

Approximately 35,000 Dariganga people live in and around the town of the same name in south-east Mongolia. They inhabit areas on a volcanic plateau in the southern part of Mongolia's Sukhbaatar Province (also spelled Suhbaatar and Sukhbator). The Dariganga language is closely related to standard Hahl Mongolian and has been listed in some sources as a dialect of Mongolian.¹ Despite this linguistic relationship, it seems that the people of Dariganga possess a different sense of identity and ethnicity. While acknowledging their link with the larger Mongol group, they also value their unique culture and history.

In the late 1600s, the region now known as Sukhbaatar Province was called Dariganga Khoshun. It was named after the majestic mountain Dari Uul and the tranquil Ganga Lake. A local legend says that 'long ago a man returned to his native Dariganga after years of study in India. He took water from the Ganga River, placed it in the sand, and Ganga Lake was formed.'²

The Dariganga region is both barren and beautiful. 'The resplendent slopes of eastern Mongolia and the Moltsog, Ongon and Suj sand dunes stretch across the province's southern reaches. One can see hundreds if not a thousand gazelles frolicking together in the warmer months. Foxes, wolves, marmots and Palla's cats, to name but a few, are also numerous in this province.'³ There are more than 220 extinct volcanoes in the area, the most famous of

which is Altan Ovoo.

The Dariganga traditionally married when they were very young. 'The girls were usually 13 or 14, and the boys were only a few years older. Today, couples usually marry while they are in their early-to-mid-twenties, then immediately begin having children.'⁴

Shamanism was the traditional religion of the Dariganga in the ancient past, until Buddhism was introduced from Tibet. During the harsh years of Communism, many Dariganga people gave up all religious faith and became atheists. The Yeguzer Khatagyn Monastery is the focal point

of Buddhism in the Dariganga region. The monastery's last lama, Galsandash, was severely persecuted by the Communists in the 1930s. He was taken away and 're-educated'. From the 1930s until the collapse of Communism, the monastery was left unattended. In the early 1990s the new government allowed restoration work on the monastery to begin, and today it again attracts Buddhist pilgrims and worshippers from throughout south-east

Mongolia. Tibetan Buddhism is flourishing again among the Dariganga people.

Although there has been encouraging Christian growth in Mongolia since the early 1990s, the gospel has failed to make the same kind of impact in this remote corner of south-east Mongolia as it has in the nation's capital. There are just a few known Dariganga Christians today. Most people have never heard the gospel in a way that enables them to make an intelligent decision to accept or reject Christ.



Population:
35,000 (2000)
40,800 (2010)
47,500 (2020)

Countries: Mongolia
Buddhism: Tibetan
Christians: 50



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Overview of the Dariganga

Other Names: Dariganga Mongols

Population Sources:

32,300 in Mongolia (2000, B Grimes [1995 figure])

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

Dialects: 0

Professing Buddhists: 55%

Practising Buddhists: 30%

Christians: 0.1%

Scripture: Portions 1952; New Testament 1979

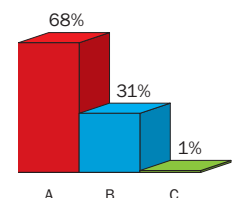
Jesus film: available (Mongol)

Gospel Recordings: Mongolian

Christian Broadcasting: available (Mongolian)

ROPAL code: KHK02

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