



Population:

14,920 (2000)
18,390 (2010)
22,650 (2020)

Countries: China, India

Buddhism: Tibetan

Christians: none known

Overview of the Groma

Other Names: Trowoma, Chomo Tibetan, Chomo, Gromo, Tomo, Zhuomu Tibetan, Chuo-mu Tibetan, Chumbi Tibetan

Population Sources:

12,840 in China (2000, B Grimes [1993 figure])

also in India

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

Dialects: 4 (Upper Groma, Lower Groma, Spiti, Tomo)

Professing Buddhists: 100%

Practising Buddhists: 90%

Christians: 0%

Scripture: none

Jesus film: none

Gospel Recordings: none

Christian Broadcasting: none

ROPAL code: GRO

The *Ethnologue* cites a 1993 source stating that there are 12,840 speakers of Groma living in southern Tibet,¹ in the Chambi Valley between Bhutan and the former independent nation of Sikkim—now a state of India. The valley is located within the Chomo (Yadong) County in Tibet’s Xigaze Prefecture. A French Catholic missionary to Tibet, Monsieur L’Abbé Desgondins, graphically described the region: ‘Take a piece of paper in your hand. Crumple it up and then open your hand and let it fall out! Nothing is flat—all you have is high points and low depressions—the steep, inaccessible, rugged mountains and the deep valleys.’² An unspecified number of Groma reportedly live on the Indian side of the border.³ In India it seems they have simply been classified as Tibetans, as they do not appear in official government lists.

Much of what is known about the Groma

comes from a linguistic study done in 1905.⁴ The Groma have been counted as part of the Tibetan nationality in China and may be culturally and ethnically indistinguishable from other Tibetans in the region. They are different because of their language, which is a member of the Southern Tibetan branch. It has two dialects, Upper and Lower Groma, with two others, Spiti and Tomo, listed as ‘possible dialects or related languages’.⁵

The cornerstone of emerging Tibetan civilization was the Yarlung Valley area,

about 80 kilometres (49 mi.) south-east of Lhasa. There, according to tradition, the union of a monkey and a she-devil created the Tibetan race. Around AD 600, the warrior-king Namri Gampo began the work of unifying the clans of Tibet. It was his son, Songtsen Gampo, who consolidated the empire and established Tibet as a military power to be reckoned with. Sikkim was nominally independent—although always under Indian influence—until it was annexed in 1975 and integrated into India. Tibetans began entering Sikkim in the 10th century. The Nepalese did not come until the 19th century, but now they make up 75 per cent of Sikkim’s population.⁶

The Groma lead typical Tibetan lives. They herd yaks, sheep and goats. Groma women do most of the work. The men often spend their days drinking and gambling with their friends. Tibetan Tantric Buddhism

dominates the Groma. Devoted pilgrims undertake pilgrimages to holy sites (such as Mt. Kailas). The Groma also observe many animistic rituals related to spirit propitiation.

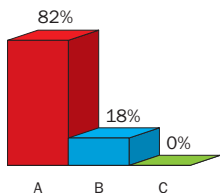
There are no known Christians today among the Groma. The little mission work that has targeted the area invariably resulted in severe persecution. ‘Converts did not easily forget the Christian who was sewn into a fresh yak skin by merciless shaman priests and placed in the

broiling sun until the contraction of the skin squeezed the life out of his frame.’⁷ In 1997 neighbouring Sikkim counted 250 churches, but almost all the believers were ethnic Nepalis. The north district where the Groma live is completely unreachable.⁸



China Advocate

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