

Population in China:

1,600 (1977)
2,450 (2000)
3,020 (2010)

Location: Tibet

Religion: Tibetan Buddhism

Christians: None Known

Overview of the Lahuli Tinan

Countries: India, China

Pronunciation:

“La-hoo-lee-Tee-nun”

Other Names: Lahuli, Bhotia of Lahul, Lahauli, Lahouli, Ranglo, Gondla, Tinani

Population Source: 450 to 1600 (1977 Voegelin & Voegelin); Out of a total Tibetan population of 4,593,330 (1990 census); 24,534 in India (1994 India Missions Association)

Location: *W Tibet:* Border between Tibet and Himachal Pradesh, India

Status:

Officially included under Tibetan

Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Bodic, Bodish, Himalayish, Kanauri

Dialects: 0

Religion: Tibetan Buddhism

Christians: None known

Scripture: Portions 1908

Jesus film: None

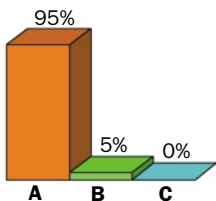
Gospel Recordings:

Lahouli Tinan #02425

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: LBE00

Status of Evangelization



A = Have never heard the gospel
B = Were evangelized but did not become Christians
C = Are adherents to any form of Christianity

Location: Linguists C. F. and F. M. Voegelin listed a 1977 population of between 450 and 1,600 Lahuli Tinan living in western Tibet.¹ Geographic and political barriers keep this small group separated from contact with the outside world. The majority of Lahuli Tinan are located in India where more than 24,000 live in the Spiti and Lahul Subdivision, which is situated in the lower Chandra-Bhaga Valley in the northern part of the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh. The main Lahuli Tinan village in India is Gondla.

Identity: The Lahuli Tinan — who are counted under the Tibetan nationality in China — are also known as *Bhotia*. The term *Bhotia* refers to people of Tibetan stock in general. The name *Lahuli* is also a generic term used to describe the inhabitants of the Lahul District, which was formerly controlled by the British. A 1922 missionary survey explained, “The name Tibet is unknown in the country itself, having been given to it by the Turks and Persians. Its true name is Bod or Bodyu, ie. Bodland, the original name of the inhabitants being Bodpa.... Little Tibet, to the west of Tibet proper, consists of Lahoul and Spiti, which belong to England.”²

Language: Lahuli Tinan is a distinct language from Lahuli Chamba. It is part of a group which includes “several West Himalayish/Kanauri languages.”³ Other Tibetans cannot understand Lahuli Tinan. It has 32% to 37% lexical similarity with Bunan, 21% with Spiti, and only 13% with Central Tibetan.⁴

History: The Lahuli region was part of the Ladakhi Kingdom in the tenth century. Border clashes in the area in the 1950s and 1960s resulted in the Chinese seizing a large tract of land from India. The region, which is home to the Lahuli people, is called *Aksai Chin*.

Customs: Lahuli men are skillful merchants and traders. Lahuli women are known for their independence. “Since their husbands are usually off on trading expeditions, the women feel free to take more than one husband. The men trade salt, grain and wool to other people in the Himalayan region and in the process sometimes become quite wealthy.”⁵

Religion: The strength of Tibetan Buddhism in northern India depends to a great extent on the

prosperity and generosity of the Lahuli Tinan. “They, in turn, feel spiritually secure because of the religious merit they gain by dispensing charity and generously supporting the temples.”⁶

Christianity: There are a handful of Lahuli Tinan believers in India, but none are known on the Tibetan side of the border. Few have ever heard of Jesus Christ. Mission work in Lahul began after Karl Gutzlaff challenged the Moravians to begin a mission in Tibet. “The first missionaries, A. W. Heyde and E. Pagell, settled down in Kyelang, a Tibetan village in the province of Lahul.”⁷ Scripture portions were translated into Lahuli Tinan in 1908 but have been out of print since 1915. Gospel recordings are currently available in the Lahuli Tinan language.



Paul Hattaway