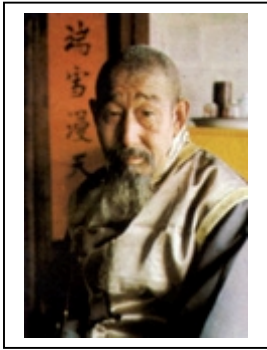


Antioch Christian Fellowship

The Dariganga People of Mongolia

Unreached People Prayer Profile for July & August, 2003



The Dariganga, a small people group of Mongolian origin, inhabit the southeastern regions of Mongolia. They are primarily located in the southern part of the Sümbaatar province, on a volcanic plateau near the Gobi Desert. The Dariganga belong to the eastern group of Mongols, which includes the Khalkha Mongols, the Buryat, and most of the Chinese Mongols. The Dariganga language is closely related to Halh, and is often referred to as a Mongolian dialect. However, all Dariganga are also able to use Halh in conversation with other Mongols in North and Central Asia. In the thirteenth century, Genghis Khan formed one of the greatest empires in world history by uniting all of the nomadic Mongol tribes. During the centuries that followed, the once mighty Mongol empire became squeezed between the growing Russian and Chinese empires. In the early 1920's, Mongolia became a Marxist state, until its quiet democratic revolution in 1990.

What are their lives like?

Although most Mongols now live in cities, there remains a large population of Dariganga nomads. They live in herding camps and migrate seasonally with their animals. Their dwellings are portable gers or yurts, which are round felt tents that have brightly painted wooden doors. The nomads raise horses, cattle, and sheep and migrate four or five times a year in search of fresh pastures. Some of the Dariganga are now settled farmers who live and work on the "collective" (community) farms. The urban Dariganga generally live in Soviet-built apartment complexes. Many of them have found jobs in industry, mining, or transport. Due to the harshness of the climate in Mongolia, the Dariganga diet consists primarily of fat, meat (mainly mutton), milk, and dairy products. Large amounts of fat and mutton are eaten during the winter, and dairy products such as yogurt, cheese, and sour cream are eaten during the summer. Their favorite drink is airag or kumiss, which is fermented mare's milk. The Dariganga traditionally married while 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. Urban Dariganga, especially those with a college education, tend to delay marriage until they reach their late twenties. Birth control is discouraged in Mongolia. Families with six or more children are given financial benefits. The Dariganga love music, folk dances, chess, and sporting events. Every July, the ancient Naadam festival is celebrated throughout Mongolia. Sporting events are held in horse racing, archery, and wrestling.

What are their beliefs?

The Dariganga were traditionally shamanists (believed in an unseen world of gods, demons, and spirits). The people depended on shamans (medicine men) to cure the sick by magic, communicate with the gods, and control events. In the late 1500's, the Mongols were introduced to Tibetan Buddhism, and most Mongols converted to Buddhism at that time. By 1900, 60% of Mongolia's males were serving as priests in Buddhist monasteries. However, as a result of an anti-religious movement launched by the Marxist government in the 1930's, about 75% of the Dariganga became either non-religious or atheists. Today, a number of Dariganga have returned to the beliefs of their forefathers. Shamans are once again called upon to cure the sick or alleviate evil spirits through divination, oracles, and astrology. A combination of Buddhism and shamanism has survived, especially among the elderly. Obos, heaps of stones thought to be inhabited by local spirits, can still be seen on almost every hilltop.

What are their needs?

Rape, murder, alcoholism, and violence are major problems in Mongolia's urban areas today. Many young people are also involved in criminal gangs. The Dariganga need to find true peace—peace that can only come through knowing Jesus Christ.

Prayer Points

- Pray that the doors of Mongolia will soon open to Christian missionaries.
- Ask the Lord of the harvest to send forth many laborers into Mongolia to share the Good News.
- Pray that alcoholism, violence, and divorce that are destroying the lives of the Dariganga people will change through the testimony and lives of those transformed by the grace of God.
- Ask God to raise up teams of intercessors who will faithfully stand in the gap for the Dariganga.
- Pray that Christians will have opportunities to introduce the Dariganga to the Prince of Peace.
- Pray that God will open the hearts of Mongolia's governmental leaders to the Gospel.

The People: (Latest estimates from the World Evangelization Research Center)

- People name: Dariganga
- Country: Mongolia
- Their language: Dariganga
- Population:
 - (1990) 37,000
 - (1995) 41,000
 - (2000) 45,200
- Largest religion:
 - Nonreligious 50%
 - Ethnic religionist 30%
 - Atheist 16%
- Christians: <1%
- Church members: 12
- Scriptures in their own language: None
- Jesus Film in their own language: None
- Christian broadcasts in their own language: None
- Mission agencies working among this people: 0
- Persons who have heard the Gospel: 4,100 (10%)
 - Those evangelized by local Christians: 1,200 (3%)
 - Those evangelized from the outside: 2,900 (7%)
- Persons who have never heard the Gospel: 36,900 (90%)

Their Country:

- Country: Mongolia
- Population:
 - (1990) 2,177,500
 - (1995) 2,410,000
 - (2000) 2,660,900
- Major peoples in size order:
 - Khalkha Mongol 64.2%
 - Western Mongol 9.2%
 - Southeastern Mongolian 5%
 - Kazak 4.4%
- Major religions:
 - Buddhist 26%
 - Nonreligious 14.3%
 - Atheist 7.7%
- Number of denominations: 6