

Aka



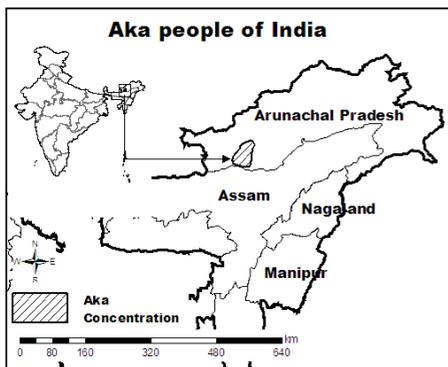
Superstition and magic plays a central role in Aka beliefs

Population: 4,600

Literacy: Low

Scripture Status: Translation starting soon.

Aka women make their faces ugly, by painting them! Covering their beauty is their way of protecting themselves from men from outside. Because of this habit the British and Assamese gave them



their name 'Aka', which in Assamese means 'painted'.

They are very proud of their long history. Their folklore claims that their ancestor was King Bhaluka, the grandson of King Bana who was defeated by Lord Krishna at Tezpur. Though their population is small, there are two dialects, namely Hrusso Aka and Kora Aka. They are a close-knit community, with eleven clans and sub clans.

Both Hrusso and Koro Aka speakers follow the same religious beliefs and practices. Their main god is represented by the sun and moon, and they call him Donyi Polo. This god is a supreme god, all powerful, and controlling all living and non-living things. However, centuries of Buddhist and Hindu influences have greatly shaped their religious rituals. Now, superstition and magic play a central role in their beliefs. Shizon is the most popular one – used mainly against their enemies.

One Shizon ritual involves slaughtering a dog, draining its blood and sprinkling a few drops of blood in their enemy's house or burning it in his hearth. The expectation is that spirits will harm the enemy.

They practice shift cultivation – mainly maize and millet. Rearing a bison-like animal called a Mithun is an activity in every household.

Handicrafts, basket weaving and woodcarving are the principal arts among the Aka tribe. Aka men wear a silky Assamese toga, while the women wear a long dark red garment that covers their entire body. Silver ornaments play an important role in the female costume: vase shaped earrings, and for the richer ones, a silver filigree chain is worn around the head. Men having several wives is quite common.

As a result of nearly 50 years of Christian ministry among the Aka, about 30% are Christians. Others practice their age-old beliefs. Translation of the Scripture into these two dialects will go a long way to help strengthen the existing churches and lead the entire community to Christ.

Pray for:

1. Aka churches and their leaders to catch the vision for their people and to take an active lead in the evangelism of their community.
2. Unity among the churches and a thirst for God's Word.
3. The mother tongue translation team* to be strengthened, well equipped and speed the process of translating the Scripture.

* Mother tongue translation teams consist of language speakers and translation consultants working together

