

Kalmyk-Oirat in Mongolia



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Map: Mongolian Traditional Costumes

"Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."

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| People Name | Kalmyk-Oirat |
| Country | Mongolia |
| Status | Unengaged Unreached |
| Population | 178,000 |
| Language | Mongolian, Halh |
| Religion | Ethnic Religions |
| Written Scripture | Yes |
| Oral Scripture | No |
| Jesus Film | Yes |
| Gospel Recordings | Yes |
| Christ Followers | No |
| Churches | No |
| Workers Needed | 3 |
| Workers Reported | 0 |

INTRODUCTION / HISTORY

The Kalmyk are Mongolian in origin. In the 16th century, the Kalmyk, or Oirat, left their homeland, now known as areas of northwest China, to avoid political and economic pressures. They had hopes of settling in the rich pastures of the northern Causasus Mountains.

In 1771, the majority of the Oirat decided to move back to their homeland in order to escape the Russian dictatorship, but only a few survived the long journey. Those who stayed behind in Russia became known as the Kalmyk, which means "to remain." As Kalmyks looked for their identity, they discovered it in Buddhism.

WHAT ARE THEIR LIVES LIKE?

In rural areas, there are herdsmen who raise cattle, sheep, goats, and a few camels. They are known for their love of fine horses and horse racing. Many have a small garden plot in the yard, growing melons, corn, and potatoes for their families. Some are employed in the trades, earning barely sustainable wages. Others continue to live as nomads, their lives characterized by seasonal migrations. Their dwellings are portable tents called yurts.

The traditional Kalmyk dress includes velvet hats, loose fitted coats, and heavily padded long pants. Men often shave their heads,

except for one small area in the back that is reserved for a ponytail.

Oral history is an important part of Kalmyk culture. It is traditionally recited by a poet and accompanied by a two stringed lute called a dombra. Favorite past-times include storytelling and singing.

WHAT ARE THEIR BELIEFS?

In the late 1500s, the Kalmyk adopted Tibetan Buddhism. Many were later forced to convert to Russian Orthodoxy. Kalmyk Buddhism is a mixture of ethnic beliefs and Shamanism (belief in unseen gods, demons, and spirits). The people continue to depend on shamans, or medicine men, despite laws forbidding their practices to cure the sick by magic and communication with the gods.

The obo, a heap of stones thought to be inhabited by local spirits, often serves as a site for performing various rituals. Occultism is occurring as Kalmyks have the custom of going to a Buddhist temple and inviting the gods to live inside them. Some are now being persuaded to join the Muslim religion.

WHAT ARE THEIR NEEDS?

Medical facilities are inadequate. Limited water supply, poor hygiene, deficient diet, and alcoholism are common problems. Kalmyk have a high infant mortality rate,

low life expectancy, and persistence of diseases like tuberculosis.

PRAYER POINTS

* Ask the Holy Spirit to soften the hearts of the Kalmyk people so that they will be receptive to the love of Jesus.

* Pray that God will free the Kalmyk from occultism and their belief in evil spirits.

* Pray that God will grant wisdom and favor to the missions agencies that may be currently focusing on the Kalmyk.

* Pray that God will send Christian medical teams to work among these precious people.

* Pray that God will raise up teams of intercessors who will faithfully stand in the gap for the Kalmyk.

* Ask the Lord to raise up strong local churches among the Kalmyk.

SOURCES

Bethany Prayer profiles
<https://goo.gl/WJ7cfG>