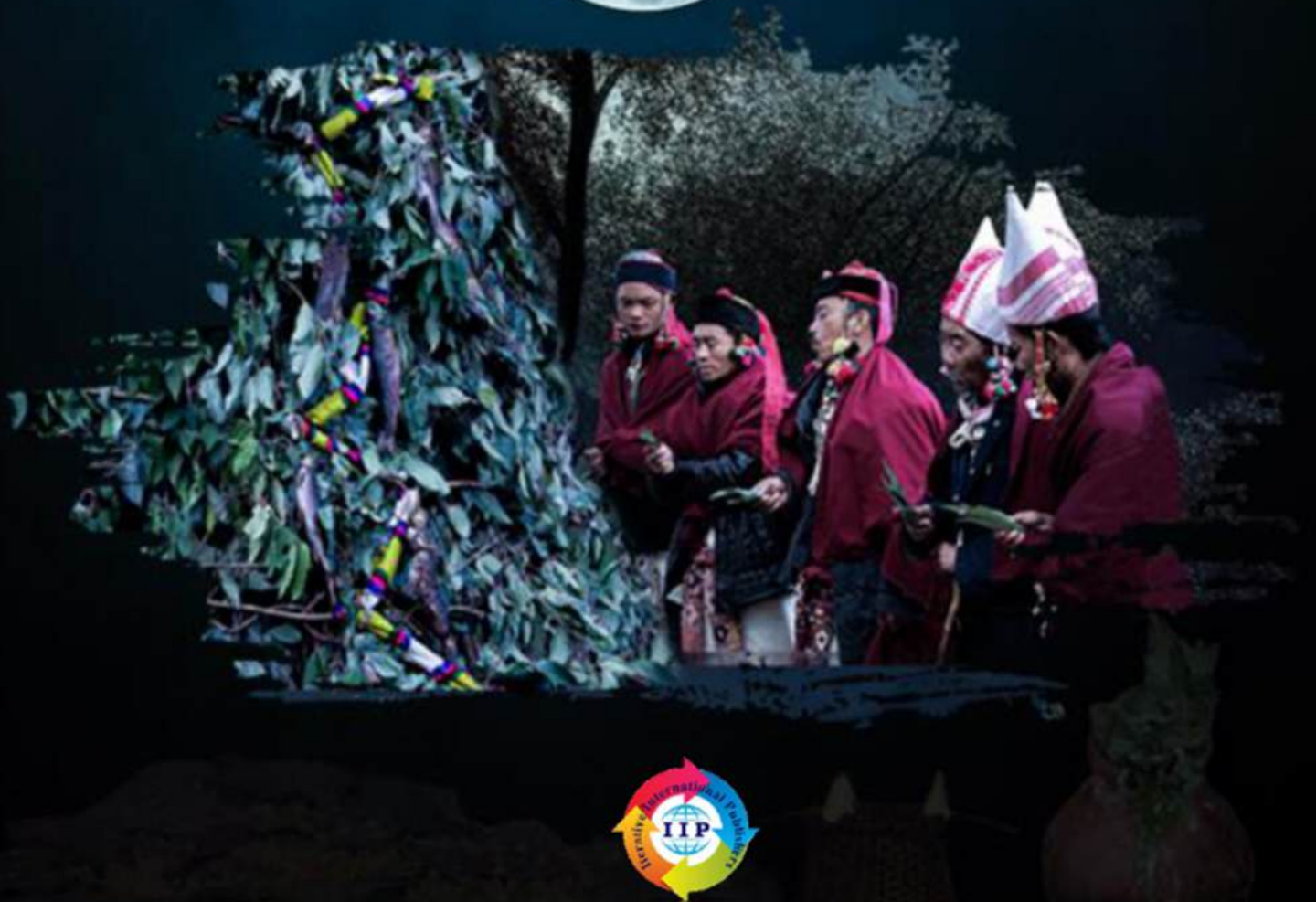


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# KHIKZIZI

GUARDIAN OF SHERDUKPEN  
TRADITIONAL BELIEFS AND PRACTICES



T.D MEGEJI, T. DOLMA, T.L MINTO

# Khikzizi: Guardian of Sherdukpen Traditional Beliefs and Practices

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**First Edition**

**Conceptualized by**

Shri Dorjee Chewang Megeji, Khikzizi  
and  
All Megeji Welfare Association (AMWA)  
Rupa

**Funded by**

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**T. D. Megeji,**

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**T. L. Minto,**

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**Shri Tsering Megeji**  
**(01-01-1941 to 21-08-2023)**

“We are forever indebted to your dedicated service in preserving indigenous faith and culture as a devoted Khikzizi.”



*Authors with the Khikzizis and Changmepos during Khiksaba*

# Foreword

It brings me immense joy to learn about the completion of the book on *Khikzizi*. This unique and invaluable resource holds tremendous significance for the institution of *Khikzizi* and, by extension, the *Sherdukpen* community as a whole. *Khiksaba* serves as a reflection of our ancestors' deep connection with nature, anchoring us to our roots and embodying the essence of *Sherdukpenhood*, if I may express it as such. *Khiksaba*, inseparable from *Khikzizi*, holds a vital place and its existence is almost non-negotiable. Regrettably, the *Khikzizi* institution is facing a decline.

In light of this critical juncture, the book stands as a beacon, enlightening the *Sherdukpen* community about the pivotal role of *Khikzizi* and its utmost importance. It also serves as a crucial reference for future generations, preserving the legacy and significance of *Khikzizi* for posterity.

Reading the completed manuscripts of the book has been a delightful experience for me. The authors have done an admirable job in their efforts to meticulously document the intricate rituals and proceedings of the *Khikzizi* through this written account.

Having had the honour of experiencing *Khiksaba* on numerous occasions as a keen participant, this book has been enlightening, unveiling the aspects that were previously unknown to me. It has deepened my understanding of the purpose behind various rituals, providing clarity on their significance. While the terminology linked to the rituals and proceedings of *Khikzizi* may initially appear perplexing to new readers or those from different communities, I am confident that this book will captivate their interest and encourage them to delve deeper into the mystical world of *Khikzizi*.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt gratitude to *Sir Tenzing Norbu Thongdok, Honourable Member of North-East Council, Government of India*, for providing the much-needed financial aid that has enabled the authors to embark on this

venture. I am certain that your generosity will not only advance this cause but also set a standard of kindness and community spirit that I believe many will be inspired to follow.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the authors on the successful completion of their work and wish them the very best in all their future endeavors.

- *Shri Dorjee Khandu Thongdok*  
President, All Sherdukpen Blu  
Former Minister, Government of Arunachal Pradesh

# Preface

With immense gratitude and deep sense of responsibility, we present this book titled '*Khikzizi: Guardian of Sherdukpen Traditional Beliefs and Practices*'. It is the result of our collective endeavor to document the indigenous ritualistic practices of *Sherdukpen* community in response to its urgent need of preservation. There is an imminent threat to the survival of the community's unique belief system and spiritual practices as the community is facing decline in the number of their main practitioners- *zizi* (priest) in almost all the villages. The preservation of this belief system is even more challenging as the tradition of priesthood is oral in nature. Against this backdrop, we have made our sincere efforts to document particularly, the ritualistic role and practices of the traditional-community priest i.e. *Khikzizi*.

To accomplish the task of documentation through this book, we conducted fieldwork in *Rupa* town (*Thō thik*) - headquarter of *Tukpen* group of the *Sherdukpen* community over two seasons of *Khiksaba* festival in 2018 and 2019 followed by several visits in subsequent years. Participant observation method along with numerous interviews with the *Khikzizis*, enabled us to gain intricate details of their ritualistic proceedings in sequential order. Further insights were gathered from other members of the community at different stages of this work. Hence, we sincerely mention and acknowledge their support in seeing this work to fruition:

First and foremost, we express our sincere gratitude to the All Megeji Welfare Association (AMWA) for envisioning this significant project. We thank them for granting us the privilege of being a part of this meaningful journey.

Our deepest appreciation goes to *Shri Tenzing Norbu Thongdok*, *Honourable Member of the North-East Council, Government of India*, whose generous financial support made this monumental project possible. The pivotal role he played in facilitating the accomplishment of this work cannot be overstated.

We are also extremely grateful to the executive members and esteemed village elders of the *Tukpen Village Council* (TVC) for their invaluable support and guidance. Their contributions were essential to the completion of this book and we truly appreciate their assistance, particularly during our field-visits.

Our sincere gratitude extends to the *Khikzizis*, who served as our primary informants. Their untiring support and willingness to guide us through the intricacies of various rituals and *Khiksaba* festival were vital to the success of this research. Their dedication and knowledge have been a source of inspiration throughout this journey. It is our heartfelt aspiration that this book, in its present form, contributes to the preservation and continuity of their sacred institution for posterity.

We also wish to thank the entire *Tukpen* community for their constant assistance and encouragement. We are appreciative of their helpfulness and patience.

We are extremely grateful to *Shri DK Thongdok*, *President of All Sherdukpen Blu*, *Former Minister to the Government of Arunachal Pradesh* for writing a befitting foreword to our book. His thoughtful insights and generous words have added immense value to our work. He has definitely set a perfect tone for the journey the readers are about to embark on. We also wish to express our gratitude to *Shri Tsering Thongdok* (social worker and prominent Baidong-Obo), *Shri Rinchin Dorjee Thongdok* (former Zilla Parishad Chairperson), *Shri Dorjee Tsering Khrimey* (Secretary, TVC) and *Shri Netan Dorjee Thongdok* (former Secretary, TVC) for their invaluable assistance in proofreading the initial draft of this book. Their meticulous scrutiny and thoughtful guidance ensured the quality and accuracy of the content.

We extend our sincere gratitude to *Shri RN Thongchi* of *Jigaon* village for his artistic design of the cover-page through which he has beautifully captured the essence of *Khikzizi*. The design has brought the spirit of the book to life by creating a visual narrative which

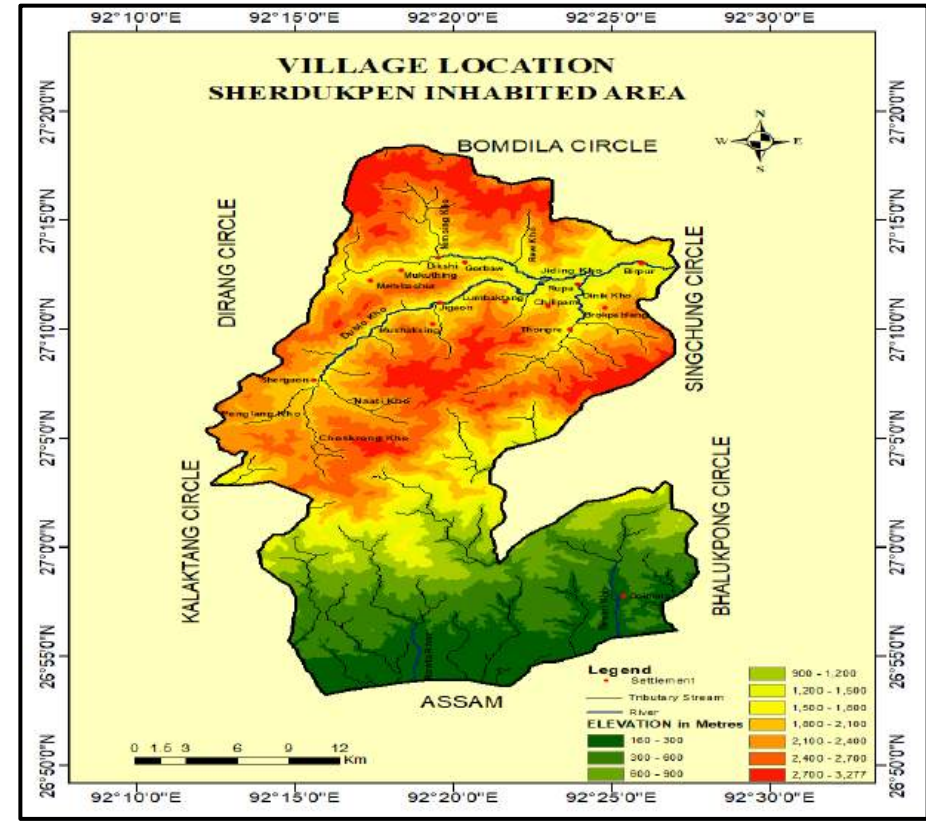
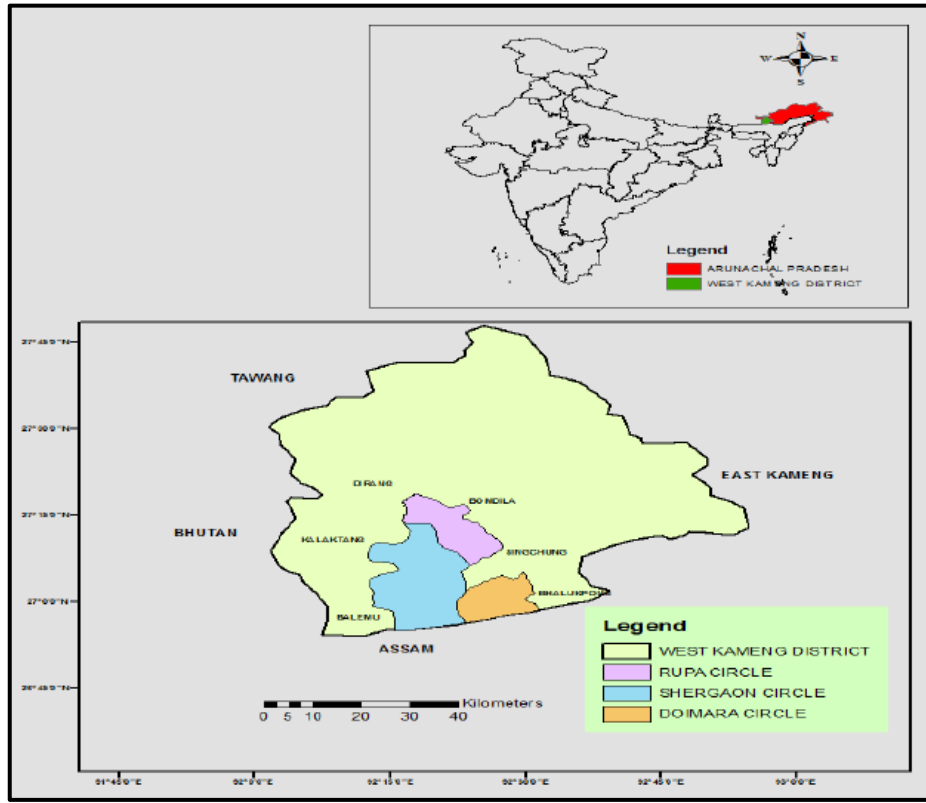
resonates with the theme. It would be remiss if we do not express our gratitude to *Shri Kezang Dorjee Thongdok* (Abu Kazi), a renowned artist and fim-maker for generously sharing us the video-clips and photographs, which were invaluable in the reconstruction of events and rituals related to *Khikzizi*. We owe a deep sense of gratitude to *Shri Khandu Thongdok*, District Labour and Employment Officer, West Kameng, A.P. as well, whose last-minute suggestions refined the content and significantly enhanced the quality of the final work.

Finally, we hope this work stands as a lasting tribute to the resilience of the *Sherdukpen* culture and serves as a valuable resource for those seeking to explore the richness of their heritage. The experience has been profoundly enriching-both intellectually and spiritually and we are honored to contribute to the preservation and celebration of this cultural legacy.

**Authors**  
***T. D. Megeji***  
***T. Dolma***  
***T. L. Minto***



## Shertukpen Inhabited Area



**Note\*** The exact boundaries of Shertukpen Area do not correspond to above map. The boundary shown herein is drawn from circle maps of Shertukpen inhabited Circles i.e. Rupa, Shergaon and Doimara.

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## ABOUT THE BOOK

'Khikzizi: Guardian of Sherdukpen Traditional Beliefs and Practices' delves into the rich cultural heritage and spiritual traditions of one of the major tribes of West Kameng District, Arunachal Pradesh. The book documents the pivotal role of traditional-community priests called Khikzizi and explores how they serve as custodians of sacred rituals, oral traditions and community values and help in the preservation of the Sherdukpen tribe's unique identity. It highlights the intricate ceremonies, ritualistic practices, beliefs and spiritual responsibilities shouldered by the Khikzizis. The role of Khikzizis during Khiksaba, an annual ritualistic festival which is observed to worship guardian mountain-deities, is one of the main highlights of the book. Finally, the present work raises pertinent questions related to cultural preservation in the face of modernization. It is a tribute to the resilience of indigenous wisdom and a call to safeguard the living traditions of the Sherdukpen people for posterity.



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