

According to a 1996 source, 2,500 people belonging to the Stod Bhoti language group live along the Stod, Khoksar and upper Mayar valleys in the Lahul region of Himachal Pradesh in northern India.¹ The region has been described as having 'an inhospitable terrain with little vegetation as the area falls in the arid zone. . . . It has very scanty rainfall. Stone boulders and loose rocks keep falling all over and on small patches of terraced fields, which are usually near the river beds.'²

The classification of this small group is extremely problematic. In India the government has granted 'Scheduled Tribe' status to the 'Bhotia' and also the 'Bodh' of Himachal Pradesh. These two terms are generic names given to people of Tibetan origin across northern India and Nepal, and they are sometimes even used as a religious designation for all Buddhist people. It is said that the people who came from Tibet prior to 1962 are referred to as Bodhs, while those who have migrated across the border in the past forty years are called Tibetans. The total number of 'Bodh' people within the state at the time of the 1981 census was 22,635. These broad classifications, however, are of little value when trying to determine ethnic and linguistic divisions among the cold and remote mountains in the northern part of the state. Even the 2,500 people living in the three valleys given as the location of the Stod Bhoti (the Stod, Khoksar and Mayar valleys) may constitute three separate language groups and five sub-groups. Stod and Khoksar reportedly have 85 per cent mutual intelligibility, but Stod and Mayar only share 75 per cent intelligibility and there is a mere 62 per cent intelligibility

between Khoksar and Mayar.³ Linguists say that there usually needs to be an 80 per cent mutual intelligibility between the speakers of two languages or dialects in order for them to be able to communicate in a meaningful manner.

Tibetan Buddhism is the preferred religion of all Stod Bhoti people in India, although Hindu influence is being seen more and more. The Stod Bhoti have their own monasteries, temples and lamas. The people are considered extremely superstitious and live in constant fear of evil spirits. They believe that they must vigilantly perform rituals and offerings to placate the deities—otherwise the spirit could take offence and bring disaster on their community.

One source summarized the religious practices of the Stod Bhoti as follows: 'The most learned of the lamas usually belong to the yellow sect and are called Bara Lama or *giani* (learned). . . . [The Stod Bhoti] have a village deity known as *Yu-la* who is worshipped and propitiated by all for the welfare of the village. Every Buddhist household has a *harsho* (long pole) fixed in its courtyard with cloth tied around it. This is kept to ward off evil eyes from being cast on the families. . . . The lamas are the sacred specialists for the community. They also do *tana-mana* (exorcism), which is locally called *kursim*. Amulets are also prepared and given by the lamas to ward off the evil eye.'⁴ There are no Christians among the Stod Bhoti. They are one of the most unreached Buddhist groups in the world. According to recent research, there were just three Christians in the whole of Lahul District with a population of 13,030.⁵



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Population:
2,660 (2000)
3,100 (2010)
3,600 (2020)
Countries: India
Buddhism: Tibetan
Christians: none known

Overview of the Stod Bhoti

Other Names: Stod, Tod, Tod-kad, Stod-Kad, Lahul Bhoti, Bodh, Bhoti, Bhot

Population Sources:
2,500 in India (2000, B Grimes [1996 figure])

Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Himalayish, Tibeto-Kanauri, Tibetic, Tibetan, Central

Dialects: 3 (Stod, Khoksar, Mayar)

Professing Buddhists: 100%

Practising Buddhists: 85%

Christians: 0%

Scripture: none

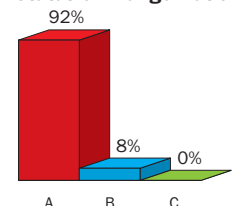
Jesus film: none

Gospel Recordings: none

Christian Broadcasting: none

ROPAL code: SBU

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