutan has .9% Christianity -- approximately 12,255 members (according to Aide à l'Eglise en détresse). Himachal Pradesh has .18% Christianity. Kashmiri Christians number in the hundreds and face intense governmental and social pressure. See: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Kashmir-zealots-push-Christians-into-valley-of-fear/articleshow/11595441.cms>. In the Northeast of India, Christianity has a strong presence: 1,851,290 Baptists, 1,711,495 Catholics, and 1,405,781 Presbyterians. In Uttarakhand, Christianity is 0.37%.

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (% of sample region population, numerical):

– Estimated population, percentage of sample region: 1

Notes: There are about 52,000,000 people in the Himalayas and as many as 450,000,000 settled around the base of the Himalayas. Among this population, a fraction is Scheduled Tribe or aligned to tribal identity.

## Scripture

Does the religious group have scriptures:

Scripture is a generic term used to designate revered texts that are considered particularly authoritative and sacred relative to other texts. Strictly speaking, it refers to written texts, but there are also “oral scriptures” (e.g. the Vedas of India).

– Yes

↳ Are they written:

– Yes

Notes: Many efforts are underway to provide the Bible in tribal languages.

↳ Are they oral:

– Yes

Notes: As many tribals are non-literate, Christian missionaries often provide audio transcription of the Bible in tribal languages.

↳ Is there a story (or a set of stories) associated with the origin of scripture:

– Yes



↳ Revealed by a high god:

– Yes

Notes: Revealed by God the Father to Moses and later apostles.

↳ Revealed by other supernatural being:

– No

↳ Inspired by high god:

– Yes

Notes: It is believed by highly literate and scholarly Christians that God the Father inspired the selection of texts to be included in the biblical canon at the First Council of Nicaea. Similarly, Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, was inspired by God when he formally organized the New Testament canon.

↳ Inspired by other supernatural being:

– No

↳ Originated from divine or semi-divine human beings:

– No

Notes: Biblical patriarchs and church leaders were not divine in any sense but in a special albeit human covenant with God.

↳ Originated from non-divine human being:

– Yes

Notes: Written by man, inspired by God.

## Architecture, Geography

Is monumental religious architecture present:

– Yes

↳ In the average settlement, what percentage of area is taken up by all religious monuments:

– Percentage: 0

Notes: Colonial-era churches remain in Himalayan hill stations not destroyed by the massive Kangra Earthquake of 1905. These monuments are still used by Christians in the Himalayas -- tribal and non-tribal alike.

↳ Size of largest single religious monument, square meters:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Height of largest single religious monument, meters:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Size of average monument, square meters:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Height of average monument, meters:

– Field doesn't know

↳ In the largest settlement, what percentage of area is taken up by all religious monuments:

– Percentage of area: 0

Are there different types of religious monumental architecture:

– No

Notes: In addition to cathedrals, colonial-era Christian cemeteries are common in the Himalayas.

Is iconography present:

– Yes

↳ Where is iconography present [select all that apply]:

– At home

– Only religious public space

– Some public spaces

Notes: For some Hindu tribals, the lack of certain Hindu body markers (dupatta and tikka, for example) are themselves indicative of Christian conversion -- a kind of iconography through absence. Typically Christian iconography take the form of poster art and statues and associated symbols (crosses, for example) in homes, cars, public buses, churches and so on.

↳ Are there distinct features in the religious group's iconography:

– No

Notes: Himalayan tribals do not have distinct aspects of Christian iconography when compared to the larger South Asian context. Their poster art, paintings, statues, crosses and so on are not distinctly Himalayan. I am unaware of iconographic syncretism between tribal religious forms and Christianity. At the level of theology, however, syncretism is to be expected.

Are there specific sites dedicated to sacred practice or considered sacred:

– Yes



Are sacred site oriented to environmental features:

"Environmental features" refers to features in the landscape, mountains, rivers, cardinal directions etc...

– No

Notes: Churches and cathedrals, often of colonial construction. Among some tribal groups, miraculous faith healing has created sacred sites in unlikely places (such as village mud huts).

Are pilgrimages present:

– No

## Beliefs

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### Burial and Afterlife

Is a spirit-body distinction present:

Answer "no" only if personhood (or consciousness) is extinguished with death of the physical body. Answering yes does not necessarily imply the existence of Cartesian mind/body dualism, merely that some element of personhood (or consciousness) survives the death of the body.

– Yes



Spirit-mind is conceived of as having qualitatively different powers or properties than other body parts:

– Yes

Notes: Spirit transcends death; the body is temporal and rots.

Belief in afterlife:

– Yes



Is the spatial location of the afterlife specified or described by the religious group:

– Yes



Afterlife in specified realm of space beyond this world:

– Yes

Notes: Heaven is understood to be a realm existing outside this world (based on various biblical references, such as (John 14:1-3 -- Jesus is actively preparing a place for believers in Heaven; preparing a place for us to live; and Isaiah 65:21 -- believers will plant vineyards and eat eat of the produce).

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined “above” space:

– Yes

Notes: Although the Bible goes to some length to describe the placeness of Heaven, most tribal Christians in the Himalayas describe eternal life in Heaven in material and spiritual terms and less in spatial qualities.

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined “below” space:

– Yes

Notes: Hell is variously described in the Bible as a below space of eternal damnation -- as a burning sulfuric lake (Revelations 21:8) and as a downwards realm of the dead (Psalms 9:17).

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined horizontal space:

– No

↳ Afterlife located in "other" space:

– Yes [specify]: Catholics believe in Purgatory as an intermediate space of purification.

Reincarnation in this world:

– No

Notes: However, for many Christian tribals in the Himalayas their Buddhist/Hindu backgrounds continue to shape their innermost conceptions of karma/rebirth and oftentimes put believers in a social bind when it comes time to perform death rituals of kin.

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses:

– No

Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:

– No

Are grave goods present:

– No

Are formal burials present:

– Yes

↳ As cenotaphs:

– No

↳ In cemetery:

– Yes

Notes: However, Christian tribals in the Himalayas sometimes immolate corpses because of community pressure. This leads to theological concern about the state of the soul.

↳ Family tomb-crypt:

– No

↳ Domestic (individuals interred beneath house, or in areas used for normal domestic activities):

– No

↳ Other formal burial type:

– No

## Supernatural Beings

Are supernatural beings present:

– Yes

↳ A supreme high god is present:

– Yes

↳ The supreme high god is anthropomorphic:

– Yes

Notes: According to standard Trinitarian beliefs, the supreme high god is one but in three forms including the incarnate human-divine form of Jesus Christ.

↳ The supreme high god is a sky deity:

– Yes

↳ The supreme high god is chthonic (of the underworld):

– No

Notes: Although God in a sense authorizes the underworld and is described as having traveled there to retrieve the Keys of Life and Death (Hebrews 2:14, among others).

↳ The supreme high god is fused with the monarch (king=high god):

– No

↳ The monarch is seen as a manifestation or emanation of the high god:

– No

↳ The supreme high god is a kin relation to elites:

– No

Notes: Although some tribal Christians have fascinating exegetical moves and hermenutic strategies to link up their lifeways and ancestry with Christ. For example, Gaddi Dalits in Himachal Pradesh describe how Jesus was revealed to shepherds and has special blessings and relationship to shepherds like themselves.

↳ The supreme high god has another type of loyalty-connection to elites:

– No

↳ The supreme high god is unquestionably good:

– Yes

↳ Other feature(s) of supreme high god:

– Yes [specify]: The hermenutic twist of tribal Christians in the Himalayas is how God is localized and harmonized with existing tribal culture, lifeways and beliefs.

↳ The supreme high god has knowledge of this world:

– Yes

↳ The supreme god's knowledge is restricted to particular domain of human affairs:

– No

↳ The supreme high god's knowledge is restricted to (a) specific area(s) within the sample region:

– No

↳ The supreme high god's knowledge is unrestricted within the sample region:

– Yes

↳ The supreme high god's knowledge is unrestricted outside of sample region:

– Yes

- ↳ The supreme high god can see you everywhere normally visible (in public):
  - Yes
- ↳ The supreme high god can see you everywhere (in the dark, at home):
  - Yes
- ↳ The supreme high god can see inside heart/mind (hidden motives):
  - Yes
- ↳ The supreme high god knows your basic character (personal essence):
  - Yes
- ↳ The supreme high god knows what will happen to you, what you will do (future sight):
  - Yes
- ↳ The supreme high god has other knowledge of this world:
  - Yes [specify]: Omniscient and yet this doesn't imede free will.
- ↳ The supreme high god has deliberate causal efficacy in the world:
  - Yes
- ↳ The supreme high god can reward:
  - Yes
- ↳ The supreme high god can punish:
  - Yes
- ↳ The supreme high god has indirect causal efficacy in the world:
  - Yes
- ↳ The supreme high god exhibits positive emotion:
  - Yes
- ↳ The supreme high god exhibits negative emotion:
  - Yes

- ↳ The supreme high god possesses hunger:
  - No
  
- ↳ Is it permissible to worship supernatural beings other than the high god:
  - No
  - Notes: Not permissible, although common.
  
- ↳ The supreme high god possesses/exhibits some other feature:
  - Field doesn't know
  
- ↳ The supreme high god communicates with the living:
  - Yes
    - ↳ In waking, everyday life:
      - Yes
    - ↳ In dreams:
      - Yes
    - ↳ In trance possession:
      - Yes
    - ↳ Through divination practices:
      - Yes
    - ↳ Only through religious specialists:
      - No
    - ↳ Only through monarch
      - No
    - ↳ Other form of communication with living:
      - Yes [specify]: Intercession, possession, tongues.
  
- ↳ Previously human spirits are present:
  - No



↳ Non-human supernatural beings are present:

– Yes

↳ These supernatural beings can be seen:

– Yes

Notes: Among Catholics, supernatural beings can be benevolent patron saints; among Evangelicals and Protestants, supernatural beings are more often demonic forces that can take specific forms. For example, Hali Gaddis (in Himachal Pradesh) believe that evil spirits associated with the devil in Christianity either inhabit Hindu deities or manifest as Hindu deities.

↳ These supernatural beings can be physically felt:

– Yes

Notes: Oftentimes maliciously.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge of this world:

– Yes

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge restricted to particular domain of human affairs:

– Yes

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge restricted to (a) specific area(s) within the sample region:

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge unrestricted within the sample region:

– Yes

Notes: Angels and heavenly beings can intercede in believers' lives multifarious ways; demonic spirits can exert malign influence in similar ways.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge unrestricted outside of sample region:

– Yes

↳ Non-human supernatural beings can see you everywhere normally visible (in public):

– Yes

↳ Non-human supernatural beings can see you everywhere (in the dark, at home):

– Yes

Notes: Psalms 139:7-11 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will lay hold of me.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings can see inside heart/mind (hidden motives):

– Yes

Notes: Proverbs 15:3 The eyes of the LORD are in every place, Watching the evil and the good.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings knows your basic character (personal essence):

– Yes

↳ Non-human supernatural beings know what will happen to you, what you will do (future sight):

– Yes

Notes: Ephesians 1:11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will...

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have other knowledge of this world:

– Yes [specify]: Depending on personal beliefs and interpretations of the Bible, supernatural beings (of good and evil design) have more or less jurisdiction over people's lives and futures.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– Yes

↳ These supernatural beings can reward:

– Yes

Notes: Revelations 22:12 Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done...

↳ These supernatural beings can punish:

– Yes

Notes: Proverbs 3:11-12 My son, do not reject the discipline of the Lord or loathe His reproof, For whom the Lord loves He reproves, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights...

↳ These supernatural beings have indirect causal efficacy in the world:

– Yes

Notes: As commonly practiced, Christianity among Himalayan tribals is associated with indirect causal efficacy in diverse arenas of personal welfare, harvest size, livestock productivity and so on.

↳ These supernatural beings exhibit positive emotion:

– Yes

Notes: When heavenly.

↳ These supernatural beings exhibit negative emotion:

– Yes

Notes: When evil.

↳ These supernatural beings possess hunger:

– No

Notes: Not in the Hindu/Buddhist sense. However, in 1 Peter 5:8 Satan is described as possessing a kind of symbolic hunger. "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."

↳ These supernatural beings possess/exhibit some other feature:

– Yes [specify]: Evil spirits have various theological characteristics as outlined in Christian demonology.

Notes: According to Revelations 12:7-9, demons are evil angels and have similar features of their heavenly counterparts. Demons are not omniscient but may have specific knowledge within a certain domain. They are not omnipotent but constrained to the power that God allows them to possess.

↳ Mixed human-divine beings are present:

– No

Notes: This depends on terminology and the ways in which one considers Christ as human, divine or "mixed".

↳ Does the religious group possess a variety of supernatural beings:

– Yes

↳ Organized by kinship based on a family model:

– No

↳ Organized hierarchically:

– Yes

Notes: Demonic spirits within Christian cosmology are often overlaid onto tribal Hindu/Buddhist nature spirits/pantheonic deities. These deities are ranked by their potency and ability to harm.

↳ Power of beings is domain specific:

– Yes

Notes: As demonic spirits within Christianity are often overlapping with local tribal/animist/Hindu/Buddhist spirits, such spirits are often localized in places.

↳ Other organization for pantheon:

– No

## Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present:

This refers to surveillance by supernatural beings of humans' behaviour and/or thought particularly as it relates to social norms or potential norm violations.

– Yes

↳ There is supernatural monitoring of prosocial norm adherence in particular:

Prosocial norms are norms that enhance cooperation among members of the group, including obviously "moral" or "ethical" norms, but also extending to norms concerning honouring contracts and oaths, providing hospitality, coming to mutual aid in emergencies, etc.

– Yes

Notes: As practiced elsewhere, tribal Christianity in the Himalayas is concerned with ethical norms as outlined in the Bible and enforced by God.

↳ Supernatural beings care about taboos:

– Yes

↳ Food:

– Yes

Notes: The Christian God is generally opposed to animal sacrifice. In John 1:29, Jesus is described as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Among Himalayan tribal Christians, they must often negotiate social expectations to

participate and even host goat/sheep sacrifices as prosocial feast rituals and Christian beliefs banning such behavior as taboo.

↳ Sacred space(s):

– Yes

Notes: Not to desecrate churches, for example.

↳ Sacred object(s):

– Yes

Notes: Not to desecrate sacred objects. However, such prohibitions are considerably less in Christianity than "typical" expressions of tribal religion.

↳ Supernatural beings care about other:

– Yes [specify]: They care about the interior spaces of belief.

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of coreligionists:

– Yes

Notes: Jesus warned that those who take the sword perish by the sword. Murder is prohibited. However, in 1 John 3:15 Jesus states that "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of members of other religions:

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of members of other polities:

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about sex:

– Yes

↳ Adultery:

– Yes

Notes: Hebrews 13:4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

↳ Incest:

– Yes

Notes: Leviticus 18:10 The nakedness of your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter, their nakedness you shall not uncover; for their nakedness is yours.

↳ Other sexual practices:

– Yes [specify]: All manner of "sexual perversions" as scattered throughout the Bible.

↳ Supernatural beings care about lying:

– Yes

Notes: Proverbs 12:22 Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal faithfully are His delight.

↳ Supernatural beings care about honouring oaths:

– Yes

Notes: Leviticus 5:4 Or if a person swears thoughtlessly with his lips to do evil or to do good, in whatever matter a man may speak thoughtlessly with an oath, and it is hidden from him, and then he comes to know it, he will be guilty in one of these.

↳ Supernatural beings care about laziness:

– Yes

Notes: Proverbs 10:26 Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the lazy one to those who send him.

↳ Supernatural beings care about sorcery:

– Yes

Notes: Deuteronomy 18:10 There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer... However, it is notable that tribal Christians often understand the vicissitudes of life as sorcery done against them (jadu tona in India) and sometimes employ the services of witchdoctors (mantra-tantra, celas) to combat sorcery with sorcery -- despite Christian prohibitions.

↳ Supernatural beings care about non-lethal fighting:

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about shirking risk:

– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about disrespecting elders:

– No

Notes: Respect for elders (although laid down in biblical verses) is not central to Christian practice as it is among Hindu/Buddhist practice. This often leads to the overthrow of traditional authority that causes social rupture among tribal groups divided by Christian conversion.

↳ Supernatural beings care about gossiping:

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about property crimes:

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about proper ritual observance:

– Yes

Notes: However, Christian practice is notably less focused on correctness of ritual observance than tribal religion and Hinduism/Buddhism.

↳ Supernatural beings care about performance of rituals:

– Yes

Notes: Less than tribal religious traditions, however.

↳ Supernatural beings care about conversion of non-religionists:

– Yes

Notes: Mark 16:15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."

↳ Supernatural beings care about economic fairness:

– Yes

Notes: Although the radical economic egalitarianism of Jesus's teachings (aligned with Zealotry) is not often prioritized among tribal Christians in the Himalayas (or really anywhere else for that matter).

↳ Supernatural beings care about personal hygiene:

– Yes

Notes: 1 Corinthians 6:20 For you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. However, Christian expressions in the Himalayas are markedly less focused on personal and symbolic hygiene. For example, Hali Christians (part of the Gaddi tribal community in Himachal Pradesh) drink from the same cup during Communion (Prabhu Bhoj) in an act of group solidarity that violates "normal" Hindu hygiene about the sharing of utensils between members of different castes.

↳ Supernatural beings care about other:

– Field doesn't know

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment:

– Yes

↳ Is the cause or agent of supernatural punishment known:

– Yes

↳ Done only by high god:

– Yes

Notes: God allows the punishment of sin.

↳ Done by many supernatural beings:

– No

↳ Done through impersonal cause-effect principle:

– No

Notes: Punishment for sin is not causal in a karmic sense since Jesus's death allows for unrequited forgiveness.

↳ Done by other entities or through other means [specify]

– Field doesn't know

↳ Is the reason for supernatural punishment known:

– Yes

↳ Done to enforce religious ritual-devotional adherence:

– Yes

↳ Done to enforce group norms:

– Yes

↳ Done to inhibit selfishness:

– Yes

↳ Done randomly:

– No

↳ Other [specify]

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in the afterlife:



– Yes

↳ Supernatural punishments in the afterlife are highly emphasized by the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: Depending on the tribal Christian community in question, eternal damnation can be highly emphasized.

↳ Punishment in the afterlife consists of mild sensory displeasure:

– No

↳ Punishment in the afterlife consists of extreme sensory displeasure:

– Yes

↳ Punishment in the afterlife consists of reincarnation as an inferior life form:

– No

Notes: Although tribal Christians often retain certain karmic attitudes about reincarnation despite Christian opposition to it.

↳ Punishment in the afterlife consists of reincarnation in an inferior realm:

– No

Notes: The soul moves from this world into hell. Not a reincarnation.

↳ Other [specify]

– No

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in this lifetime:

– Yes

↳ Supernatural punishments in this life are highly emphasized by the religious group:

– Yes

↳ Punishment in this life consists of bad luck:

– No

Notes: Not in the sense often stressed in tribal religion.

↳ Punishment in this life consists of political failure:

– No

↳ Punishment in this life consists of defeat in battle:

– No

↳ Punishment in this life consists of crop failure or bad weather:

– Yes

Notes: Tribal Christians are divided about the effects of sin in this life. Certainly eternal damnation in the next life is guaranteed without proper forgiveness. In this life, believers are divided about the impact of sin on everyday domains of crop failure, weather, defeat, misfortune and so on. The so-called Prosperity Gospel so popular in the USA has vague resonance in the Himalayas depending on the sectarian emphasis and the imagination of the believer.

↳ Punishment in this life consists of disaster on journeys.

– No

↳ Punishment in this life consists of mild sensory displeasure:

– Yes

↳ Punishment in this life consists of extreme sensory displeasure:

– Yes

Notes: Depends on individual belief.

↳ Punishment in this life consists of sickness or illness:

– Yes

↳ Punishment in this life consists of impaired reproduction:

– Yes

↳ Punishment in this life consists of bad luck visited on descendants:

– Yes

Notes: The inter-generational curses outlined in the Bible resonate with tribal religious beliefs.

↳ Other [specify]

– No

– Field doesn't know

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards:

– Yes

↳ Is the cause/purpose of supernatural rewards known:

– Yes

↳ Done only by high god:

– Yes

Notes: Matthew 6:19-21 Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

↳ Done by many supernatural beings:

– No

↳ Done through impersonal cause-effect principle:

– No

↳ Done to enforce religious ritual-devotional adherence:

– Yes

Notes: Storing up treasure in heaven is based on devotion and giving glory to God in this world.

↳ Done to enforce group norms:

– No

Notes: Although this is a consequence of such beliefs, it is not its point of origination.

↳ Done to inhibit selfishness:

– No

↳ Done randomly:

– No

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in the afterlife:

– Yes

↳ Supernatural rewards in the afterlife are highly emphasized by the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: Among Hali Protestant converts in Kangra, for example, weekly services in local house churches emphasized the supernatural rewards of the afterlife as compensation of sorts of this-worldly injustices.

↳ Reward in the afterlife consists of mild sensory pleasure:

– Yes

Notes: John 14:2 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

↳ Reward in the afterlife consists of extreme sensory pleasure:

– Yes

Notes: 1 Corinthians 2:9 But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him."

↳ Reward in the afterlife consists of eternal happiness:

– Yes

Notes: John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

↳ Reward in the afterlife consists of reincarnation as a superior life form:

– No

↳ Reward in the afterlife consists of reincarnation in a superior realm:

– No

↳ Other [specify]

– No

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in this lifetime:

– Yes

↳ Supernatural rewards in this life are highly emphasized by the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: This depends on the sect and the emphasis of individual teachers and believers. Among Hali converts in Hali, for example, this-world rewards were praised weekly during a time to give testimonials about the supernatural blessings given to individual church members. Pastor Vinay gave this speech one Sunday, by way of example: There

is so much suffering in the world. And we thank you God for keeping us safe, for maintaining our life (jīvit rakhnā); there are many people who have not made it to see today, died from diseases and accidents, from so many factors outside human control they have left this world. We thank you God (śukraguzār karnā) for taking care of us in every moment, in every situation. Hallelujah? Hallelujah! I often hear the testimonies from believers, how we are saved by the hand of God from daily accidents, like falling on the road at night, getting a wound and needing to go the hospital. These things happen all the time, but we live in the grace of God and are saved. He doesn't permit these things.

↳ Reward in this life consists of good luck:

– No

↳ Reward in this life consists of political success or power:

– Yes

↳ Reward in this life consists of success in battle:

– No

↳ Reward in this life consists of peace or social stability:

– Yes

Notes: Especially with regard to discrimination and social/caste exclusion and the lack of state support that falls to the weakest and often marginalized groups within tribes.

↳ Reward in this life consists of healthy crops or good weather:

– Yes

↳ Reward in this life consists of success on journeys:

– Yes

↳ Reward in this life consists of mild sensory pleasure:

– Yes

↳ Reward in this life consists of extreme sensory pleasure:

– Yes

↳ Reward in this life consists of enhanced health:

– Yes

↳ Reward in this life consists of enhanced reproductive success:

– Yes

↳ Reward in this life consists of fortune visited on descendants:

– Yes

↳ Other [specify]

– Yes

Notes: Supernatural rewards are described as testimonials in house services among many tribal Christians. Below are categories of supernatural blessings recorded among Hali tribal aspirants in Kangra. In-church testimonials can be roughly categorized as pertaining to: a) safety (“I went to Ludhiana for the first time, and there was no problem while traveling and God helped me to get there safely.”); b) avoidance of disaster (“A few days ago I got distracted, and thank God that his concentration always falls on us because my daughter went on the roof and was horsing around, and thank God my landlord heard her and went and grabbed her and brought her inside, and there was no accident and she didn’t fall.”); c) procurement of work (“I was sitting around not getting any work, and I prayed to God, give me anything! I gave God all my anxieties – there should be work! Finally, the phone call came and I got work, and I was so happy that I didn’t even properly hear the name of where I was supposed to go.”); d) family discord (“My family members are always fighting but thanks to Yeśu Masīh I was able to pray and not get drawn into it.”); e) spiritual torment (“I went to Bharmaur for work and fell into a depression. I couldn’t eat a thing. I was vomiting. I felt like no one could take me out of my sadness. I went to the hospital, but the doctor did nothing. I was feeling so small. I prayed to the Lord (Prabhu), and he touched my body with his Holy Spirit (pavitra ātmā) and removed the evil spirt.”); and f) negotiation of Gaddi identity (“I returned to Bharmaur, and my relatives were bothering me about how I left our Gaddi family deities. They told me about all the things their deities did for them. I told them, ‘It’s okay, keep your deities, they are not for me. My God created the heavens and the earth and sustains me in health. Before I was sick; now I am healed.’”).

## Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present:

– Yes

↳ Is the messiah's whereabouts or time of coming known?

– No

Notes: Matthew 24:36 But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

↳ Is the messiah's purpose known:

– Yes

- ↳ Messiah is a political figure who restores political rule:
  - No
- ↳ Messiah is a priestly figure who restores religious traditions:
  - No
- ↳ Other purpose:
  - Yes [specify]: The Second Coming of Christ has various interpretations (Preterism, LDS, Evangelical and so on).

## Norms and Moral Realism

Are general social norms prescribed by the religious group:

– Yes

Is there a conventional vs. moral distinction in the religious group:

– Yes

↳ What is the nature of this distinction:

– Present and clear

↳ Are specifically moral norms prescribed by the religious group:

– Yes

↳ Specifically moral norms are implicitly linked to vague metaphysical concepts:

– Yes

Notes: As many tribals are non-literate, explicit biblical exegesis is not the norm.

↳ Specifically moral norms are explicitly linked to vague metaphysical entities:

– Yes

↳ Specifically moral norms are linked to impersonal cosmic order (e.g. karma):

– Yes

↳ Specifically moral norms are linked in some way to an anthropomorphic being:

– Yes

Notes: Anthropomorphic in the sense of Jesus as incarnate God in human flesh.

↳ Specifically moral norms are linked explicitly to commands of anthropomorphic being:

– Yes

↳ Specifically moral norms are have no special connection to metaphysical:

– No

↳ Moral norms apply to:

– All individuals within society

Notes: The egalitarianism and lack of social exception based on caste and class is a major attraction for low-status converts within tribes. This speaks to a larger issue about the inegalitarianism of tribes and the appeal for Christianity among those commonly discriminated against in tribal social formations.

Are there centrally important virtues advocated by the religious group:

– No

Notes: However, particular tribal converts may emphasize different virtues (such as social equality) based on their own subject positionality within the larger community. Emphasizing such virtues of equality may restructure social behavior.

## Practices

### Membership Costs and Practices

Does membership in this religious group require celibacy (full sexual abstinence):

– No

Does membership in this religious group require constraints on sexual activity (partial sexual abstinence):

– Yes

↳ Monogamy (males):

– Yes

↳ Monogamy (females):

– Yes



↳ Other sexual constraints (males):

– Yes

Notes: Among some tribal groups, forms of marriage exchange (like batta satta among Gaddis wherein the bride's brother would marry the groom's sister or vice versa) and polygamy have fallen away, although sexual laws are still comparatively lax in an Indian context. Christian converts are further instructed in biblical teachings about chastity and sexual purity.

↳ Other sexual constraints (females):

– Yes

Notes: The wearing of the ghunghat (dupatta headdress) is sometimes practiced to encourage sexual modesty.

Does membership in this religious group require castration:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require fasting:

– No

Notes: Not required, but some Christians draw from passages in the Bible and practice fasting.

Does membership in this religious group require forgone food opportunities (taboos on desired foods):

– No

Does membership in this religious group require permanent scarring or painful bodily alterations:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require painful physical positions or transitory painful wounds:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of adults:

"Adults" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition of a human who is 18-years-old or older and who is legally responsible for his/her actions, then please specify that difference in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of children:

"Children" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition, please specify that difference in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Does membership in this religious group require self-sacrifice (suicide):

– No

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of property/valuable items:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of time (e.g., attendance at meetings or services, regular prayer, etc.):

– Yes

Notes: Adherents are instructed to attend church regularly (usually in the form of house church attendance).

Does membership in this religious group require physical risk taking:

– Yes

Notes: In some cases, physical violence is threatened against Christian tribals (see the video about the Ladakhi Christian in "sources". In the case I am most familiar with, Hali Christians in Kangra were visited by Hindu fundamentalists who physically threatened them for worshipping on Sundays.

Does membership in this religious group require accepting ethical precepts:

– Yes

Notes: Interestingly, when tribals become Christian they often adopt ethical norms that are viewed as distinctly untribal by the majority community.

Does membership in this religious group require marginalization by out-group members:

– Yes

Notes: Like the above answer, when tribals convert to Christianity they are often put in the dilemma of rejecting "tribal" practices like animal sacrifice and the taking of intoxicants.

Does membership in this religious group require participation in small-scale rituals (private, household):

– Yes

Notes: Weekly communion and, in extraordinary situations (that nevertheless happen with some frequency) for prayer intercession to cast out demons and evil spirits -- a practice that parallels witchcraft practices in many tribal communities.



What is the average interval of time between performances (in hours):

Performances here refers to small-scale rituals.

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Among the Halis in Kangra, for example, house churches would meet at regular intervals (normally Sunday mornings) and for special intersession prayer periods -- about once a week.

Does membership in this religious group require participation in large-scale rituals:  
I.e. involving two or more households; includes large-scale "ceremonies" and "festivals."

– Yes

↳ On average, for large-scale rituals how many participants gather in one location:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Large-scale rituals include yearly Christmas and Easter celebrations. Some tribals are members of house churches that set up tents and small-scale celebratory rituals; other tribals are part of larger institutional churches with massive membership (such as Northeast India) where celebrations happen in the thousands.

↳ What is the average interval of time between performances (in hours):

Performances here refers to large-scale rituals.

– Field doesn't know

↳ Are there orthodoxy checks:

Orthodoxy checks are mechanisms used to ensure that rituals are interpreted in a standardized way, e.g. through the supervisory prominence of a professionalized priesthood or other system of governance, appeal to texts detailing the proper interpretation, etc.

– Yes

Notes: Priesthood or qualified religious leaders (padres, pastors and so on).

↳ Are there orthopraxy checks:

Orthopraxy checks are mechanisms used to ensure that rituals are performed in a standardized way, e.g. through the supervisory prominence of a professionalized priesthood or other system of governance, appeal to texts detailing the proper procedure, etc.

– No

Notes: Not like Brahmanical checks.

↳ Does participation entail synchronic practices:

– No

Notes: Not as a rule, although "tribal practices" do seep into Christian forms of worship and ritual.

↳ Is there use of intoxicants:

– No

Notes: Tribal Christianity is generally opposed to intoxicants and generally describes drugs and alcohol as not only "tribal backwards" but also anathema to Christian virtue. They draw from a range of biblical sources to make this claim.

Are extra-ritual in-group markers present:

E.g. special changes to appearance such as circumcision, tattoos, scarification, etc.

– Yes

↳ Tattoos/scarification:

– No

↳ Circumcision:

– No

↳ Food taboos:

– Yes

Notes: The banning of prasad (sanctified food) in Hindu/Buddhist traditions. This creates sociality problems as the rejection of food from neighbors and affines is tied into a history of status jockeying and the rejection of the cooker or food presenter (since food is often felt to be a biomorphic substance imbued with the essence of the giver).

↳ Hair:

– No

↳ Dress:

– No

Notes: Although some Christian tribal groups discourage the wearing of traditional tribal costumes -- creating social breaches.

↳ Ornaments:

– No

↳ Archaic ritual language:

– No

↳ Other:

– Yes [specify]: Markers of Christian identification among tribals are usually noticable for their absence -- the absence of tikka and maang and dora and choti and other physical body markers associated with some tribal traditions.

Does the group employ fictive kinship terminology:

– Yes

↳ Fictive kinship terminology universal:

– No

↳ Fictive kinship terminology widespread:

– Yes

Notes: Adherents become brothers and sisters in Christ, of one body.

↳ Fictive kinship terminology employed but uncommon:

– No

## Society and Institutions

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### Levels of Social Complexity

The society to which the religious group belongs is best characterized as (please choose one):

– Other [specify in comments]

Notes: Christian conversion among tribal segments is not often individual but group oriented. Sub-groups and clans/castes with tribal communities may convert not en masse but one after the other. So the "society" of tribal Christians is often a low-status segment. Between tribes, however, there is no widely-recognized Christian society as such.

### Welfare

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized famine relief:

– Yes

Notes: From larger denominational churches to small house churches, there are forms of socioeconomic support. When someone is ill or when crops fail, collections/tithes may be taken for that individual family in question.

Is famine relief available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: IRDB and poverty assistance in India and elsewhere in the Himalayas.

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized poverty relief:

– Yes

Is poverty relief available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized care for the elderly and infirm:

– No

Notes: Family units and extended relatives are normally responsible for the care of the elderly.

Is institutionalized care for the elderly and infirm available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

## Education

Does the religious group provide formal education to its adherents:

– Yes



Is formal education restricted to religious professionals:

– No

Notes: Many primary and secondary Christian schools are in Nepal and Northeast India. On the other hand, there are many seminaries in the Himalayas that cater to tribal populations and are designed for aspiring religious leaders. For example, the Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India (with more than 1,000,000 members) in Northeast India has the Eastern Theological College which has minted more than 2500 graduates and 800 pastors.



Is such education open to both males and females:

– Yes

Is formal education available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: For example, Agape Christian Missions (<http://acm-india.org/>) is a South Indian group focused on tribes outside of the Indian Himalayas; however, they fund theological training and the dissemination of audio recordings of the bible in local dialects to tribal groups in Himachal Pradesh.



Is extra-religious education open to both males and females:

– Yes

## Bureaucracy

Do the group's adherents interact with a formal bureaucracy within their group:

– Yes

Notes: Just in Northeast India, for example, tribal Christians are often affiliated with sectarian churches operated on formal bureaucracies. See, for example, "Church-Mission Dynamics in Northeast India" by Lalsangkima Pachuau (International Bulletin of Missionary Research 27:4).

Do the group's adherents interact with other institutional bureaucracies:

– No

## Public Works

Does the religious group in question provide public food storage:

– No

Is public food storage provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Does the religious group in question provide water management (irrigation, flood control):

– No

Is water management provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: State governments and IRDB poverty quotas.

Does the religious group in question provide transportation infrastructure:

– No

Is transportation infrastructure provided for the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: State governments. In all the questions relating to public works, the answers are highly variable. It is uncommon for churches in the Himalayas with tribal congregants to provide storage of public food, for example. But the larger institutional churches in the Indian Northeast and Nepal, along with various NGOs and missions groups do offer significant forms of social support and emergency funds for situated problems. And small-scale house churches often collect tithes for redistribution to members suffering from various misfortunes.

## Taxation

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Does the religious group in question levy taxes or tithes:

– Yes

Notes: Based on church tradition, congregants are encouraged to give what they can (typically 10% of earned income). This is based on Deuteronomy 14:22 (Make an offering of ten percent, a tithe, of all the produce which grows in your fields year after year).

Are taxes levied on the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: Various state and local taxes.

## Enforcement

Does the religious group in question provide an institutionalized police force:

– No

Do the group's adherents interact with an institutionalized police force provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: Many tribal Christians interact with heightened security forces, especially in sensitive border and disputed areas.

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized judges:

– No

Do the group's adherents interact with an institutionalized judicial system provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: Legal systems particular to each state/country. Also tribal Christians are often under local judicial systems (panchayat).

Does the religious group in question enforce institutionalized punishment:

– No

Are the group's adherents subject to institutionalized punishment enforced by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes



Do the institutionalized punishments include execution:



– No

↳ Do the institutionalized punishments include exile:

– No

↳ Do the institutionalized punishments include corporal punishments:

– No

↳ Do the institutionalized punishments include ostracism:

– No

↳ Do the institutionalized punishments include seizure of property:

– No

Does the religious group in question have a formal legal code:

– No

Are the group's adherents subject to a formal legal code provided by institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

## Warfare

Does religious group in question possess an institutionalized military:

– No

Do the group's adherents participate in an institutionalized military provided by institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Are the group's adherents protected by or subject to an institutionalized military provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

## Written Language

Does the religious group in question possess its own distinct written language:

– Yes

↳ Is use of this distinct written language confined to religious professionals:

– No

Notes: Although trained pastors and much more likely to be literate than their congregants. For an analysis of the translation of the Bible into tribal dialects in the Himalayas, especially through Summer Language Institute of Linguistics, see Fredrick A. Aldridge Jr's unpublished dissertation on the subject -- available here: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.912.9893&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

Is a non-religion-specific written language available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Is a non-religion-specific written language used by the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

## Calendar

Does the religious group in question possess a formal calendar:

– Yes

Notes: Although the Christian calendar is in a sense the standard calendar throughout the Himalayas to mark secular time, the Christian calendar with its distinct religious observances and monthly breakdown differs significantly from how most tribal communities measure time (either using a Hindu calendar (panchang) or animist/Buddhist spiritual time or, as is often the case, using agricultural or pastoral measurements of time).

Is a formal calendar provided for the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

## Food Production

Does the religious group in question provide food for themselves:

– No

Notes: Although through redistribution of tithes and international missions works/support church members in distress are often helped -- including food donations.

Is food provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

↳ Please characterize the forms/levels of food production [choose all that apply]:

- Gathering
- Hunting (including marine animals)
- Fishing
- Pastoralism
- Small-scale agriculture / horticultural gardens or orchards
- Large-scale agriculture (e.g., monocropping, organized irrigation systems)