


Population in China:

3,000 (1993)
3,260 (2000)
4,200 (2010)

Location: Xinjiang

Religion: Tibetan Buddhism

Christians: None Known

Overview of the Tuva

Countries:

Russia, Mongolia, China

Pronunciation: "Too-va"

Other Names: Tuvin, Uryangkhai, Altai Uryangkhai, Altai Uriangkhai, Altai Tuva, Tuwa, Monchak, Monjak, Soyon, Shor, Urinkhai

Population Source:

3,000 (1993 J. Janhunen);
2,600 (1982 census);
Out of a total Mongol population of 4,806,849 (1990 census);
206,000 in Russia (1993 P. Johnstone);
27,000 in Mongolia (1993 P. Johnstone)

Location: *N Xinjiang*, near Russia-Mongolia-China border: Ili Kazak Prefecture: Altay and Burqin towns, Kanas Village; And in Fuyun and Habahe counties.

Status: Officially included under Mongolian

Language:

Altaic, Turkic, Northern Turkic

Dialects: 0

Religion: Tibetan Buddhism, Shamanism, No Religion

Christians: None known

Scripture: Portions 1996. Work in progress

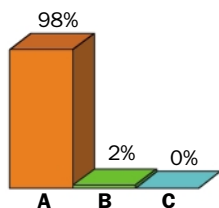
Jesus film: Available (but not understood by Tuva in China)

Gospel Recordings: None

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: TUN00

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: More than 3,000 Tuva are located in the extreme north of China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region near the juncture of China, Mongolia, and Russia. The vast majority (87%) of Tuva are located in the Tuva Republic in Russia, where they were originally known as the *Soyon* and *Urinkhai* and sometimes as *Shor*. Approximately 27,000 Tuva live in western Mongolia.

Identity: The Tuva in China are a diaspora group who migrated to their present location in the early 1800s. Although the Tuva were "discovered" as a distinct people by the Chinese authorities in 1986, they are still officially classified as part of the Mongolian nationality.

Language: Tuva is a Turkic language. Because of contact with other peoples, 90% of the Tuva in China can speak Kazak and 30% can speak Oirat.¹ Most can also speak Mandarin. "The use of the [Tuva] language is rapidly declining on both sides of the China-Mongolia border,"² although it is reportedly still spoken by most Tuva children.³ About half of the Tuva in China are able to speak their language,⁴ which they call *Diba* or *Kok Mungak*.⁵ The Tuva in Russia use a Cyrillic script.

History: The Tuva in China separated from the main Tuva population in the early 1800s, when a group migrated to the Altai region of Xinjiang. Today their language is different from Tuva in Russia and Mongolia, and they have become their own distinct people group. In the late

1800s the Tuva in China started to call themselves Mongolians "to avoid oppression by the then ruling Qing Dynasty, and to enjoy the favored status of the Mongolians, who were allies of the Manchurian court."⁶ Tuva was declared an independent state by the Tzarist government in Russia in 1912; at the same time Mongolia gained independence from China. Freedom was short-lived however. Tuva became a Russian protectorate in 1914.

Customs: The Tuva do not live in yurts as do the Mongolians, "but in square houses built of logs with a roof plastered with thick mud."⁷ Chinese scholars note that the Tuva "speak Mongolian with outsiders and have adopted many of the manners and customs of the surrounding Mongolian tribes, but they speak their own Turkic language among themselves."⁸

Religion: The Tuva in all three of the countries they inhabit adhere to Tibetan Buddhism. They were converted by Tibetan missionaries in the 1700s,⁹ although shamans and mediums are still active among the Tuva communities in China. Most Tuva youth in China now consider themselves atheists.

Christianity: Very few Tuva in China have ever heard the name of Christ, and there are no known believers among them. The situation among the Tuva in Russia is better, with a reported "17 registered evangelical churches."¹⁰ One Tuva believer in Russia was recently martyred. His death was reported on television, causing a growth of interest in the gospel among many people.¹¹ One Christian handed a Mongolian New Testament to a Tuva girl in China. "She started reading and wouldn't let up, walking away towards the hills with her treasure."¹²



Midge Conner