



**Population:**  
 70,300 (2000)  
 81,900 (2010)  
 95,500 (2020)  
**Countries:** Mongolia  
**Buddhism:** Tibetan  
**Christians:** 50

## Overview of the Mongolia Buriat

**Other Names:** Buryat, Buriat-Mongolian, Northern Mongolian, Mongolian Buriat, Bur'aad

**Population Sources:**  
 64,900 in Mongolia (2000, B Grimes [1995 figure])

**Language:** Altaic, Mongolian, Eastern, Oirat-Khalkha, Khalkha-Buriat, Buriat

**Dialects:** 2 (Khor, Aga)

**Professing Buddhists:** 50%

**Practising Buddhists:** 20%

**Christians:** 0.1%

**Scripture:** Portions 1827; work in progress

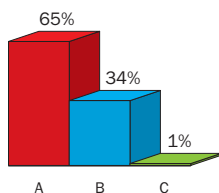
**Jesus film:** none

**Gospel Recordings:** none

**Christian Broadcasting:** none

**ROPAL code:** BXM

## 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

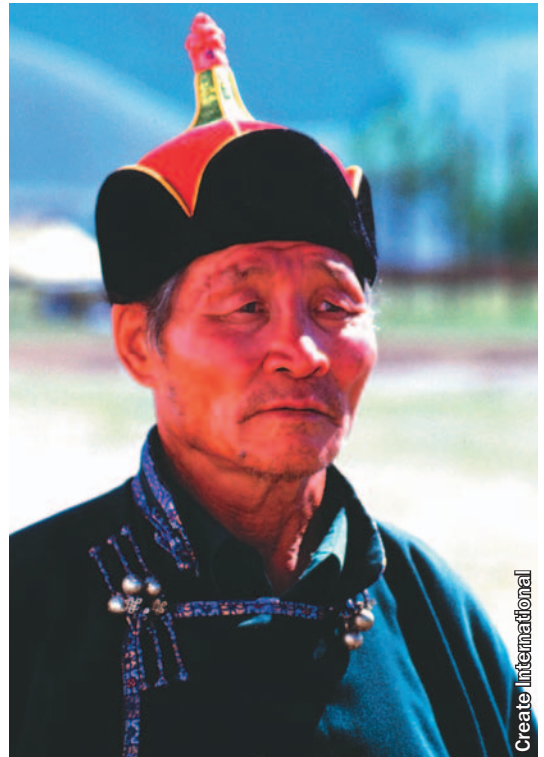
Approximately 75,000 Buriat people live in the north-eastern part of Mongolia, near the border with Russia. The Buriat in Mongolia migrated there from their homeland around Lake Baikal in Siberia many centuries ago. Over time, their language and culture have diverged from those of the Buriat in Russia. Today the Buriat of Mongolia, Russia and China should each be treated as separate ethnolinguistic groups. There are two main dialects of Buriat in Mongolia: Khor and Aga. Standard Mongolian has heavily influenced these dialects, and hundreds of loanwords have become part of the Buriat vocabulary in Mongolia.

In the past, most Buriat in Mongolia were nomads, tracking their herds across a wide region of grassland in the north-east of the country. Traditionally, they were 'shepherds who raised horses, cattle, sheep, goats and a few camels. Today, many still raise horses and sheep. Others have jobs in wood-related industries or coal mines; some trap animals; and many work on farms.<sup>11</sup>

The Buriat along the Russia-Mongolia border were considered strategically important after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. 'By maintaining their influence in Buryatia, the Soviets could keep a tight reign on the Mongolian People's Republic, which most political scientists considered to be little more than a sixteenth Soviet republic. The Soviets feared an independent Mongolia because of the impact it could have on Russian access to the rich natural resources of Siberia.<sup>12</sup>

Living in one of the coldest places on earth, the Buriat of Mongolia rely on a protein-heavy diet to get them through the winter. They consume 'much fat and meat (mainly mutton) during the winter, and dairy products such as yogurt, cheese and sour cream during the summer. Their favorite drink is *airag*, which is fermented mare's milk.<sup>13</sup>

Before Communism came to Mongolia, the Buriat were zealous followers of Tibetan Buddhism, which they mixed with their traditional shamanistic practices. During the decades of Marxist rule many became atheists. Temples were demolished and the Buddhist clergy largely disbanded. Since the early 1990s, 'the advent of religious liberty in the former Soviet Union and Mongolia during this period stimulated . . . Buddhists to revive their traditional culture and religion. Monasteries were rebuilt, young men trained as monks, and contacts established with Tibetan Buddhists



Create International

abroad.<sup>14</sup> The revival of Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolia has been energized by visits from the Dalai Lama.

Because of linguistic differences, the Buriat in Mongolia have been overlooked, and the lack of resources has hindered the small number of Christians among them from growing. The *Jesus* film in Buriat was produced for the Buriat in Russia. Those in Mongolia struggle to understand the dialect used. There are no Scriptures and no gospel recordings produced specifically for the Mongolia Buriat.