

MISSION ATLAS PROJECT

Turkmenistan

Snap Shot

Country Name: Turkmenistan

Country Founded In: October 27, 1991

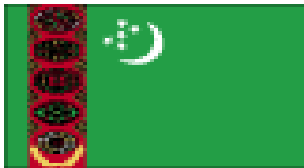
Population: 4,952,081

Government Type: Republic with authoritarian presidential rule

Geography: Central Asia, east of the Caspian Sea, north of Iran, southwest of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan

Number of People Groups: 40

Picture of Flag:



Religion Snapshot:

Major Religion and Percent of population: 89% Muslim (Mostly Sunni)

All Religions and % for each:

Muslims (Sunni)	89%
Russian Orthodox	1.7%
Baha'is	0%
Jewish	0.1%
Buddhists	0%
Christian adherents	2.3%

Government interaction with religion:

The constitution provides for freedom of religion in Turkmenistan and there is no official state religion. While this is the case, the government restricts all forms of religious expression and many feel that there is no freedom of religion in the country. Some have described the government of Turkmenistan as one of the most closed and brutal in the

world. All religious organizations must be registered and law requires that an organization must have 500 members in each location in order to gain legal status.

The only two religions that have successfully registered with the government are Sunni Islam and Russian Orthodox Christianity. These two groups are tightly controlled by the government. No other groups have successfully been registered and the government severely limits all other religious activities. Public gathering, proselytizing, and distributing religious materials is prohibited. No religious community is allowed to print, publish, or import religious literature.

Groups are also not allowed to meet and worship privately. There have been reports of police raids on prayer meetings, arbitrary beatings and arrests, and excessive fines. In 2005, Baptists reported that there was a raid on a worship service in city of *Mary* and earlier in the city of *Turkmenabad*. A Pentecostal congregation was threatened in the city of *Turkmenbashi*.

<http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/t/2866.htm>

Basic Facts

Demographics:

As of July 2005, the population of Turkmenistan was 4,952,081. The population growth rate is +1.81%. Age structure stands 0-14 years 35.7%; 15-64 years 60.2%; 65+ years 4.1% (2005 est.). The birth rate stands at 27.68 births per 1000 population and the death rate 8.78 deaths per 1000 population. Infant mortality rate is 73.08 deaths per 1000 live births. Life expectancy is 58.02 years for males and 64.93 years for females. Less than 0.1% of the adult population is infected with HIV/ AIDS. The urban/rural division stands at 45.51% urban with a 2.5% urban growth rate. The largest cities are *Ashkhabad* (500,892), *Chardzhou* (202,203), *Tashauz* (142,174), *Mary* (115,319), and *Nebit-Dag* (108,271).

Encarta Encyclopedia: Johnstone and Mandryk
www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/tx.html

Language:

The official language of Turkmenistan is *Turkmen* and is spoken by 72% of the population. Russian is used by many in business and government and is used by 12% of the population. Uzbek is used by about 9% of the population and 7% of the country's people speak other languages.

Society/ Culture:

About 40 people groups make up Turkmenistan.

The primary people divisions are:

Turkmen (85%)

Uzbek (5%)
Russian (4%)
Other (6%)

The people of Turkmenistan are a diverse group of people. One source suggests that more than 70 tribes make up Turkmenistan. Although tribal affiliation is weakening in the cities, it still places a rule in Turkmen society.

In the past, tribes were distinguished by the language dialect, clothing, headgear, and carpet pattern. Tribal identity is still important today and often plays a role in the arranging of marriages. Even in the cities, most know their tribal affiliation.

National awareness has increased. School curriculum now includes a class on *edep*, which is the proper social behavior and moral conduct according to Turkmen and Islamic standards. *Turkmen* has become the national language and the country has begun to promote national and religious holidays.

The society of Turkmenistan is broken down into a class structure that is based on Marxism. There is a class of intelligentsia, which is mostly made up of Turkmen people, a worker class, which is made up of Russians, and the peasant class, which is also made up of Turkmen. Most intelligentsia are Western oriented and hold high positions in government, industry, and education. They are educated and often go to higher education schools in Russia. Most speak Russian and live in urban centers.

Family is very important to most families in Turkmenistan. Traditionally, before Soviet rule, the extended family was necessary for survival. Small groups of families lived together in their traditional regions and only came together in times of war or celebration. Families tended to be self sufficient.

Today families remain close and often families are made up of five or more children. In rural areas, many families are still grouped by their clan or tribe. It is common for a village to consist of one lineage. When a couple marries, it is not uncommon for the couple to remain with the parents of the groom. Many marriages, especially in rural areas, are arranged by matchmakers. Even though the marriages are arranged, most couples already know each other and freely consent to the marriage agreement. "Marriages of love" are becoming more common, especially in the cities. A bride price must be agreed upon before the wedding can take place. Divorce among those living in Turkmenistan is rare.

Respect for elders is very important in Turkmen society. Homes for the elderly exist, however, it is almost unheard of for a Turkmen to put a parent in one of these homes. Elders are considered sources of wisdom and spirituality. Power within the community is given to the community's older members. Before any significant decisions, the advice and consent of an elder is usually sought.

The people of Turkmenistan have a rich culture. *Turkmen* carpets are well known and are as important to the people of Turkmenistan as the pyramids are to the people of Egypt. Evidence suggests that carpet making dates as far back as the 6th century BC. The design on a carpet dating back almost 2,500 years ago is similar to the patterns found on the carpets woven today. Five of the traditional designs woven on carpets can be seen on the country's flag and emblem. In addition to their carpets, the people of Turkmenistan are known for their horses. The *Ahal-Teke* breed of horse is known for its beauty and swiftness.

While Turkmenistan is a primarily Muslim country, women do not have the same place in society that they do in other Muslim countries. Most women in Turkmenistan are not expected to veil. They also do not practice the more strict seclusion that is practiced in other Muslim countries. Many possess specialized skills and crafts, however, they are often not seen in political affairs outside of the home. During the Soviet Period some women were economically forced to observe some Muslim practices in order to protect the careers of their husbands. Some had to work outside the home, which disrupted some of the more traditional family practices and increased the divorce rate.

Food in Turkmenistan is similar to the food in other Central Asian countries. Herb filled pastries, cornmeal pancakes, and porridges with mungbeans, cornmeal and pumpkin, or rice, milk, and yoghurt are very common. *Plov* is the staple food and consists of mutton, shredded yellow turnip, and fried rice. *Shashlyk*, which is mutton kebabs, and *lipioshka*, which are rounds of unleavened bread, are often served on the street and in restaurants.

Manty, large noodle sacks filled with meat, and *Shorpa*, which is a meat and vegetable soup, are also common. Seafood is often substituted in mutton dishes in places along the Caspian Sea. Two foods unique to Turkmenistan are *ka'urma*, which is deep fried mutton in its own fat, and *Churban churpa*, which is mutton fat dissolved in green tea. Another food unique to Turkmenistan, *Ishkiykli*, is dough balls filled with meat and onion. These are cooked in sand that has been heated by a fire. Green Tea is a very common drink and is served in most places. *Kefir* is a thick yoghurt drink often served at breakfast.

The majority of the people in Turkmenistan are Sunni Muslim. They do not, however, share the fundamentalism of their more devout neighbors in Afghanistan and Iran. Tribal loyalties are as important and in some areas more important than Islam. The people in Turkmenistan who are Muslim celebrate several religious ceremonies. Most take part in a month of fasting called *Ramazán*, *Eid Al-Fitr*, or *Ramadan*.

Many start the month by wearing new clothes and going to prayer. Children often receive gifts during this time. At the end of the month, they take part in a three-day feast. This *Eid-i-Ramazán* is a time of joy where relatives get together. Another important celebration is *Eid-i-Kurbon* or *Eid Al-Adha*. This feast celebrates Abraham's sacrifice of a sheep in place of his son as ordered by Allah. Usually during this celebration, families slay a sheep and give some of the meat to the poor. Another important celebration is the celebration of Mohammed's birthday, which is called *Mawleed Al-Nabi*. *Ashura* is the

tenth day of the month Muharram according to the Islamic calendar. This is seen as a day of mourning of the martyrdom of Hussein and his followers at the battle of Kerbala.

Other holidays include New Year's Day on January 1, Memory Day on January 12, National Flag Day on February 19, Turkmen Women's Day on March 20, Novrus Bairam on March 21, Victory in May, Revival and Unity Day on May 18, Day of Election of First President on July 21, Independence Days October 27-28, and Neutrality Day on December 12. On October 6, Remembrance Day is celebrated marking the anniversary of the 1948 earthquake.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkmenistan#Culture>
http://www.cac-biodiversity.org/tkm/tkm_culture.htm
www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ti.html
www.plasma.nationalgeographic.com/mapmachine/profiles/ti.html
<http://muslimministries.iteams.org/asia/tajiks.php>
http://www.turkmenistanembassy.org/turkmen/history/hist_cult.html

Government:

Turkmenistan is a republic with authoritarian presidential rule. There is little power outside of the executive branch. *President Saparmurat Niyazov* has been chief of state and Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers since October 27, 1990, when he was elected president by 99.5% of the vote. He is both the chief of state and the head of government.

The president is elected by popular vote for a five year term, however, on December 28, 1999, *Niyazov* was unanimously approved as president for life by the People's Council. The next elections will be held in 2008, when the president turns 70 years old and is no longer constitutionally eligible to run for office. The executive branch is made up of President *Niyazov* and a Cabinet of Ministers that he appoints. The legislative branch is made up of two Parliamentary bodies. The unicameral People's Council or *Halk Maslahaty* is the supreme legislative body made up of up to 2,500 delegates. These delegates are elected by popular vote and others are appointed. The unicameral Parliament, or *Mejlis*, is made up of 50 members who are elected by popular vote for a five year term.

A new law was passed in 2003 making the president the supreme leader of the *Mejlis*. Since the president is also "Chairman for Life" of the *Halk Maslahaty*, he has sole authority of both the executive branch and the legislative branch of government. The Judicial Branch consists of a Supreme Court in which judges are appointed by the president.

www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/tx.html
<http://www.country-studies.com/turkmenistan/government.html>
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/eur/8359.htm>

Economy:

The Gross Domestic Product of Turkmenistan stood at \$27.6 billion in 2004. However, since Turkmenistan's economic statistics are state secrets, all economic figures are subject to a wide margin of error. Agricultural products common to Turkmenistan include grain, cotton, and livestock. Industries include natural gas, oil, petroleum products, textiles, and food processing. Turkmenistan has the world's fifth largest reserves of natural gas and substantial oil resources. This has not helped their economy much, however, because of Russia's refusal to transport Turkmenistan's gas.

Turkmenistan's main exports are gas, crude oil, petrochemicals, cotton fiber, and textiles. About 49.8% of Turkmenistan's exports go to Ukraine, 17.2% goes to Italy, and 4.7 goes to Turkey. Turkmenistan's major imports include chemicals, foodstuffs, machinery, and equipment. 14% of Turkmenistan's imports come from Russia and 13.8% come from Ukraine. Turkmenistan receives about 11.1% of the country's imports from the United States, 8.1% from the United Arab Emirates, 8% from Turkey, and 6.8% from Germany. France also sends imports to Turkmenistan.

In 2003, almost 58% of Turkmenistan lived below the poverty line, and in 2004 almost 60% of the country's population was unemployed. Most families in Turkmenistan depend on some sort of state employment. Those working in government, industry, construction, transportation, and science tend to receive the highest wages and those in health, education, and services receive the lowest wages for their work. Those working in agriculture tend to earn very low wages and most living on collective farms have a standard of living that is much below the standard of living in the cities. In 2003, the employment breakdown was 48.2% agriculture, 13.8% industry, and 37% services. Turkmenistan received \$16 million in economic aid from the United States in 2001. The average income of those in Turkmenistan is about 30 USD a month.

Living conditions in Turkmenistan have declined since the country's independence. In 1989, about 31% of the country's housing had running water, 27% had central heating, and about 20% had a sewer line. In 1991, almost all families had a television set, refrigerator, and a sewing machine. About 26% of families owned a car. Consumer goods have decreased and prices have increased.

Health care is free, but in rural area, healthcare is not good. In both rural and urban areas, medical workers are under trained and facilities are often unequipped and short of medications and supplies. One study suggests that up to 70% of the obstetricians and gynecologists in Dashhowuz Province were not well trained for surgical procedures and almost half of their patients died. In addition, only about 15% of maternity clinics have water piped in. There is a shortage of rehydration salts and vaccines in the country. In the northeastern part of the country, many medical problems are caused or exacerbated by poor diet, pollute drinking water, and industrial wastes and pesticides.

Several development opportunities exist in Turkmenistan. One of the country's goals is integration into the world market economy. As a result there is a great need for English teachers and instructors in business and economics. There is also a need for health volunteers to develop community health programs that will educate people on maternal

and child health. People are also needed to create programs in preventive health care practices in rural communities. People are needed to teach agricultural principles such as crop diversification. While there are needs in Turkmenistan, access to the country is limited. Authorities are often resistant to the help of non-government organizations.

<http://www.peacecorps.gov/index.cfm?shell=learn.wherepc.easteurope.turkmenistan.workarea>
<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/%7Easiactr/haq/200003/0003a002.htm> <http://www.mercycorps.org/items/309/>
<http://www.win1040.com/countries/a0000056.cfm>
<http://www.studyrussian.com/seidenstrasse/silkroad/Turkmenistan.htm>
<http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/t/2866.htm>
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/tmtoc.html>
http://www.turkmenistanembassy.org/turkmen/history/hist_cult.html http://www.fh.org/prayer_tajikistan
Johnstone, Patrick & Mandryk, Jason. *Operation World: 21st Century Edition*. Cumbria, CA: Paternoster Lifestyle, 2001. www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/ti.html
www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/car/index/html

Literacy:

Tajikistan has a total 98.8% literacy rate, with 99.3% of men and 98.3% of women above the age of 15 able to read and write.

www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/tx.html

Land/Geography:

Turkmenistan, located in Central Asia, southwest of Uzbekistan and east of the Caspian Sea boasts a total land area of 488,100 sq. km. It borders Afghanistan to the southeast, Iran to the south, Kazakhstan to the northwest, and Uzbekistan to the north and northeast. The country is slightly larger than California.

Turkmenistan is mostly flat to rolling desert. Dunes rise to mountains in the south and there are low mountains along the border with Iran. Two populated strips of irrigated land on the northern and southern borders are divided by the *Kata-Kum* Desert. The Desert makes up almost 89% of the land and only around 1% is actually productive agriculturally.

Earthquakes have been a problem in Turkmenistan. In 1895 and 1924 Turkmenistan experienced giant earthquakes reaching 10 points on the Richter scale. In 1948 another earthquake hit *Ashgabat* and destroyed the city.

www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/tx.html; Johnstone, *Operation World*

Brief History of Turkmenistan

50,000 BCE - 2,000 BCE

Links to the Prophet Noah are included in the Muslim traditions of the *Turkmen* people. According to these traditions, Noah gave the *Turkmen* lands to his son Yafes and his descendents. Allah made the *Turkmen* successful and increased their numbers. The

Turkmen were granted the qualities of spiritual richness and courage. Allah also gave them the capacity to recognize the realities behind events. According to these traditions, Allah named these people Turk Iman, meaning “made from light, whose essence is light.”

Tools have been discovered along the Caspian Sea and near Turkmenbashi that date back to the Stone Age. Remains of farming settlements that date back almost 8,000 years have been discovered in the *Kopet Dag Mountains*. It is believed that people during this time used the mountain streams to irrigate their crops and survived by herding and hunting.

Achaemenid Rule, ca. 550-331 BC

As the people in this area learned to make pottery and metal tools, trade increased with neighboring peoples. This increased the wealth of the people. However, it also made them more attractive to foreign invaders. This area was constantly invaded and overtaken by foreign invaders. During the rule of Darius the Great, the Achaemenid (Persian) Empire expanded to its peak and included much of what is now Turkmenistan. They had their base south of the *Kopet Dag Mountains*. This allowed the Persians to control trade through Central Asia and increased their control over the nomadic people who lived on the plains of Turkmenistan.

Alexander the Great and the Sassanians, ca. 330 BC-700AD

Turkmenistan remained part of the Persian Empire of Cyrus the Great until it was conquered by Alexander the Great in the 4th century BC. In 330BC, Alexander’s armies founded the city of Alexandria near the *Murgab River*. Alexandria was a part of an important trade route and later became the city of *Merv*, which is modern day Mary. The ruins of this city can still be seen along the banks of the *Murgab River*.

Alexander the Great died in 323BC and his generals fought for control of his empire. This quickly led to the deterioration of the Empire. The Scythians, who were nomadic warriors from the north, established the kingdom of Parthia. This kingdom included present day Iran and Turkmenistan. At the peak of their rule, the kingdom extended as far as India. Parthian kings ruled from the city of Nisa. In 224AD, Parthia fell to the Sassanians of Persia. During this time, the Alans and Huns also began moving into Turkmenistan.

Islamic Conquest, ca. 637-900AD

After the death of Mohammad, Islam spread the Middle East and Central Asia. Five years after the death of Mohammad, at the *Battle of Qadisiya* in 637AD, Arab Muslims defeated the Iranian *Sassanians* and began taking over the regions east of Iran. This raid brought local rulers under the control of the Umayyad caliphs.

Between the seventh and ninth centuries, most of Central Asia was converted from Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and folk religions to Sunni Islam. Semi-independent states began to emerge throughout the empire by the middle of the ninth

century as the *Abbasid* rule began to deteriorate. One of the best known dynasties during this time was that of the *Samanid*. During this time, Iranian Muslim scholarship, *Shia* Islam, dominated the area. This dynasty lasted until the middle of the tenth century when Turkish tribes from the north and the *Ghaznavids* from the south took on the faltering *Samanid Dynasty*.

Ghaznavid Rule, ca. 1030-1130AD

In the ninth century, Turkic nomads from the north entered Central Asia. These people were people who lived in the grasslands from Mongolia to the Caspian Sea. They came in as slave soldiers to the *Samanid Dynasty* and the *Abbasid* army. As the *Samanids* began to lose control of the area, these soldiers gained positions of power and they were able to establish their own states. As these Turkic people rose to power, other Turkic tribes were drawn to the area.

The first Turkic state in Central Asia was the *Ghaznavid Empire*. This empire spread Islam throughout Afghanistan, Pakistan, and parts of India. *Mahmud*, the most famous of the dynasty's rulers carried out raids into India, looting Hindu temples, and converting the people to Islam. He started universities and saw many scholars arise.

The caliph in Baghdad, which was Islam's intellectual center at the time, recognized *Mahmud* as the temporal heir of the Samanids. In 1030 *Mahmud* died and around 1130 *Ghazni* was captured and destroyed by the rulers of the *Kingdom of Ghor*. Two large groups of Turks entered the region and undermined the *Ghaznavids*. The *Qarakhanids*, in the east, conquered the Samanids. The *Seljuk* family led a group of Turks into the western part of Central Asia, including what is now Turkmenistan and conquered the *Ghaznavid* territory of *Khorazm*.

The Oguz, Seljuk, and Ghorid Rule, ca. 1130-1220AD

The ancestors of the Turkmen people are believed to be the *Oghuz tribes* who migrated from the Mongolia and southern Siberia to the area that is now Turkmenistan in the tenth century. By the eleventh century, the Arabs were pushed out of Turkmenistan as the *Seljuk* clan of the *Oguz tribe* established the *Seljuk Empire*.

The *Seljuk Empire* grew to dominate much of Central Asia and by 1055 stretched as far as Baghdad. The Empire became very important to the Islamic world. The empire split into states that were ruled by Turkic and Iranian rulers and the capital of this empire was *Merv*. As the *Oguz* settled among and mixed with the other people groups in Turkmenistan, the *Oguz* north of the *Kopet Dag Mountains* gradually became known as the *Turkmen*. Other groups of *Oguz* moved across the Caspian Sea and settled in Azerbaijan and Asia Minor. They joined the Seljuk Turks in establishing the *Ottoman Empire*.

Until about 1200 AD, the *Ghorids* ruled what is present day Afghanistan, eastern Iran, and Pakistan and the Seljuk Turks ruled western Iran, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and

other parts of Central Asia. From 1200-1205, however, the *Khwarazm Turks* invaded from Central Asia and conquered most of the lands under Ghorim control. This empire was defeated by the Mongols in 1220.

Mongol and Uzbek, ca. 1220-1700

In 1220 *Genghis Khan*, overran Central Asia, destroying its cities and people. The city of *Merv* was burned to the ground and its inhabitants were massacred. Genghis Khan also ordered the destruction of Turkmenistan's farms and irrigation works. This conquest quickened the process of Turkification in the region because Genghis Khan's armies, while led by Mongols, were mostly made up of Turkic tribes.

As these armies settled, they intermixed with the local populations. His empire spread from China to the Caspian Sea. While his power was great, Genghis Khan failed to loosen the grips of Islam on Central Asia. By the thirteenth century, even his descendents were Muslims.

The Mongols destroyed Buddhist monuments and buildings. After Genghis Khan's death in 1227 Central Asia went through a period of fragmentation. This lasted until the 1380's with the rise of *Timor Lenk*, or *Tamerlane*. Timor, who was of both Turkish and Mongol descent claimed to be an ancestor of Genghis Khan and was able to consolidate the kingdoms, which founded a powerful state, with the capital in Samarkand. He started a series of military campaigns and by the late fourteenth century, he expanded his dynasty from India to Turkey. *Movarounnahr*, the new centralized part of Central Asia, saw much advancement in the economy, as well as in social and military institutes that had been undermined by the Mongol domination.

Timor's successors supported Islamic art, culture, and the sciences and several well known poets and artists arose under the royal patronage. Science, town-planning, literature, and arts developed during this time in Central Asia. The *Timurid Empire* came to an end around the turn of the sixteenth century.

Between the thirteen and fifteenth centuries the *Turkmen* became a distinct ethnic group. The Mongol invasions had left the Turkmen divided into small clans that were forced to live in the deserts. As the Mongols retreated, the *Turkmen* fell into the hands of Muslim rulers who established their territories in *Bukhara* and *Khiva*.

From the fifteenth century until the seventeenth century, southern Turkmenistan was under Persian rule and the northern part of Turkmenistan was under control of *Khiva* and *Bukhoro*. *Khiva* and *Bukhoro* both fell under Uzbek rule in the sixteenth century. In the early 1700's, the Persians gained control of *Khiva* and *Bukhoro*, however, by the middle of the century, the Uzbeks regained control of the area.

The Russian Conquest, ca. 1716-1917

During the eighteenth century, the Russian Empire was expanding into Central Asia. *Peter the Great* sent Russian expeditions into Turkmenistan seeking a trade route between southern Asia and the Middle East. In 1716, the expedition was murdered by a *Turkmen* clan near *Khiva*.

It was about a century before Russians were sent to Turkmenistan again. By 1802, members of several *Turkmen* clans officially became Russian subjects. As the *Turkmen* led several rebellions against khans and shahs of Persia, they turned to Russia for support. The Russians agreed to provide arms and food for Turkmen rebel's hopes of gaining access to Turkmenistan's land and natural resources.

From 1863-1868, Russia sent military expeditions into Turkmenistan and defeated the khanates of *Bukhara* and *Khiva*. The people of western Turkmenistan willingly joined the Russian Empire, however those in the eastern and southern parts of the region resisted Russian control. It has been said that of all the people of Central Asia, it was the *Turkmen* who put up the fiercest resistance to Russian expansion.

In 1869, Russia gained a foothold in Turkmenistan when they founded a port built on the *Caspian Sea at Krasnovodsk*, which is now *Turkmenbashi*. From there, they began conquering *Turkmen* land. They slaughtered hundreds and destroyed their settlements. In 1879 Turkmen warriors stopped a large group of Russians at *Geok-Tepe* near *Ashkhabad*, however in 1881, the Russians attacked and captured *Geok-Tepe* and *Ashkhabad*. During this same year, the Russians signed an agreement with the Persians that established the modern day borders between Turkmenistan and Iran. By 1885, the *Turkmen* were fully submitted to Russian control.

As the Russians gained control of Turkmenistan, they pushed across Turkmenistan to the borders of Persia and Afghanistan. As the *Transcaspian Railroad* was built, *Krasnovodsk*, *Mary*, and trading centers in the east were connected and allowed for economic development. In 1899, the Transcaspian Region, which included Turkmenistan, became part of the governate general of Russian Turkistan.

Turkmenistan remained a part of Russian Turkistan until 1917. As part of Russian Turkistan, the Turkmen held a low status and were ruled as a military colony. This arrangement allowed them to maintain their language, culture, and nomadic way of life with little interference.

Soviet Turkmenistan, ca.1917-1924

Since early Soviet rule brought about very few changes to the people of Turkmenistan, there were few uprisings. The preceding years had sporadic *Turkmen* uprisings, the most well known being the anti-tsarist revolt of 1916 which swept through all of Turkestan.

The uprising of the Turkmen and other peoples of Central Asia to reclaim their homelands was led by *Dzhunaid Khan*. The Turkmen defeated the Russians at *Khiva* and established a national government that lasted until 1918. In 1917, *Vladimir Ilich Lenin*,

leader of the Communist, overthrew the Russian government and took control of *Ashkhabad* in the summer of 1918. *Dzhunaid Khan* joined forces with the old Russian regime in order to drive out the Communists. In the summer of 1919, they established the independent state of *Transcaspia*.

By the fall of 1920, however, the Communist army began moving in and taking control of Turkmenistan. In 1922 the new government established the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and by October of 1924, Central Asia was divided into distinct political entities. The Trans Caspian District and the Turkmen Oblast of Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic became the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic. This led to forced collectivization and extreme socioeconomic changes.

Pastoral nomadism was replaced by a sedentary lifestyle by the 1930's. There were significant changes in the *Turkmen* way of life that effected family, political relationships, religious and cultural observances, and intellectual developments. In the late 1920's and early 1930's Stalin made many harsh changes in the USSR. Private property was taken and opposition was punished brutally. In 1927, a national resistance movement called the *Turkmen Freedom* rose up and the Soviets lost control of Turkmenistan. This was a part of the larger *Basmachi Rebellion* that swept throughout Central Asia from the 1920's into the 1930's. Guerilla war lasted until 1936 and resulted in the death of a large number of *Turkmen*. More than a million *Turkmen* fled to Afghanistan and Iran and a wave of Russian immigrants began settling in these deserted areas.

In 1932, Stalin was able to regain control of the *Turkmen SSR* and he had thousands of Turkmenistan's Communist leaders executed. He accused them of helping the nationalists. The Communist regime in *Ashkhabad* became subject to the central government in Moscow. During World War II, the western part of the Soviet Union saw large amounts of destruction and after the war, the Soviets began rebuilding plans in Central Asian cities. Ethnic Russians and Ukrainians seeking jobs began immigrating into the cities of *Ashkhabad* and *Turkmenabat*.

As Russians and Ukrainians came to the area, most *Turkmen* remained rural and nomadic. The Turkmen SSR was one of the Soviet Union's most isolated republics. Foreigners and Soviet citizens were not allowed to visit most of the region and Turkmen were rarely allowed to travel outside the republic.

Sovereignty and Independence, ca. 1986- current

Turkmenistan remained a quiet republic during Soviet rule. *Gorbachev's* glasnost policy which allowed more open criticism of the Communist Party and the country's economic system, and his *perestroika policy*, which eased government control over small businesses, did not have a big impact on Turkmenistan. In 1986, *Annamurad Khodzhamuradov* became the leader of the Turkmen SSR and never accepted Gorbachev's reforms. In August 27, 1990, Turkmenistan declared its sovereignty by a

unanimous vote. Also in 1990, communist leader *Saparmyrat Niyazov* was named as the new president. After a coup against the Gorbachev regime was attempted in August of 1991, *Niyazov* called for a popular referendum on independence which resulted in a 94% vote in favor of independence. The Republic of Turkmenistan was officially established on October 27, 1991. In December of 1991, Turkmenistan became a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Since the country's independence, there have been significant changes. A new currency has been introduced and plans for further economic change have been put in place. Politics, however, has changed little since the Soviet Era. The former Communist Party held much of its power and any opposition leaders were restricted and harassed. *Niyazov* was reelected in an unopposed election in 1992, and in 1994 he won a referendum which extended his term until 2002.

In 1999, *Niyazov* was declared president for life, although in 2000, he promised to step down by 2010. He acquired the title of *Turkmenbashi*, which means "leader of all Turkmen." Aside from being a political leader, his title also makes him somewhat of a spiritual leader. His statue is on every available pedestal throughout the country and many towns were renamed after him. In 2002, he renamed the months of the calendar after himself, his mother, and his spiritual adviser. An attempted assassination in 2002 led to even stricter government restrictions on both personal and political freedoms.

The international community continues to tolerate *Niyazov's* regime because of the country's strategic position and because of its large reserves of oil, gas, and precious metals. In 1994, Turkmenistan became Central Asia's first republic to join NATO's Partnership for Peace program and in 1998 a natural gas pipeline to Iran opened. Both Iran and Turkey have the status of "permanent neutrality" with Turkmenistan. The country also has close ties with the Russian Federation. This relationship, however, has been strained due to difficulties over the dual nationality status of ethnic Russians living in the country. Turkmenistan has also become a strategic country in the US-led war against the Taliban in Afghanistan. It has become the staging post for humanitarian aid and material in Central Asia.

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Christian History

Christianity first came to Central Asia around 250AD as Christians traveled the Silk Road. At first, it was strongly opposed, however, by 410AD, almost one fourth of the population claimed to be Christians. Nestorian Christianity reached Central Asia in the fourth century. It was, however, completely wiped out by Islam during the time of the Arab invasion. It was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that Christianity returned to the region.

At this time, Turkmenistan came into contact with Christianity through the Russians and was exposed mostly to the Russian Orthodox Church. As a result, many in Turkmenistan see Christianity as the religion of the Russians. During Stalin's reign, many minorities in the former Soviet Union were deported to Central Asia. This brought Protestants and Roman Catholics to the area for the first time.

Local Christians never developed a vision to reach out to the Turkmen or other Muslim groups, so there were very few indigenous believers in Turkmenistan. Islam has remained the predominant religion in Turkmenistan; however, Orthodoxy is the most widely practiced of the Christian groups.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion in Turkmenistan and there is no official state religion. While this is the case, the government restricts all forms of religious expression and many feel that there is no freedom of religion in the country. Some have described the government of Turkmenistan as one of the most closed and brutal in the world.

Non-Christian Religions

Buddhism, Hindu, Baha'i, and Zoroastrian

Turkmenistan has seen many religions and has often been an important religious center. Some believe that Zoroastrianism originated in this area. By the beginning of the second century, the *Kushan Empire* reached its greatest geographic and cultural peak. It became a center of literature and art and also became a center of trade, especially in silk. It became part of a trade route into East Asia. *Kanishka*, who was the leader during this time was considered *Kushans* greatest ruler.

During his reign, Mahayana Buddhism reached its peak in Central Asia. By the middle of the seventh century, the Buddhist culture and earlier Zoroastrian influence began to fade. There are no known Zoroastrian or Hindu groups left in Turkmenistan today. There are some small communities of Buddhists and Baha'is found in Turkmenistan. It is estimated that by the middle of 2000, there were about 630 Buddhists and 964 Baha'is in Turkmenistan. There is also a small group of Hare Krishnas in Turkmenistan. None of these groups are registered and they do not maintain churches or temples.

Ruhnama

The president, *Saparmyrat Niyazov*, formed a personality cult that he used in the attempt to unite all *Turkmen* and that other religions are being forced to observe. Muslims as well as Orthodox Christians have been pushed to venerate the *Ruhnama*, or the “book of the Soul,” the president’s two volume ideological book. The *Ruhnama* is supposed to be fully adequate for the spiritual needs of all Turkmen and is meant to make up for the shortcomings of both the Bible and the Koran.

Religious leaders are being pushed to teach from these books and to treat them as having the same authority as the *Quran*. Imams are required to recite an oath of loyalty to the president and the country at the end of the daily prayers. Mosques and churches are required to have a Turkmen flag above their entrances and every sermon is supposed to begin with a eulogy to *Niyazov*.

Each mosque is to have a copy of the *Ruhnama* at the entrance and people are to touch it as they enter, as though it were a sacred object. Churches must have two copies of the *Ruhnama*. Mosques not following these rules are closed down or fined. One mosque was shut down for not putting the *Ruhnama* on the same reading stand as the Koran. In some mosques, officials are stationed to remind the imams which passages of the *Ruhnama* they are to read from at the prayer times.

The cult also has a big mosque in the president’s home village with quotations from the *Ruhnama* on it. There is a gold statue in *Ashgabad* which revolved in a circle to follow the sun that is a monument to the *Ruhnama*. This cult began in the 1910’s, but increased significantly in 2001 when Niyazov published the first volume of the *Ruhnama*. The second volume was published in September of 2004. The books are taught in school and the English translation is often used to teach English. Most government buildings and schools have a “*Ruhnama* room” just as space was set aside to honor Lenin during the Soviet period.

Islam

After the death of Mohammad, Islam spread the Middle East and Central Asia. Five years after the death of Mohammad, at the Battle of Qadisiya in 637AD, Arab Muslims defeated the Iranian Sassanians and began taking over the regions east of Iran. This raid brought local rulers under the control of the Umayyad caliphs. Between the seventh and ninth centuries, most of Central Asia was converted from Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and folk religions to Sunni Islam. The Abbasid Dynasty grew stronger and was able to subdue the Arab invaders by the middle of the eight century.

Semi-independent states began to emerge throughout the empire by the middle of the ninth century as the Abbasid rule began to deteriorate. One of the best known dynasties during this time was that of the Samanid. During this time, Iranian Muslim scholarship, Shia Islam, dominated the area. *Bukhara* was the capital during this time. This dynasty lasted until the middle of the tenth century when Turkish tribes from the north and the Ghaznavids from the south took on the faltering *Samanid Dynasty*. Rule changed hands

many times over the next centuries, but Islam remained the predominate, and almost the only acceptable religion of the area until the Russian conquest.

During the Soviet Era, authorities did not prohibit Islam; rather they used it to control the people. In many places, mosques and madrassahs were closed and religious festivals were banned. During the 1920's and 1930's, Muslims experienced harsh anti-Islamic attacks. In addition to bans on festivals and meetings, many were killed. Muslims were forced to go underground and secretly practiced their religion, or they were forced to practice their religion under the close scrutiny of the Soviet government. In the 1940's, Islam became more accepted, but was strictly controlled by the Kremlin. The 1970's and 1980's saw a new effort at minimizing the influence of Islam and hostility towards Islam escalated during the Soviet military involvement with Afghanistan. Government feared Muslim extremists. In 1990, Muslims from different countries in the Former Soviet Union began to organize the Islamic Rebirth Party.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion in Turkmenistan and there is no official state religion. While this is the case, the government restricts all forms of religious expression and many feel that there is no freedom of religion in the country. Some have described the government of Turkmenistan as one of the most closed and brutal in the world. All religious organizations must be registered and law requires that an organization must have 500 members in each location in order to gain legal status. The only two religions that have successfully registered with the government are Sunni Islam and Russian Orthodox Christianity. These two groups are tightly controlled by the government. No other groups have successfully been registered and the government severely limits all other religious activities. Public gathering, proselytizing, and distributing religious materials is prohibited. No religious community is allowed to print, publish, or import religious literature. Groups are also not allowed to meet and worship privately.

Islam in Turkmenistan is overseen by Turkmenistan's Muslim Religious Board and the Muslim Religious Board of Mavarannahr in Uzbekistan. A council of religious affairs monitors all activities of clergy and in order to become an official clergy member, a person must attend official religious institutions and pass an examination.

Muslims, along with other religious followers, have faced increasing pressure by the government. Muslims have been pushed to venerate the *Ruhnama*, or the "book of the Soul." This is the president's two volume, ideological book.

Today, Turkmenistan has a large Muslim population, with an estimated 89% of the population calling themselves Muslim. Although a large portion of the population professes to be Muslims, the degree of religious observance varies widely. Most claiming Islam in Turkmenistan are Sunni Muslim.

The Sunni branch of Islam has been a part of the sedentary population of Central Asia for about 1,200 years. Many Muslims in Turkmenistan can trace their beliefs back to Sufi shaykhs from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. *Turkmen* who are revered for their

spiritual powers can trace their lineage to an *ovlat*, which is the Turkmen “holy” tribe. Six of these tribes are active and they are a revitalized form of the ancestor cult mixed with Sufism. According to tradition, these tribes descend from the Prophet Mohammad through one of the Four Caliphs.

Islam is regaining popularity in the country as *Niyazov* has ordered basic Islamic principles to be taught in public schools and more religious institutions have been built. Classes in both schools and mosques focus on Arabic language, the Koran, and the history of Islam.

Judaism

There are about 2,790 Jews in Turkmenistan, most of who are non-practicing. Many of these are descendents from families that came to Turkmenistan from the Ukraine during World War Two. There is also a population of *Bokharski Jews* who live in *Turkmenabat*, on the border of Uzbekistan. There are no synagogues or rabbis in Turkmenistan and the population of Jews in the country has continued to decrease as Jews emigrate to Israel, Russia, and Germany.

Atheism/ Non-religious

In 2000, there were an estimated 64,007 atheists and 400,896 non-religious in Turkmenistan. While the numbers of those regarded as non-religious are declining (-12.8 %), the non-religious still outnumber the total who are counted as Christian by 3.8 % and one must remember that the Christian numbers include Catholic, Orthodox, and marginal groups

Christian cults and sects

There are over 1000 *Jehovah's Witnesses* in Ashkhabad. The congregation has submitted applications to register with the government yearly since 2001; however, they have yet to gain legal status as a registered congregation.

One female Jehovah's Witness reported being assaulted and threatened with rape by two public prosecutors. Another female Jehovah's Witness experienced the same threats and one male member of the congregation was imprisoned and raped. Others have been threatened with losing their jobs if they continued to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. Homes have been raided and literature has been confiscated.

The State Cult -- *Ruhnama*

Religious groups have faced increasing pressure by the government. Churches have been pushed to venerate the *Ruhnama*, or the “book of the Soul,” the president's two volume ideological book. The president has built palaces and monuments to himself over much of

the country. He calls himself the “King of Kings.” The expensive monument building was enacted in the face of mounting poverty on the part of the people. As seen earlier, the *Ruhnama* is supposed to be fully adequate for the spiritual needs of all Turkmen and is meant to make up for the shortcomings of both the Bible and the Koran.

Religious leaders are being pushed to teach from these books and to treat them as having the same authority as the *Quran*. Priests are required to recite an oath of loyalty to the president and the country at the end of the daily prayers. Churches are required to have a Turkmen flag above their entrances and every sermon is supposed to begin with a eulogy to *Niyazov*. Pressure has been especially intense in the northeastern *Dashoguz Region*, where ethnic Uzbeks make up about half of the regions population.

Evangelical Christians

Protestants/ Evangelicals/ Pentecostals

There are several Protestant denominations in Turkmenistan. Among the Protestant Christians, there are small, unofficial communities of Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, Pentecostal Christians, the Protestant Word of Life Church, the Greater Grace World Outreach Church, and the New Apostolic Church. There are also members of several unaffiliated, non-denominational evangelical Christian groups. There is also a small community of ethnic German Lutherans who live around the city of *Serakhs*.

Public gathering, proselytizing, and distributing religious materials are prohibited. No religious community is allowed to print, publish, or import religious literature. Groups are also not allowed to meet and worship privately. There have been reports of police raids on prayer meetings, arbitrary beatings and arrests, and excessive fines. In 1999 a Seventh Day Adventist Church was demolished and in 2001 a Baptist church was shut down. In 2005, Baptists reported that there was a raid on a worship service in the city of Mary and earlier in the city of *Turkmenabad*. A Pentecostal congregation was threatened in the city of *Turkmenbashi*.

The combined Evangelical churches of Turkmenistan are showing a growth rate of + 8.1% annually an independent church reported a growth of + 22.6% annually.

Orthodox Churches

Second in numbers of followers to Islam is the *Russian Orthodox Church*. There are 11 registered Orthodox congregations in Turkmenistan in the main cities which are made up of about 40,000 members. One source suggests that there are only three priests. Three of these are in *Ashgabat*.

A priest resident in *Ashgabat* is a Deputy Chairman of the Council of Religious Affairs and he is responsible for leading the country’s Orthodox Church. He serves under the Russian Orthodox Archbishop in Uzbekistan. There are no Orthodox seminaries. Other branches of the Orthodox Church in Turkmenistan are the *Moldavian Orthodox Church*

and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. There are four Catholic congregations with about 1,000 members. These are mostly made up of local residents, migrant workers, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Lithuanians, and Poles. There are thirteen Armenian Apostolic congregations made up of about 13,900 members.

The Orthodox Church recently celebrated its 125 anniversary in the region. The Russian Orthodox Church traces its roots back to 988. Russia adopted Christianity as the official religion when *Prince Vladimir of Kiev* became a Christian in 988. The ceremony for *Prince Vladimir* was based upon Byzantine rites and this would serve as a model for the rise of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The church traces its apostolic succession through the Patriarch of Constantinople. At the Council of Florence in 1439, leaders of the Catholic and Orthodox Church agreed to reunify the two branches of Christianity. The Russian people rejected the concessions to the Catholics and Metropolitan *Isidore* was kicked out of his position in the church. In 1448, the Russian Orthodox Church separated from the Patriarchate of Constantinople and installed Metropolitan *Jonas* who was given the title of Metropolitan of Moscow and all of Rus.

Patriarch Nikon, in 1652 attempted to centralize the power that had been distributed locally while conforming Russian Orthodox rite and rituals to those of the *Greek Orthodox Church*. An example of this conformation was the insistence that Russians cross themselves with three fingers instead of two. People saw these changes as heresy and this led to *Nikon's* loss of power. One leader, *Tsar Aleksey*, however, maintained *Nikon's* changes and persecuted those who opposed *Nikon's* changes. They were persecuted until the reign of *Peter the Great*, which allowed people to practice their own style of Orthodoxy.

The Russian Orthodox Church grew during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1686, the *Metropolia of Kiev* was moved from Constantinople to Moscow, which brought millions of followers under the authority of the Russian Orthodox Patriarch. Missionaries were sent across Siberia and into Alaska and the United States. In 1721, *Peter the Great* established the Holy and Supreme Synod to govern the church instead of leaving the authority with one person. Things remained this way until after the Russian Revolution in 1917.

During this time, bishops elected a new patriarch. By 1914, there were 55,173 Russian Orthodox Churches, 29,593 chapels, and 112,629 priests in Russia. The church had to coexist with a secular government and followers were often disadvantaged and persecuted. During the 1920's and 1930's, many churches were converted into secular buildings and over 50,000 priests were sent to labor camps or executed. Several seminaries were reopened in 1944, but relations between the Church and government got worse after *Stalin's* death. People were kept from many jobs due to their faith. University students were forced to take courses in Scientific Atheism.

Catholic

There are four Roman Catholic churches in Turkmenistan made up of about 1,000 congregants. These are made up of both citizens and foreigners. The Roman Catholic community in *Ashgabat* meets in the chapel of the Vatican Nunciature.

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People Groups in Turkmenistan

24603

Armenian (40,317)

The Armenians of Turkmenistan are also known as the Armiane, Ermeni, Ermini, Hai, and Western Armenian. The Armenians use the Armenian language. Armenians come from the Trans-Caucasus Mountains of Armenia. They are an ancient people from the Caucasus with a 3,000 year history that has been researched and detailed. They have a deep tie to Christianity, since 303 when they became the first nation to declare it as the state religion, though many are Muslim. The Armenians have struggled to remain both Christian and free, defending against Turks, Mongols, Persians, Soviets, and Kurds, and so on. The Diaspora of Armenians has a varied and broken connection to this republic. Before leaving Armenia, they experienced much suffering. In the first part of this century, almost half of the people in Armenia were slaughtered by the Turks.

The Armenians in Turkmenistan are primarily Orthodox Christians. They are about 50% Christian adherent, however the percentage of evangelical believers is unknown. They have portions of the Bible, Christian radio, the God's story video, and the Jesus Film available in their language. 16% are non-religious. 8% are atheist. There are multiple groups working among these people.

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24604

Avar (675)

The *Avar* are also called *Batlux*, *Dangestani*, *Daghestani*, and *Maarulal*. They are one of the major Daghestani ethnic groups in the former Soviet Union. They are made up of a complex mix of related, but distinct ethnic groups. They are mostly found in the Dagestan, in the North Caucasus Mountain region of Russia and are one of the largest people groups in that region. They controlled much of the river valley and plateau area in the highlands. They are also found in Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and the Ukraine. They speak the Avar language, which is part of the northeast Caucasic linguistic family. Since many of them live in isolated mountain areas, dialects between groups are often incomprehensible to others groups.

The *Avars* have a family centered lifestyle. Girls marry near the age of 15 to the preference of her parents. Divorce is possible for both whereas in years past only men had this possibility.

They were farmers on the collected lands of the Soviets but this did not change their community values. Only a small percentage of their land is arable, and they have created terraces to maintain the land. They fish in the Caspian, and herd sheep as other sources of food. Their homes are built on the mountain slopes. Most are of stone and are two or three stories.

The *Avars* are Sunni Muslim, many of the Shafi School. Many attend mosques regularly, pray daily, and carry out common Muslim practices. The percentage of Avar Christian adherents and evangelicals is estimated to be about 1%. In some areas, the Georgian Orthodox Christianity was introduced between the 5th and 12th centuries. Avar Christians are largely Nestorian. They have the Bible or portions of the Bible, Gospel audio and the Jesus film in their language. There are no known groups working among them. There are about 650,000 people in the Avar people cluster, and among those, there are only about 30 known believers.

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24605

Azerbaijani, North (47,525)

The Azerbaijani, also known as the Azeri, are of the Turkic affinity block. They are also called Azeri Turk, Turkmen, and South Azerbaijani. The name is derived from words meaning “fire” and “guardian” and points to the sacred oil fires that were lit by fire worshippers in their homeland. They are found throughout the former Soviet Union, with the largest populations found in Azerbaijan, Russia, and Georgia. In Turkmenistan, they are found near the cities of Krasnovodsk and Nebit- Dag. This group speaks Northern Azerbaijani. The two main language subgroups are North Azerbaijani, and South Azerbaijani. The differences in the two are in the sound and grammar. The language was written in fourteenth century. The Azeri language is of the southwestern, Oguz, branch of the Turkic language group.

In Turkmenistan some of the Azeri are rural farmers, while others live in the cities and work as technicians and engineers. In some places they work as industrious workers in larger cities and towns. Some work in lower skilled jobs. They also used to be known for their rug weaving.

The clan structure was common in the Azeri tradition. A clan, called hoj, would carry the name of a common ancestor. Landless peasants made up the lowest class, called tavyrga. Marriage to first cousins was encouraged before the Soviet era. After which there were unions outside the extended family. It was common that forty members of the extended family would live in the same house, called a gazma. The clan worked the land for the mutual survival of its members. Marriage outside the family was not allowed before the Soviet period. This has changed over the past decade, though they still encourage marriage within the family or clan in order to protect their culture. Although many are Muslim, having more than one wife is only acceptable in cases of infertility.

The diet of the Azeri has consisted of rice pilaf, boiled and grilled meats like goat, beef, and lamb. A traditional yogurt soup is called dovga. The traditional mutton stew is called bozartma. Tea and wine are traditional and popular drinks.

The Northern Azerbaijani are mostly Shiite Muslim. Some are Sunni Muslim of the Hanafite branch. They practice Islam. However, the Azeri women tend to be less restricted than the women of other Muslim groups. Many of the women work outside of the home and are allowed to be in leadership positions. The number of Christian found in the Azeri in Turkmenistan is unknown. They have the Bible, the God’s Story video, Christian audio recordings, and the Jesus film in their language. In Russia, they are 78% Muslim, 20% non-religious, and about 2% Russian Orthodox.

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23906

Baloch, Western (40,204)

The Western Baloch of Turkmenistan are a subgroup of the Baluch community. About six million Baloch live in the Balochistan province of Pakistan, and the southern border of Afghanistan and southeastern Iran. In Turkmenistan, they are found around the city of Mary. Alternative names for this people group include Baloch, Baluch, and Sarawani. The Baluch groups are named and distinguished according to their languages, which are divided into three branches. There are Eastern, Western, and Southern Baluchi. Baluchi is an Indo-Iranian language that is related to Kurdish. Until recently, the Baluch language was unwritten, and today many of the Baluch people cannot read or write. History and their code of living were passed down through poetry, songs, and stories.

The Baluch was once a nomadic tribe. Today, the Baluch are farmers and herders. Women are often given the task of threshing and separating the harvest, while men do most of the plowing and planting of crops. Women also weave rugs.

Land among the Baluch is not privately owned. Rather, it belongs to the whole tribe. They are a patriarchal society and are organized into clans and tribes. Clan membership is determined by family ties and tribe membership is determined by territory. All Baluch tribes share common political and social behaviors. Many Baluch live under a sort of feudal system in which absolute loyalty is owed to the tribal chief, or sadar. In the more urban areas, student leaders, poets, writers, and politicians are gaining authority. Democracy is not practiced by the Baluch.

Marriages among the Baluch are similar to others marriages among other Muslim groups in Turkmenistan. They are usually arranged between the bride's father and the future groom. The groom must pay a "bride price" of livestock or cash to the bride's family. When the woman marries, she becomes part of the groom's immediate family and is put under his authority. Unlike some other Muslim groups, Baluch marriages are almost always monogamous and lifelong. A Baluch is not allowed to marry outside of the Baluch community.

The Baluch are known as strong, sensitive people. They live by an honor code, which is called Baluchmayar. Baluchmayar stresses the importance of hospitality, loyalty, mercy, offering refuge to strangers, and honesty. This code is passed down from generation to generation through songs and poetry. Children are taught this code from an early age as they watch the adults in the community and are reprimanded when they do not act according to the code.

The Baluch are Sunni Muslim. However they do not practice Sharia law in dealing with social violations. In this group, authority belongs to the tribal leaders. In the past, feuds would develop between groups if one group violated another group resulting in death. These feuds have hurt the tribe's economy and stature. The Islam practiced by the Baluch is mixed with folk practices. Shrines are visited and amulets are worn as a part of their attempt to influence God's favor. Many fear evil spirits and take precautions to keep

spirits from harming them.

All of the New Testament is translated in Baluchi. Gospel recordings have been made in several Baluchi dialects, but these cassettes have not been widely distributed. Portions of Scripture, the Jesus film, and Christian audio recordings have been translated into this language. There are few, if any, known believers or churches among the Western Baluch of Turkmenistan.

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24607

Bashkir, Bashkort (6,644)

The Bashkir or Bashkort people are of the Ural-Siberian people cluster. They are also known as Bashkirian people. This group speaks the Bashkir language. They are mostly found in Russia and make up about 0.9% of the people in Russia. Most live in Bashkortostan, an autonomous republic of the Russian Federation, however even within their own republic they are a minority, outnumbered by the Russians and Tatars. Large populations are also found in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Belarus.

The Bashkir were cattle breeders and hunters before they set up trading centers in the Urals. They were nomadic shepherds before settling down. Along the Silk Road they not only interacted with merchants but with their religion. They became Muslim in the 10th century after interaction with the Arabs. They had a real tribal outlook that caused the group to adhere well throughout most of their history. During the past several centuries the number of other peoples moving into the Bashkir area has burgeoned. There are over 100 nationalities in Bashkortostan. There were many farmers that lost land. Most still are small farmers, but some have acquired jobs as skilled industrial workers.

Family is important to the Bashkir people and the newly married couples live with the husband's parents at first. Polygamy exists on a small scale, mostly among those of high social status. Many of their traditions have been lost, though there is still a strong sense of kinship and loyalty to kinsmen. The village is considered the key to their social structure. Many live in peasant communities and rely on farming and animal breeding. They raise horses and sheep, as well as cattle and goats. Koumiss is a fermented drink they make from horse's milk.

The Bashkirs are closely related to the Russian Tatars and are only distinguished by their language dialect. They speak Bashkir, however many claim Tatar as their native language. Before the Russian Revolution, the Bashkirian culture did not exist, rather they thought of themselves as being Tatars until the 1930's.

The Bashkirs are primarily Sunni Muslim, however, to many, being a Muslim is more about maintaining family traditions than about spiritual convictions. The older generations practice Islam most fervently. To them, Christianity is closely linked with being Russian. A small minority of Christians converted by the Russian Orthodox Church called the Nagaibaks still exist. There are tensions still lingering from Communism and from foreign peoples. They have the Bible, Christian radio broadcasts, and the Jesus film available in their language. They are 70% Sunni Muslim. About 7% are Christian adherent and about 0.89% are evangelical. They are basically unreached by the Gospel with only a small group of Bashkort believers worldwide.

<http://www.adoptapeople.com/Profiles/clusters/8003.htm>

<http://www.imb.org/centralasia/people/bashkort.htm>

<http://www.hope4ufa.com/>

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

<http://www.janzteam.com/OSTEUROPE/en/cr2.htm>

www.MIRFocus.com

<http://www.russiatoday.ru/en/profile/people/nat/891.html>

24608

Brahui, Kur Galli (1,802)

The Brahui, also known as the Kur Galli or the Kalat, live in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, with a few in India. Some are also found in Turkmenistan and Bangladesh. One explanation of the name Brahui says that it is a corruption of the word, *Barohi*, which means “mountain-dweller” or “highlander.” It is not clear where the Brahui originated, but some suggest that Brahui are actually the same as the Baluchi. They are distinguished from the Baluch and the Pashtun by their language, which is a Davidic language called Brahui. The language is titled as unwritten, but has been put into the Urdu script.

In the past, they overthrew a dynasty of Hindu kings to rise to power in the 1600s. Under Nasir Khan in the 1700s, their confederacy was at its pinnacle. Now, 29 tribes make up this confederacy. They are known as fierce tribes and are believed to submit to no law except that of retaliation.

The Brahui are nomadic shepherds. They sometimes have to travel 45 miles between wells in search of water. At times, they have to travel into Iran to find pastures for their flock. During the cold, winter months, the Brahui live on the plains. To help survive, the Brahui live in khalks. These are cooperating households that combine their herds into one flock and are looked after by a professional shepherd. This allows the men to go to local villages to work on farms.

Marriages are arranged through the families, however the desire of couples is considered in the process. Cross cousin arrangements are preferred. Men may have multiple wives, but due to expenses, this is limited in practice. Divorce is rare. Upon marriage, the wife moves in with the husband and his family.

Tribes are based on patrilineal descent as well as political allegiance. Each tribal unit has a sadar who is the authoritarian chief. This person is sought in settling disputes and in the

past was able to collect taxes.

The Brahui are Sunni Muslim. Many of the Islamic beliefs are mixed with folk practices. The Brahui are 0.10% Christian adherent and evangelical. There are few, if any, churches among them. Portions of the Bible, the Jesus film, Christian broadcasting, and audio tapes are all available to the Brahui.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

http://www.adoptapeople.com/Profiles/p_code3/8.htm

http://www.peopleteams.org/Brahui/lives_culture.htm#distribution

Weeks, Richard. Muslim People: A World Ethnographic Survey. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978.

24609

Bulgar (1,214)

The Bulgar people are of the Southern Slav people cluster. They are primarily found in the Balkan region of southern Europe, but can also be found throughout Central Asia and Europe. The largest groups are found in Bulgaria, Moldova, Ukraine, the United States, and Turkey. They are also known as Bogomil, Bulgarian, Moldavian, Palityan, and Pomak. This people group speaks Bulgarian, however many are bilingual.

The Bulgar people are often thought of as Bulgarian since they speak Bulgarian and have many features and practices that are Bulgarian. The Pomaks, however, are different from Bulgarians in their non-Bulgarian names and their practice of Islam, instead of Orthodox Christianity.

Many rely on farming to make a living. They grow rye, barley, corn, flax, tobacco, and hemp. They also raise cows, goats, and sheep. Some of the women make a living by weaving. Foods common to them are bread, potatoes, beans, yogurt, cheeses, lamb, and goat. In some places they live in two story buildings, living in the top story and keeping the animals on the first floor.

Marriages are often arranged and many marry in their mid to late teens. Although polygamy is allowed by Islamic law, it is uncommon. Weddings often combine Muslim and Christian traditions.

Most of the Bulgar people today are Orthodox Christians. Some, however, are Muslim. They are believed to have been forcibly converted to Islam in the 1370's. Overtime, they have adopted Muslim customs, but there is still an absence of Islamic practices among many of the Bulgar people who are Muslim. Their language lacks many religious words and important Muslim saints are unknown to many of the Bulgars. They do, however, observe some of the feast days of some of the Christian saints. To them, Christianity is closely linked with being Russian, so there is often a mistrust of Christians. About 72% are Christian adherent, most of those being Bulgarian Orthodox. In Turkmenistan, they are about 1% evangelical. They have the Bible or portions of the Bible, Christian radio broadcasts, Gospel audio recordings and the Jesus film available in their language. Many of them are atheist/non religious.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>
http://www-gewi.kfunigraz.ac.at/csbsc/ulf/pomak_identities.htm

24610 **Byelorussian (7,641)**

The Byelorussian people are of the Eastern Slav people cluster. They are found throughout the former Soviet Union. They are also known as White Russians, Baltorusins, Baltorussians, Belorussians, Belarusins, Baltorusians, Belorus, Beloruthenians, White Ruthenians, and Krivichis. They speak Belarusan, which has four basic dialects.

The Belarusians are made up of several groups that evolved into this ethnicity. Some of these groups are the Krivichi, Radzimichi, Dregovich, and Viatic people. Among the Russian people, they are sometimes looked down on and simply categorized as Russians. Throughout their history, the Belarusins have suffered a lot. Under Stalin's rule, about 15% of their population was deported to concentration camps, where most of them died. Another 5% of their population died of starvation after the state took their produce. During World War II, three out of every four Belarusian towns were completely destroyed. The Germans killed more than a million Belarusians and deported tens of thousands for forced labor. Stalin, after Russia regained the area of Belarus in 1944, continued killing and persecuting the Belarusins. The Belarusians were also negatively affected by the Chernobyl nuclear accident in 1986. The reactor was located in the northern Ukraine, however, radiation spread widely and more than 2,000,000 people were exposed. Epidemiologists began detecting unusually high rates of cancer and Neurological disorders in the Belarusian people by 1991.

The Belarusians have had to fight to maintain their culture. Aside from persecution and genocide, they have struggled to maintain their identity. In 1986 a group of students organized the Talaka Historical Cultural Association in order to bring about a Belarusian national revival. They emphasized their ties to Poland and Lithuania and pulled away from their ties with Russia. In 1991 Belarus was recognized as an independent nation within the commonwealth.

In Turkmenistan, their primary religion is Russian Orthodoxy and they are 60% Christian adherent. The percentage of evangelicals is only about 1%. They have the Bible or portions of the Bible, Gospel audio recordings, Christian radio broadcasts, and the Jesus film available to them in their language.

Olson, James. *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>
<http://www.peopleteams.org/teambelarus/default.htm>
<http://www.russiatoday.ru/en/profile/people/nat/897.html>

24612 **Chechen (675)**

The Chechen's are of the Caucasus people cluster. They are also called the Nokhichi or the Shishan people. They are found throughout Central Asia and part of the former Soviet Union. Many Chechens live in the southern region of Russia between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. They speak the Chechen language, which is also known as Nokhchin, and Nokshin Muott.

There has been conflict between Chechens and the Russian government for most of the Twentieth Century. They are known to be a strong people and have a history of fighting for their independence. During World War II, they fought with the Red Army, however, from 1944-1957 Russia deported somewhere between a quarter and half of the Chechen population to Siberia and Central Asia from their Chechen homeland. They lost much of the productive farm land during that era. They also suffered deeply with the loss of their economic resources and civil rights. Many returned in 1968 but they returned to closed mosques and a repressive religious atmosphere. Muslim missionaries only stepped up the work during this period. When the Chechen Republic declared independence in 1991 the Russian government came in to control the situation. This invasion has resulted in a ruining of relations and the land since then. In Russia, they are considered the Mafia of Russia and are generally feared and disliked by Russians.

Chechen society is generally patriarchal, with relaxation having come with the twentieth century. Women are often allowed to work outside of the home. It is not uncommon for Chechens to marry outside of their clan and marriage between blood relatives within three generations is forbidden. The groom's family pays the brides family a dowry to guarantee against divorce. In the past, the wife was not allowed to eat with her husband or speak to his relatives. She was to show absolute submission.

They are the most devout of the Muslims in the Russian federation. There may be a growing Christian population. Ancient church ruins make it clear that there used to be some Christians among the Chechens, however, since the seventeenth century, Chechens have been known to be Muslim.

Today the Chechens are primarily Sunni Muslim. The number of Christian adherents is unknown. In Turkmenistan, they are estimated to be about 1% evangelical. They have portions of the Bible, radio broadcasts, and the Jesus film available in their language.

Olson, James. *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*. Westport , CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

http://www.adoptapeople.com/Profiles/p_code/982.htm

<http://archives.tonline.org/news/lastfrontier/Chechen.html>

<http://www.peopleteams.org/chechen/>

<http://www.russiatoday.ru/en/profile/people/nat/1472.html>

24613

Chuvash (2,971)

The Chuvash are of the Ural- Siberian people cluster. They are also known as the Bolgar and Bulgar people. They are found throughout Central Asia and the former Soviet Union. They speak Chuvash which belongs to the Turkic group of languages. It is said to be the only remaining branch of the Old- Bulgaric language.

The Chuvash are likely descended from Bulgar ancestors that moved from Asia into the Mid-Volga area. The Chuvash influenced the Turkic language in the 4th century and the language today shows the different dialects that have been mixed over its history. They established their own Chuvash Empire that came under the influence of Ilmaic and Mongol forces in the 13th century. In 1552 Russia took over the Chuvashia area and the people became Orthodox Christian. The Russians acted as protectors of the Chuvash. There is no Chuvash written history until the 1500's. The first Russian documentation of the Chuvash name was in 1521. By the 1800's, Chuvash as a written language had developed. In 1920 the area of the Chuvash was called the Chuvash Autonomous Region, but in the 1990's it was called the Chuvash Republic.

The Chuvash are primarily Christian, though there are some Muslims among them. About 35% of the population is Christian adherent, with most of those being Orthodox Christians. There are few, if any, evangelical believers among them. Some of the population is animistic or non-religious. They have the New Testament, Bible portions, Christian radio broadcasts, and the Jesus film in the Bolgar language.

<http://www.unpo.org/member.php?arg=17>

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

<http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/cultural/oldworld/europe/chuvash.html>

http://www.ozturkler.com/data_english/0007/0007_15_07.htm

<http://www.chuvashia.com/cap/main.asp?prev=103&pos=11>

http://www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/europe_report.html#Chuvash

24614

Dargin (2,252)

The Dargin people are of the Caucasus people cluster. They are also called Darghinian and Dargwa. They are mostly found in the mountainous south of the Dagestan Republic in southern Russia, however, smaller groups are found scattered throughout Kazakhstan, Armenia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. The Dargin people are made up of four smaller groups and are comprised of more than 360,000 people. They speak Dargwa. Traditionally they were highland agriculturists and traders. They have been able to maintain their traditional extended family structures, village assembly, and council of elders. They are originally from the North East Caucasus area.

The Dargins are Sunni Muslim. Islam entered the Dargin people in the eighth century> They did not completely accept Islam until the fifteenth century. Only about 1% of them are Christian adherents. They have the Jesus film and portions of Scripture available to them in their language.

http://www.mirfocus.com/pages/ppl_dr.html

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>
<http://languageserver.uni-graz.at/ls/lang?id=3065>
http://www.kafkas.org.tr/english/bgkafkas/Ethnicgeography_Dargin.htm

24616

Georgian (1,273)

The Georgian people are of the Caucasus people cluster. They are also called Adjari, Adzhar, Gruzin, Imerxey Georgian, and Western Georgian. They are mostly found in Europe, Central Asia, and the former Soviet Union. The Adjari are a separate ethnic group and speak a Georgian that is heavily influenced by Turkish. Gruzin is the Russian word for the Georgians. Within the Georgian people there are subgroups that are distinct in religion and location in the Caucasus. They speak Georgian a language in the Caucasus language family which has had its own script since pre-Christian times.

The Georgian people who live on the Black Sea, trace their ancestry back to Japheth, Noah's son. They are known for their horsemanship and in 79AD were said to have performed before the Roman Emperor Vespasian. They tend to be very nationalistic and many take pride in their "native son" Joseph Stalin. They are also known to be resourceful and ambitious. They were considered the "black sheep" of the Soviet Union.

Due to the location of Georgia, being sandwiched between the West and the East, it has been invaded numerous times, impacting the people in the culture and livelihood. Georgia became a Christian state in the fourth century and was a strong influence in the area until Islam became too aggressive to contain. The Arab-Georgian conflicts lasted from the seventh through the ninth century. By 1008 there was a united Georgian kingdom which had a Golden Age in the twelfth century.

The Golden Horde engulfed the entire country in the thirteenth century. The tie to Byzantium kept Georgia in contact with Christians, but the disruptions of the invaders, then the fall of Constantinople pushed Georgia into stagnation. The state disintegrated into three kingdoms, and fell further with the Turkish-Persian wars. Russia influenced the Georgian people, later taking them into the Russian Empire and Soviet Union.

Internal strife in the Caucasus through most of the twentieth century was coupled with harsh purges by the Soviet leaders. Industrialization and urbanization expanded rapidly and the Georgian Communist Party pressed for nationalist policies. Under Gorbachev, Georgian nationalism grew into reforms and a national revival. The Georgian Orthodox Church and nationalist groups pushed for moral regeneration and independence. Georgia declared independence in April, 1991, but by the end of 1992 civil war erupted. In 1995, a popular election restored progression by electing Eduard Shevardnadze as President. He held office until legislative election manipulation in November 2003 led to his resignation. Mikheil Saakashvili was elected president in early 2004. Since the independence of Georgia, many Georgians considered moving back under the Georgian government's active immigration policy.

The Georgian population is primarily non-religious. In Turkmenistan, they are estimated to be about 30% Christian adherent, but the number of evangelicals is unknown. They have the Bible, the Jesus film, Gospel audio recordings, and Christian radio broadcasts in their Georgian language.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

<http://www.janzteam.com/OSTEUROPE/en/cauc3.htm>

http://www.nupi.no/cgi-win/Russland/etnisk_b.exe?Gruzian

<http://www.imb.org/centralasia/pray/Adjari.html>

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/gg.html>

00000

German, Volga German (2,200)

These ancestral Germans moved to the Volga valley in Russia in July 1763 when Catherine II, the Russian Empress invited them to settle there. The situation in Germany at that time was bad. There was religious persecution, poverty was extreme following the Seven Years War and there were high taxes. An invitation to leave was welcomed by many. When they settled they were expected to farm the land only in the Volga region. The government paid for a church within each colony, but required it to be repaid for the cost. Four years later there was a set of detail instructions and regulations for them to follow.

By 1890's there were almost 1.8 million German inhabitants in Russia. The Volga region had run out of land and so the newer immigrants were sent to Siberia. When the Germany declared war in 1914, hostility towards the Germans in Russia grew and the passage of the Laws of Liquidation formally gave threat to the Russian Germans. The laws were not enacted but served to keep the Germans in submission.

The first relocation of the Volga Germans took place in July of 1915, when they were sent to Eastern Russia. In the communities of the Germans, of which 76% were Lutherans, the religious solidarity was seen as a threat when the Bolsheviks took over in 1917. The Volga-Germans were severely persecuted. A labor commune of Volga Germans was established on October 19, 1918. Males in these camps had a very low survival rate. By 1919, pastors were sent to slave camps because they were considered propagandists against the Russian government.

Between 1921 and 1922, widespread famine wiped out one-third of those Germans still in the Volga Region. On December 19, 1924, the Volga German ASSR was established but later closed on August 28, 1941. The city of Engels was the capital of the Volga-German ASSR. In the 1930's, collectivization began and private property was removed. Nearly all the clergy were killed and the churches were beyond repair.

With World War II the condition of the Volga Germans only worsened as they were considered enemies of the state. Along with the closing of the Volga-German ASSR, the Decree of Banishment forced a mass evacuation. The young men were sent to the

Russian Army and young women became domestic servants in the big cities. Everyone else was banished.

In September 1955, amnesty was given to the remaining Volga Germans but they were asked not to return to their original settlements. In August 1964, the U.S.S.R. admitted guilt in charging innocent people and urged Soviets to give assistance to Russian Germans. In January 1965, the Decree of 1941 was voided. Afterwards, many Volga Germans attempted to return to their former cities and found they were unwelcomed. They settled in the Ural Mountains, Siberia, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. Others immigrated to the United States and Canada. The Law/Right of Return was used by many people of German ancestries who wanted to return to Germany but were living in Eastern Europe.

They are 78% adherent to Christianity, with about 12.5% being evangelical. They have the Bible, Gospel audio recording, Christian radio broadcasts, and the Jesus film available in Standard German.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volga_Germans
<http://www.lhm.org/LID/lidhist.htm> see article
<http://www.joshuaproject.net>
<http://www.volgagermans.net/>
<http://www.grhs.com/archive/reviews/volga.html>
<http://www.irex.uz/?id=publications&file=art006>

00000

Greek (500)

The Greeks are sometimes called Dimotiki, Greek Crypriot, Hellenic, Romei, Romeos, and Urum. The Greeks in Turkmenistan are mostly from Russia. The Black Sea area was a place of trade between the Byzantine Empire and its neighbors for centuries. As power changed hands the Black Sea remained a place of importance in trade relations.

The spread of religion also occurred throughout the Black Sea region. Greek Orthodox and missionaries have carried their Christianity to the Slavs, Khazars, and Alans. The Russians raided the Black Sea during the 9th and 10th Centuries but later traded with them. During the era of the Golden Horde, Greeks immigrated to the Russian lands and contributed much to their culture.

After the fall of Byzantium, trade with the Ottomans and Russians made use of the Greeks. Conditions for the Greeks changed drastically from the Tsarist years to the Bolsheviks revolution. The Greeks fought against the Bolsheviks and many were deported to remote areas of Russia. Churches and schools of the Greek Orthodoxy were closed. More hardship came during World War II under the Nazis. The Greeks were caught in the Crimean War conflict and some were deported to Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Siberia with the Crimean Tatars. After Stalin died, many Greeks were allowed to return to the Black Sea region. Many immigrated to Greece as well.

They are 90% Greek Orthodox. They have the Bible, Gospel audio recordings, and the Jesus film in Greek.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

http://www.nupi.no/cgi-win/Russland/etnisk_b.exe?Greek

24631

Irani (10,812)

The Irani people of Turkmenistan are of the Persian people cluster. They are also called Baghdadi, Balochi, Ebhele, Farsi, Parsiwan, Persian, and Qazilbash. They speak Western Farsi, an Indo-Iranian language. Farsi is an Indo-Iranian language and is one of the oldest languages still in use today.

The Irani people descend from the Persian groups that settled in Iran around 1000 BC. The Persians became the rulers of the Achaemenid dynasty during the sixth century BC. The Persians were ruled by many dynasties over the centuries. Some of the ethnic Persians were the Sassanids, the Buwayhids, and the Samanids. Unethnic Persians that ruled were the Seleucids, Seljuk Turks, Mongols, and the Safavids.

Many Irani are farmers, however some rely on crafts such as hand woven items, rugs, and pottery to make a living. Irani society is both patriarchal, which means male-dominated, and patrilineal, which means they trace ancestral descent through the male lineage. Irani women are generally submissive to their husbands in public, however, in private are given more freedom in the decision making. The men are responsible for defending family honor, especially concerning the purity of their daughters and sisters. Marriages are often arranged and alliances between cousins are preferred.

In more urban areas, the Persians are divided into five social classes. Former villagers who came into the towns make up the lowest group and are often unskilled laborers who live on the outskirts of towns. Real estate investors, merchants, and other businessmen make up the higher class. The “ulama” is the social class that is made up of priests and clergymen.

Until the Arab invasion, the Persian people were primarily Zoroastrian. Zoroastria stresses the struggle between the forces of good and evil. In the sixteenth century, Shia Islam became the national religion. Most Persians today are of the Ithna Ashari branch of Shia Islam. The Irani in Turkmenistan are 1% Christian adherent and 1% evangelical. The Bible, the Jesus film, God Story video, Christian radio, audio recordings, and web recordings have been translated into their language.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

24618

Jew, Eastern Yiddish Speaking (3,491)

There are between 2,790 and 3,491 Jews in Turkmenistan, most of who are non-practicing. Many of these are descendents from families that came to Turkmenistan from the Ukraine during World War II. There is also a population of Bokharski Jews who live in Turkmenabat, on the border of Uzbekistan. There are no synagogues or rabbis in Turkmenistan and the population of Jews in the country has continued to decrease as Jews emigrate to Israel, Russia, and Germany.

The Bukharic Jew people group is sometimes considered the Central Asian Jew people group. The Central Asian Jew is also sometimes called Sarikoli, Sarykloy, Tadzik, or Tajiki. In Turkmenistan, they prefer to be called "Isro'il" or "Yahudi." They have a strong sense of Jewish identity. The Jews of Asia have a distinct lifestyle. Most of these Jews are Ashkenazim which are descendents of the Jews who inhabited the Germanic region of Europe. They speak Eastern Yiddish, a German dialect that is mixed with Hebrew. The Bukharic Jews speak Bokhara, which is a Jewish dialect of Tajik. This is one of the Asian Jews distinguishing features.

Jews have lived in the area that is now Tajikistan since the Middle Ages. In the past they tended to associate with the general Tajik population and they adopted many Tajik customs. Ashkenazic Jews came to Central Asia after the Second World War, mostly working as engineers and specialist occupations. The Soviet era was particularly hard for Jews in Russia, with synagogues shut down and religion repressed; some were imprisoned by the State. They were at times compared to Nazis in the media. A movement for Jewish rights was bolstered by the Six-Day War and many began applying for entry into Israel in the 1970's. Under Gorbachev more freedom was attained and in the early 1990's ten's of thousands of Jews were emigrating annually.

In the past, the Bukharan Jews worked as peddlers, shoemakers, barbers, factory workers, and collective farmers. Today they continue working in these traditional occupations, also working as engineers, doctors, teachers, and musicians. In addition, women often dance at Jewish and Muslim weddings. In the past, these people faced a lot of persecution, especially from the predominant Muslim population. They were often forced to live in mahallas, which were isolated parts of cities, and were required to wear signs on their clothing marking them as Jews. They had to pay special taxes that other groups did not have to pay. In the past ten years, however, they have gained more freedom.

The Bukharan Jews are indigenous to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. They settled mostly in Bukhara, which is how they derived their name "Bukharan." These people claim to be descendents from the ten tribes of Israel who were forced to Persia in the fifth century. Traditionally, these families were patriarchal and patrilineal and households were made up of extended families. Nuclear families, however, are becoming more common. In the past, Bukharan Jews only married other Bukharan Jews. Ashkenazic Jews in larger cities, are now intermarrying with Muslims. Traditionally a matchmaker was sent to the parents of the bride and a dowry and bride price was agreed upon.

Jews in the cities tend to not adhere strictly to Jewish practices, though the Bukharic Jews tend to hold tightly to their traditions and religion. They follow the Law of Moses and have strict laws concerning diet, circumcision, and the Sabbath. There are few, if any, known Christians among the Jews in Turkmenistan. They have the Bible, the Jesus film, Christian radio broadcasts, and Gospel audio recordings in their language.

<http://www.adoptapeople.com/Profiles/clusters/8095.htm>

<http://www.peopleteams.org/forzionsake/upgs.htm>

http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/History/Human_Rights/sjmove.html

<http://www.wzo.org.il/en/resources/view.asp?id=1547&subject=131>

<http://www.blossomingrose.org/chernobyl/howmany.htm>

http://www.nupi.no/cgi-win/Russland/etnisk_b.exe?Jewish

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

24619

Karakalpak (4,280)

The Karakalpak, which is translated “black hat,” are of the Kazakh people cluster which descend from the Turks. They are sometimes called the Black Hat, Kara- Kalpak, or the Karapapakh people. They are found mostly in Uzbekistan, with about 92% of them living in the Karakalpak Republic in Uzbekistan. They are, however, also found in Iran, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan. In Turkmenistan, they mostly reside along the Uzbekistan border, near the city of Tazanz. The Karakalpak people speak Southwestern Karakalpak, which is similar to Uzbek. A written language was not available until 1925, after the Karakalpak Republic was founded.

The Karakalpak are believed to have descended from Iranians and Mongolians. They were Turks who became dominated during the Mongolian invasion. When fighting with the Russians, the Karakalpak were known as fierce fighters and were known for their proficiency in taking people captive. They used to be a loose allegiance of semi-nomadic tribes. In the 1920’s they established the Karakalpak Republic, also known as Karakalpaksatan, in Uzbekistan. This republic is a combination of the Khivan Khanate and Khorezum People’s Republic. The tribes are divided into clans which are called Uru. The Uru are then divided into family groups called Koshes, which all share a common male ancestor. These groups are very loyal to each other and share land.

Karakalpak often live in small villages with less than 50 houses. Many Karakalpak are farmers and herders. In many places, women and children are responsible for harvesting the crops, while the men are responsible for planting the crops and herding the animals. In some places, both men and women are able to work in factories. The families are patrilineal, which means their descent is traced through the male lineage. Big families are seen as ideal and usually consist of as many as four generations within the same household.

The Karakalpaks place a strong emphasis on sharing meals together and believe the time spent together at meals will keep their relationships close. Karakalpak girls often marry young, and the groom must pay a bride price to the girl’s family. After they marry, the

girl is expected to leave her home and live with her husband's family. Unlike several other Muslim groups of people, if a woman's husband dies, she is entitled to half of the inheritance, and the rest goes to the man's sons.

The Karakalpaks are mostly Sunni Muslim of the Nanafi sect. They tend to be orthodox in their beliefs, and they are known for being the most pious and observant of the religious customs among all the other nationalities within Central Asia. The Karakalpak Republic in Uzbekistan is one of the major centers of Sufism.

There are few, if any, known believers and no churches among the Karakalpak people. There are no known groups working among them. They have a Bible translation or parts of the Bible, the Jesus film, and Christian audio recording available in their language, but there are no radio broadcasts available to them.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

http://www.ozturkler.com/data_english/0007/0007_10.htm

<http://karakalpak.homestead.com/>

http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=Afghanistan

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24620

Kazakh (126,131)

The Kazakh are a Turkic people. They are also known as Hazake, Mazax, Qazaq, or Qazaqi people. They are the second largest Muslim group within Central Asia. While most live in Kazakhstan, they are also found in Mongolia, Ukraine, Russia, China, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Tajikistan, Iran, Germany, Belarus, and with smaller populations in a few other countries. In Turkmenistan, groups of them are found south of Ashkabat and north of Mary and also south of the Kara-Bogaz Bay in the northwestern part of the country. They speak Kazakh which belongs to the Turkic branch of the Ural-Altai language family. Their written language is based on the Arabic alphabet.

As clans joined together for protection, the Kazak became a distinct ethnic group in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. During the nineteenth century, Russia claimed Kazakhstan, and during the Russian Civil War in the 1920's-1930's, about half of the Kazak population was killed. During this time, many fled to parts of China and Mongolia. Since the 1960's, however, many have returned to Kazakhstan.

Kazak were nomadic shepherds, but lost much of their land during the Soviet rule and were forced to do collective farming. They lived in *yurts*, dome shaped tents. Many times, poor, individual families cannot survive without living with a clan.

Kazakh society is both patriarchal, which means male-dominated, and patrilineal, which means they trace ancestral descent through the male lineage. In some places this is gradually changing and shifting legal authority over to the heads of collective farms. This

has caused a breakdown in the overall traditional family structure. The nuclear family, which generally consists of a man, his parents, his wife or wives, and their children, is the most important unit within the Kazakh society. Traditionally, feudal lords and tribal chiefs practiced polygamy and marriages were arranged. Richer men could marry up to four wives, while the poorer could not afford the bride price to even marry. This changed, however, and families began exchanging their daughters as each other's daughter-in-law without asking for gifts. When a girl marries, she becomes part of the husband's immediate family.

The Kazaks are known as warm-hearted, sincere, and hospitable people. In some places, a guest will be presented with a sheep's head. As a sign of appreciation, the guest cuts a slice off the right cheek and puts it back on the plate.

The Kazakh people of Turkmenistan are mostly Sunni Muslim; however, many combine the Islamic practices with their traditional folk religions involving worship of spirits, fire, animism, and ancestor worship. Many consult Shamans (priests), to cure the sick, communicate with spirits, and manipulate the spirits to control events. There are few, if any, Christians among the Kazakhs in Turkmenistan. There are Bibles, the Jesus film, Christian audio resources, and radio broadcasts available in their language.

<http://www.pcg.org.uk/Uzbekistan%20-%202001.pdf>
<http://www.joshuaproject.net> <http://www.chsource.org/Kazak.htm>
<http://www.china.org.cn/e-groups/shaoshu/shao-2-kazak.htm>

24622

Korean (4,053)

Many of the Korean people of Turkmenistan came from Russia. They joined the Bolsheviks during the Civil War, due to hatred of the Japanese for their treatment of their families in Korea years earlier. Many Koreans became Communist Party members. The Koreans successfully worked rice farm collectives established on the Ussuri River. Some Koreans moved to Central Asia on the promise of free, irrigable land. Stalin deported the remaining Koreans in the far eastern territory to Central Asia.

Koreans are found throughout the world. They are also known as *Chaoxian*, *Chejuma*, *Chosun*, *Chosun Jok*, *Hanghohua*, *Hanguk Mal*, and *North and South Korean*. The Bible, the Jesus film, Christian radio broadcasts, and Gospel audio recordings are available in the Korean language. In Turkmenistan, they are about 20% Christian adherent and an estimated 12.50% are evangelical. Their primary religion is secularism.

http://www.adoptapeople.com/Profiles/p_code2/967.htm
http://www.nupi.no/cgi-win/Russland/etnisk_b.exe?Korean
<http://www.joshuaproject.net>
Olson, James. *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

46645

Kurmanji, Northern Kurd (6,193)

The Kurds are divided into the Northern and Southern Kurds. The Northern Kurds are also called the Turkish Kurd, Yazidi, Yezidi, and Kermanji. Large numbers of Kurds came to the Caucasus region during the 19th and 20th centuries seeking refuge from the wars between Ottoman Turkey and Tsarist Russia. Many live in cities and have a higher standard of living than those in Turkey. They usually do not face discrimination and many even hold high political offices throughout Central Asia. They are literate in Kurmanji, which is published. There are radio broadcasts in Kurmanji. The Urfi dialect is used. The Kurds in Turkmenistan typically speak Northern Kurdish. In Turkmenistan, they are mostly found near Ashkhabad.

The Kurds have a rich history and consider themselves to be decedents of the Medes, which are mentioned in the Old Testament. Two of the most famous Kurds are King Darius, mentioned in the Old Testament book of Daniel, and Saladin, who retook Jerusalem in 1187 from the Crusaders. Like Saladin, the people in general, resist subjugation by other nations. They were conquered by the Arabs in the 7th century and have desired independence from their various rulers since that time.

The Kurds were often persecuted in Turkey and Iran. In Turkey, where almost half of all the Kurds live, the government has continued to refuse to recognize them as a separate ethnic group. In addition, until recent times, they made it illegal to speak Kurdish in public. The Iranian government has a history of persecuting this group, as does the Iraqi government. In Iraq, Kurdish villages have been destroyed. They were assaulted by chemical weapons, and many were forced into detention camps. They have fled to areas surrounding their former localities, seeking refugee. Currently Kurds campaign for an independent nation.

Today, most make a living by farming and raising livestock. Some live in permanent homes, some are still semi-nomadic. They move to the mountains during the summer and travel to the plains during the winter months. The Kurds are diverse and have differing tribal associations, lifestyles, and religious practices depending on where they live. The Kurds are tribal people.

In the absence of a national Kurdish state and government, individual tribes are the highest source of authority for the people. In Kurd society, there is a clear division of labor by age and sex. Marriages are usually arranged and it is not uncommon for first cousins to marry. Upon marriage, the wife usually moves into the husband's household. Family is very important to the Kurds. Men are the ones who make the decisions and women are under the authority and protection of the men. A woman's honor is very important, so she must dress very modestly. Kurds value family loyalty and honor.

Traditionally, Kurds practiced a religion called Yazdanism, later practicing Zoroastrianism. Today the Kurds are primarily Sunni Muslim. Kurd minorities have been associated with the secret and unorthodox sects of Islam. The number of Christian adherents among the Kurd in Turkmenistan is unknown and only about 1% are

evangelicals. They have the Bible, Christian radio broadcasts, Gospel audio recordings and the Jesus film available in the Kurdi language.

http://www.adoptapeople.com/Profiles/p_code/77.htm
<http://www.xs4all.nl/~tank/kurdish/htdocs/index.html>
<http://www.ibtnet.org/pdf/kurdish.pdf>
<http://www.perspectives.org/students/ip/kurds/>
<http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/maps/bigmap4.gif>
<http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/kurds.shtml>
<http://www.joshuaproject.net>
<http://www.xs4all.nl/~tank/kurdish/htdocs/facts/society.html>
<http://mm.iteams.org/asia/kurds.php>

24621

Kyrgyz (901)

The Kyrgyz are found in Afghanistan, China, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and the Ukraine. The Kyrgyz became a distinct nationality in the fourteenth century and settled where they are today in the fifteenth century. They are also called Kara, Ke'erkzi, and Kirghiz. The Kyrgyz speak Kirgiz, a Kirghizian language belonging to the Turkic group. This is divided into the northern and southern groups. Yensei is a Kirghiz script which was lost. Now Kirghiz have adapted a new script based on the Arabo- Persian alphabet.

The Kirghiz are a nomadic people and travel almost all year round. Many of the Kirghiz practicing high altitude pastoralist, raising fat tailed sheep, yaks, goats, camels, and horses. They are able to manage the high altitude living by their multilayered clothing and housing styles. They live in Yurts, round tents that can be heated by fire. The more wealthy Kirghiz live in stone and mud homes.

The Kirghiz are a patrilineal society, where the line of decent is traced through the males. The more wealthy Kirghiz may practice polygamy. Many also follow levirate marriage customs, such as a widow with a least one child is entitled to a husband from the same lineage as her deceased spouse. Contrary to Islam, the women often receive no inheritance, and instead of the sons getting an equal portion of the inheritance, they receive an inheritance based on their birth order. Usually the oldest son inherits the father's prestige, political standing, and pasture lands, while the youngest son inherits the family yurt and the herd. In many places, the khan is the judge, mediator, and political and economic leader.

Marriages in Kirghiz society are usually arranged, sometimes even before birth. A gift, such as a roasted sheep, is often presented to the bride-to-be and gifts are often given from the future groom's family to that of the future bride's. The family is usually composed of three generations, with married couples living with the husband's family. Household decisions are made by all adult members of the household, and no one member can impose his or her will on the rest of the house. Men are usually responsible for herding horses and cattle, cutting wood and grass, and other heavy household chores,

while women usually hold the responsibility of milking, shearing, and grazing the animals.

The Kirghiz are very hospitable. All visitors, strangers or friends, are offered the best at the meal. In many places, mutton from the sheep's head shows a high respect for the guest. A guest must leave food in his bowl to show that the host has been generous and that he has received more than his fill of food. When a guest arrives on horseback, the host unsaddles the guest's horse, and then puts saddles back on when the guest leaves.

The diet among the Kirghiz herdsmen usually consist of animal byproducts as well as some cabbages, onions, and potatoes. They often drink goat's milk, yogurt, and tea with milk and salt. The wealthy eat beef, mutton, horse, and camel meat with flour and rice. Butter is stored in dried sheep and cattle stomachs.

Almost all Kirghiz play a musical instrument the komuz. They have songs that express people's anger, joys, sorrows, and losses and sing for almost every occasion, including songs to say goodbye to a guest. They are known for their epic poem called "Manas" which tells a story of a hero whose descendents are the Kirghiz people.

The Kirghiz are Sunni Muslim. However, they tend to hold to their more traditional, pre-Islamic practices. They have continued with their old practice of ancestor worship and Islam is not a big part of everyday life among the Kirghiz. Most communities do not have the mosques and are unfamiliar with the Islamic holidays. It is possible that only a few among them actually know the basic tenants of Islam. There are few, if any, known Christian adherents and evangelicals. They have portions of the Bible, the Jesus film, God's Story video, Christian audio recordings, and radio broadcasts translated in their language.

<http://www.china.org.cn/e-groups/shaoshu/shao-2-kirgiz.htm>

<http://www.chsource.org/Kirgiz.htm>

<http://www.orientaltravel.com/people/Kirgiz.htm>

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

[www.gl.iit.edu/govdocs/afghanistan/People in Afgh.](http://www.gl.iit.edu/govdocs/afghanistan/People%20in%20Afgh.)

24624

Lak (3,378)

The *Lak* are of the Lori-Bakhtiari people cluster, which is a part of the Indo- Iranian affinity block. They are from the Dagestan Republic in what they call Lakstan. Many Lak live in the basins of the upper Kazikumukh, Tleusarakh, and Khatar Rivers in the former Soviet Union. They live in the high mountain passes that make them isolated in the winter. They can be found throughout Central Asia. They are also called Kumux and Laki.

The Lak are related to the *Dargins*. In the Lak language there are five dialects: *Kumuk*, *Vikhli*, *Ashtikuli*, *Vitskh*, and *Balkar-Calakan*. Before the nineteenth century, the *Lak* wrote in Arabic, however, in 1928 they were forced by the Russians to use the Latin

script. Ten years later, the Cyrillic alphabet replaced the Latin alphabet and Russian words replaced the Arabic and Persian words. Today the Cyrillic alphabet is used in literature. About 95% of the *Lak* speak their language but they are multilingual.

Traditionally *Lak* were shepherds, raising sheep and goats. They practiced transhumant shepherding, which required them to move their livestock from mountain to lowland areas as the seasons changed. In areas where they continue to shepherd, the men raise and tend to the livestock, while the women are responsible for the farming. They depend on meat and milk for food, but also grow peas, barley, wheat, and potatoes.

Many *Lak* were also local craftsmen. They continue to be known for their jewelry and coppersmith. Today they work as merchants and make saddles and harnesses. Some work as masons, candy makers, and tinsmiths. Women work in rug weaving, spinning, and making ceramics.

Family is important to the *Lak* people. They used to live in extended family units called *Takhums*. These were made up of several families, descending from a common male ancestor. Marriages were often arranged and kept within the *takhum*. The eldest women often played a major role in arranging these marriages. A bride price is a custom that still exists today, but it is more of a symbolic transaction than a financial one.

The *Lak* were exposed to Christianity by the Armenians and Georgians in the sixth century, but they converted to Islam in the eighth century. They are believed to be the first people in the Dagestan area of Russia to encounter Islam. They are Shafi Sunni Muslim. They are about 1% evangelical. There are Bible portions and the Jesus film in the *Lak* language. There is almost no Christian witness among them.

http://www.adoptapeople.com/Profiles/p_code5/980.htm

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

http://www.nupi.no/cgi-win/Russland/etnisk_b.exe?Laksian

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Minahan, James. *One Europe, Many Nations: A Historical Dictionary of European National Groups*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000.

24625

Latvian (743)

The *Latvians* are of the Baltic people cluster. They are also called East Latvian, Latgalian, Lett, Lettish, and the Upper Latvian people. They are mostly found in Latvia, but are also found in large groups throughout parts of the former Soviet Union. A large group of them is found in the United States. Some were deported to Siberia and Central Asia in the 1940's of which only 20% returned alive. Others live near their homeland in Russia, or in cities where they moved for employment. They are Scandinavian in culture with storytelling and singing being important cultural facets. These served as means of perseverance during the Soviet occupation. There is also a naturalist appreciation among the *Latvians*. They are creative artisans as well. The *Latvians* are generally a quiet, humble people keeping to themselves.

In Turkmenistan, the percentage of Latvians who are Christian adherent or evangelical is unknown. They have the Bible, Gospel audio recordings, the Jesus film, and Christian radio broadcasts in the Lett or Latvian language.

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<http://www.peopleteams.org/latvians/>

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

http://www.iclub.lv/life/LB/ph_birzulis.htm

<http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/livonians.shtml>

http://www.nupi.no/cgi-win/Russland/etnisk_b.exe?Latvian

Olson, James. *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

24626

Lezghian (14,753)

The *Lezghian* people are of the Caucasus people cluster. They are also called Lezghi people. Lezgin homeland is in Dagestan and Azerbaijan. The largest groups of them are found in Russia, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan. The Lezgins are believed to be the descendents of merging Alty, Akhty, and Rutul peoples. They are bilingual in Azeri. Their neighbors are the Aguls, Azeri, Rutuls, Tabasarans, and Tsakhurs. They resisted Russification and have a strong traditional culture. In their homeland, they are geographically isolated and remain among the least educated in the former Soviet Union.

Many have retained their traditional rural lifestyle. They raise sheep and goats in highland areas and cattle in lower land areas. Weaving, pottery, making rugs, and gold and silversmithing are also ways of earning income for them.

They are primarily Sunni Muslim, having been fully converted to Islam in the 19th century. In some areas, they are Shiites Muslim. In Russia, they are known as one of the more devout Muslim groups. In Turkmenistan, there are few, if any known Christians among them. They have portions of the Bible, the Jesus film, and Christian audio recordings in the Legzi language.

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<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

http://www.nupi.no/cgi-win/Russland/etnisk_b.exe?Lezgin

http://www.adoptapeople.com/Profiles/p_code/1939.htm

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24627

Lithuanian (450)

The *Lithuanians* are of the Baltic people cluster. They are found throughout Eastern Europe and Central Asia. There are large groups of them found in the United States and Western Europe. The Lithuanians are also known as the Samogit, so named for the

Samogitian Hills in west Lithuania. They are Baltic descendents of the tribes that settled along the Baltic coast and inland thousands of years ago. Their language is related to ancient Sanskrit. It is part of the Baltic group of languages.

During the Middle Ages the Germanic lords set up feudal systems, introduced Christianity, and organized the tribes. The *Lithuanians* were ruled by Poland from 1501 through the 1800's. The Lithuanian society was shaped by the Roman Catholic culture. Lithuania was occupied by the Germans in WWI, and experienced turbulent governmental upheaval after 1917. In 1920 Poland invaded and Lithuania battled through the 1930's to establish stability. The occupation by the Russians in 1941, divided Lithuanians into many groups that fought for Germany, while others were taken away to German labor camps.

About 200,000 *Lithuanian* Jews were murdered. By 1944, the Soviets had overtaken all of Lithuania, shipping 120,000 – 300,000 religious, cultural, or national leaders off to prison camps in Europe, Siberia, and Central Asia. Nationalist strength grew in the 1980's and an independence declaration in 1990 was restated in 1991 to Russia. Government instability in the 1990's was due to scandal, resignations, and dismissals. Lithuanians did not enjoy the economic growth that other post-communist peoples did. In 1999 they suffered from the highest suicide rate in Europe, with many unemployed and still suffering from the turbulent past.

In Turkmenistan, they are about 85% Christian adherent, likely Roman Catholic. They are about 1% evangelical. Lithuanians have saints that are believed to intervene with God on behalf of peasant welfare. One of these saints is St. Casimir. Other saints are believed to perform lesser miracles. St. George, for example, is considered the protector of animals. They also have a strong devotion to the Virgin Mary and those in Lithuania make pilgrimages to the shrine of Our Lady of Siluva. Those who lived under Prussian control tend to be Lutheran. They have the Bible, the Jesus film, Gospel audio recordings, and Christian radio broadcasts in Lithuanian.

Minahan, James. *One Europe, Many Nations: A Historical Dictionary of European National Groups*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

http://www.nupi.no/cgi-win/Russland/etnisk_b.exe?Lithuanian

Olson, James. *An Ethno-historical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

24628

Mari, Low (675)

The *Mari* people are part of the Finno-Ugric people cluster. They are also known as *Cheremis*, *Eastern Mari*, and *Low Mari people*. They are mostly found in Russia along the banks of the Volga River. Groups of them are also found in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, the Ukraine, Latvia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. Although they are one people group, the Mari speak two distinct dialects: *Meadow Mari* and *Hill Mari*.

This people group is believed to have appeared as an ethnic group in the sixth century. In the eighth century, they fell under the rule of the *Khazar Empire* and survived with slash and burn agriculture, hunting, and fishing. By the ninth century, Volga Bulgarians gained control of the people and remained in power until the twelfth century when the Mongol Tartars took over. During the middle of the sixteenth century, the Russian Empire took control of their area.

They are about 90% Christian adherent in Turkmenistan and are primarily Russian Orthodox. They first came in contact with Russian Orthodox in the sixteenth century by missionaries. They tend to mix Orthodoxy with shaman practices.

Pagan rituals take place in the birch forests for fear that the *Mari* will die. This tie to nature is ancient and the *Kugu Sorta* is an influential animistic sect among this group. According to Finnish mythology which some of the *Mari* believe in, *Juma* is the god of sky, thunder, and lightening. The number of evangelicals is unknown. They have the Bible, the Jesus film, and Christian radio broadcasting in the Eastern Mari language.

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<http://www.geocities.com/ojoronen/FGPEOPLE.HTM>

http://www.christusrex.org/www1/pater/maps/Russia_Autonom.jpg

<http://www.pantheon.org/articles/j/juma.html>

<http://www.mircorp.com/wwml.html>

<http://languageserver.uni-graz.at/ls/lang?id=5719>

<http://www.udmnet.ru/udmitem/>

<http://www.dlc.fi/~kokov/finnougrian.htm>

<http://www.ibtnet.org/pdf/mari.pdf>

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

Olson, James. *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

00000

Moldavian (1,700)

The *Moldavians* are of the Romanian people cluster. The largest groups of them are found in Moldova, the Ukraine, and Russia. The *Moldavians* are those descendents from the territory occupied by current Moldova, but their exact ancestry is still debated. They are also referred to as the Moldavians. They speak Romanian and most today use a Cyrillic script.

There are some differences between Moldovans and Romanians but they are very similar in culture and language. The term Moldovan is used to distinguish a person using the Romanian language that lives in the *Bessarabia* region formerly controlled by the Soviet Union. They are 82% Christian adherent, likely of the Romanian Orthodox Church. There are few, if any, known Evangelicals. They have the Bible, the Jesus film, Gospel audio recordings, and both Christian radio and audio recordings in the Romanian language.

One Europe, Many Nations: A Historical Dictionary of European National Groups by James B. Minahan (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000) 465-471.

Olson, James, *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

http://www.nupi.no/cgi-win/Russland/etnisk_b.exe?Moldavian

24629

Mordvinian (3,604)

The *Mordvinian* are also called the *Mordva*, *Erzya*, or *Moksha*. They are mostly found in the Middle Volga region and in the Mordvinian Autonomous Republic parts of Russia. They are part of the Finnish groups of people. They speak *Erzya*, which is in the Finnic group of the Uralian branch of the Uralic-Altaic family.

They are almost all bilingual and the population of this people group is decreasing, as many are assimilating into the cultures they live in. They are primarily Orthodox Christians. Approximately 65% of the population is Christian adherent and 1% evangelical. They have the Jesus Film and portions of Scripture in their language.

<http://www.peoplesgroups.org/MapSearch.aspx?country=Tajikistan>

Olson, James, *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

24630

Ossete (3,378)

The *Ossete* are of the Caucasus people cluster. They are also known as *Allagir*, *Iron*, *Tagaur*, *Western Ossete*, and *Western Ossetian*. They are mostly found in Georgia and Russia, however are also found in the areas of the former Soviet Union. They speak Osetin, which is an Indo-European language of the Iranian group. They use a Cyrillic script. It is influenced by Turkic languages.

They adopted Christianity in the 4th -5th centuries, with Russian orthodoxy influencing them in the 18th century. Kabardian mediation in the 17th century led to the introduction of Islam. Some Ossetians remained Christians and enjoyed the Russian protection against the Kabards, while other converted to Islam. These Christians settled *Vladdikavkaz* in response to the protection and expansion of Russia in the Caucasus.

The New Testament, Christian radio broadcasting, the Jesus film, and Gospel audio recordings are available in the Ossetin language. In Turkmenistan, they are 36% Christian adherent, most of those being Orthodox Christians. Only about 1% of them are evangelical. Their primary religion is Islam.

http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=oss

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

<http://www.ibtnet.org/pdf/ossetic.pdf>

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24632

Polish (728)

The *Polish* are among the Western Slav people cluster. Until the late 18th century the Polish people lived in their independent state when Prussia, Russia and Austria-Hungary partitioned the Polish homeland for themselves. In Post-WWI, a new Poland was created and Poles moved into these new areas of Lithuania, Ukraine, and Belarus. After the 1939 repartitioning of Poland by Russia and Germany, nearly two million Poles ended up living in Soviet Union. There were many Poles deported by Stalin into Siberia and Central Asia and half a million of those deported died during transit. The rest of the Poles were subject to the cruelties of Nazi occupation.

Religion is a major component of Polish life. They are primarily Roman Catholic and live in relational community based on their past and present as Catholics. Catholicism is important to their identity as Poles.

The percentage of Christian adherents among the Polish in Turkmenistan is unknown. They are estimated to be about 12.50% evangelical. They have the Bible, the Jesus film, Christian radio broadcasting, and Gospel audio recordings.

<http://www.teamwarsaw.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.worldmap.org/php/country>

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

http://www.nupi.no/cgi-win/Russland/etnisk_b.exe?Pole

Olson, James, *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

24633

Pashtun, Northern, Afghani (1,689)

The *Pashtun* is the largest people group in Afghanistan; however, many have fled to Tajikistan, Iran, and other parts of Central Asia due to unrest. The Pashtun are also known as the *Pathan*, *Pukhtun*, *Afghan*, or *Pushtun*. While there are approximately 7.5 million Pashtun residing in Afghanistan, an even larger population of about 14 million Pashtuns resides in Pakistan. There are also groups of Pashtuns residing in *Xinjiang*, *China* and some other Persian Gulf states.

The primary language of the Pashtun is *Pashto*. *Pashto* belongs to the eastern subgroup of the Iranian branch. The language consists of approximately 20 dialects that are usually divided into two main groups. The northeastern dialect is known as “hard” and the southwestern is known as “soft.” Like other Persian languages, Pashto is written in an adapted form of the Arabic alphabet. Pashto has a tradition of prose and poetry, some dating back as far as the seventeenth century. The language is still developing and since the 1940’s has tended to pick up more and more of the eastern dialect group.

The families are patriarchal, and women are usually confined to work within the home. Women are responsible for the care of the home and for the disciplining of the children. The oldest male member of the family, usually the grandfather, is in charge of the finances. The grandmother usually is in charge of overseeing all of the housework assignments.

According to Islamic law, divorce for a man is very easy. To divorce his wife, a man must simply say "I divorce you" three times in front of witnesses. A woman, on the other hand, must appear before a judge and present reasons for requesting a divorce. Although divorce is allowed, it is very rare. If a woman remarries after divorce, the man loses the bride price as well as his honor.

According to Islam, polygamy is allowed. A man may take up to four wives, but he must care and provide for each of them equally. In some cases, the women live together in the same house, and in others, a separate house is built for each wife and her children.

Tribal custom is the most important aspect of Pashtun political organization. Second to these customs is Islamic law. There are two major principles of social organization among the Pashtun, honor and taxes. In areas where honor is most important, there is no central political authority. In areas where taxes are most important, land ownership gives status and the political authority is centralized by the upper class. In the past, the role of the government was to collect taxes, so there was little cooperation among the people.

Every Pashtun lives by a set of standards called the Pashtunwali, or "the way of the Pashtun". These are unwritten laws or codes belonging to the Pashtuns, but followed by almost all Afghans. Pashtunwali is centralized even more than Islam. Several things make up this code, most revolving around honor and self-pride.

To be a Pashtun is to be a Muslim, usually a Sunni Muslim. With only a few exceptions, Pashtuns tend to be Sunni Muslim of the Hanafi legal school. Pashtuns are 99% Sunni Muslim. Religion is very important to Pashtun daily life. People in a Pashtun village may convert to Islam, but this is rare since all children are declared Muslims at an early age. Anyone who seeks to leave the faith will face persecution from the family and tribe. To save the reputation of the family, they cut off the non-Muslim from the family and in some cases may even kill him.

Among Sunni Muslim, there is no formal clergy, however, a Mullah takes the role of a religious leader. The village Mullah usually receives some religious education, which allows him to teach children and lead Friday prayers. A Mullah is responsible for taking care of the mosque and leading the call to prayer five times a day. They also officiate at the rites of passage that mark the stages of life-birth, circumcision, marriage, and death.

During the Soviet war, a third type of religious leader emerged in Pashtun area. This group, called the Taliban, was made up of young, Islamic militant leaders. They challenged the authority of the traditional leaders and took on a more political approach

to Islam. The Taliban held to a strict interpretation of the Quran and made strict laws for everything. Regulations were set for things as little as the length of a beard, the length of a man's hair, and the length of a woman's burkha. Punishments for breaking any laws were harsh and beatings, amputations, and public executions were commonly used.

While there are no churches among the Pashtun, there are some believers. The Pashtun in Turkmenistan are about 1% evangelical. They have Christian audio recordings available in their language, however still need the Bible, radio broadcasts, the God's story video, and the Jesus Film translated into their language. There are currently several groups working among the Pashtun.

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Dayna Curry and Heather Mercer. *Prisoners of Hope*. New York: Doubleday, 2002.
[www.gl.iit.edu/govdocs/afghanistan/People in Afgh.](http://www.gl.iit.edu/govdocs/afghanistan/People%20in%20Afgh)
www.britanica.com

24634

Romanian (1,624)

The *Romanian* people are found throughout the world, with a large group of them in Central Asia. They are also called Istrio-Romanian and Oltenia. Their primary language is Romanian. In 1944 the Soviets invaded Romania and it remained Communist, depended on the USSR for economic and political support. Anti-Soviets were removed from Romania. Russia and Romania struggled back and forth for power over the country and people. Violence marked the end of the Ceausescu regime and economic stability was not fully restored. Political ties with Europe were developed in the 1990's. The new millennia included positive political development towards democracy for Romania.

The Romanian are primarily Orthodox Christians. They have the Bible, the Jesus film, Christian radio broadcasting, God's Story video, and Gospel audio recordings in Romanian.

<http://www.romania.org/romania/history3.html>
<http://www.answers.com/topic/romania>
<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

984

Russian (363,100)

The Russian people are also called *Russ*, *Olossu*, and *Eluosi*. They are the descendants of eastern Slavic origins. Russians include those who have intermarried with the following groups but consider themselves Russian: Menshcheryaks, Polekh, Goryuns, Starozhily

(old inhabitants), Bukhtarmans, Polyaks, Semeikis, Kerzhaks, Urals, Kamchadals, Zatundren, Sayans, Karyms, Kolymchans, Yakutyans, Markovs, Russkoustins, and Pomors. Their primary language is Russian.

The Russian state was formed in 1521 but the Rus' of Kiev are well known for their leaders Prince Vladimir who converted to Byzantine Orthodox Christianity in 988. The Kievan Rus were isolated from the Catholic West because of this decision, and the Mongol invasion of the 13th century held Russia in a developmental lurch for two centuries. The Mongol control forced many Rus' into the West, creating Byelorussians and Ukrainians as well. Moscow replaced Kiev as the most powerful Russian city as Ivan I became Prince of Muscovy and the collector of tribute to the Mongols. Muscovy gained strength and the people of Russia expanded as the Mongol rule faded.

In 1453 Moscow was declared the Third Rome by the Russian Orthodox leaders. In 1480, tribute payment ceased and by 1500 much of the ethnic Russian territory was under *Muscovy* control. *Ivan the IV* annexed the Volga River basin and Central Asian lands and Cossacks settled into these areas, as well as the frontiers of Siberia. More expansion led to wars with Poland, and conflicts with China. *Peter the Great* led Russians into Western empowerment, but through oppressive means. He took control of the northern Baltic area after defeating the *Swedish King Charles XII*.

Under Peter the Great, the Russian Orthodox Church became controlled by the government. Russia expanded into Crimea and the Black Sea with *Catherine II* at the head of the Empire. Russian relations with the Ottoman Empire had weakened Turkey until they were not a threat any longer. Expansion into the Caucasus and into Alaska came in early 19th century. Russia became larger than its original ethnic Russia. Russification programs ensued under the leadership of Nicholas I and Alexander II. Central Asia was taken in the 1860's, and Far Eastern relations forced the sale of Alaska to the United States to pay for work in the Far East.

World War I and the defeats Russia suffered created ground for the Bolshevik revolution and the end of the Romanov's 300-year dynasty. Civil infighting led the Russians to choose between the new Red Army and old leadership calling themselves White Army. This ended in 1920 with foreign intervention. Lenin's death in 1924 left the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic in the hands of Joseph Stalin.

Stalin and the Russian people dominated the government and anyone thought to be opposed to Stalin and his policies were executed. The failed alliance with Germany in World War II, forced Stalin into the court of the allies. The Russian loss of 20 million in during the war, along with the suppression of the people suspected of working with the Nazis, was a great loss to the Russian people.

The state emerged from the war as a superpower. The lands that Russia held prior to WWI were regained in the aftermath of the second war. The peoples of these nations were forced into collectives and many were deported to slave or work camps in Siberia and Central Asia. The USSR used this slave labor for its heavy industries as it attempted

to build huge military stores. Stalin's death ended some oppression of the peoples of the USSR. The Russian people and the Soviet Man became the ideal to which all peoples were to adhere. Soviet Russification led to many new generations of people that call themselves Russian who are of other ethnic descent. Russians felt that the Soviet shadow obscured what it meant to be Russian. Nationalism surfaced during the Gorbachev era with three separate movements that reacted to the West and to Soviet policies. The Russian people have suffered much repression and loss of birth rates due to the environmental pollution by the industrial, petroleum, and nuclear waste created in the Soviet era.

The Russian people in Turkmenistan are 30% adherent to Russian Orthodoxy and about 1% of those are Evangelical. They have the Bible, Gospel audio recordings, Christian radio broadcasting, the God's Story video, and the Jesus film in Russian.

<http://www.nationmaster.com/country/rs>

<http://www.ahart4russia.com/Ekaterinburg.htm>

<http://www.eglobalaccess.com/carrie/uzbek/culture.htm>

<http://www.peopleteams.org/stavteam/default.htm>

<http://www.hope4ufa.com/>

http://www.nupi.no/cgi-win/Russland/etnisk_b.exe?Russian

<http://www.pcn.org.uk/Uzbekistan%20-%202001.pdf>

<http://www.russianservice.com/regions.asp?Main=Uzbekistan>

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

http://www.stopvaw.org/printview/Ethnic_minorities4.html

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24636

Tabasaran (201)

The *Tabasaran* people are of the Caucasus people cluster. They are mostly found in the northeastern part of Dagestan in Russia, however small groups of them can be found in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and the Ukraine. They are also known as the *Ghumghum*, *Tabassaran*, *Tabasarantsy*, and *Tabasaran Zhvi people*.

They are referred to in the Primitive Christian Church and in Armenian historical documents in the 5th and 7th centuries. The Tabassarans adopted Islam in the 8th and 9th centuries. A nation state emerged in the 12th century, but it became part of the Khanate of Derbent between the 13th and 15th centuries. Foreign invaders that threatened their existence include the Arabian Caliphs, Mongol-Tatars, and Turkish sultans. In the 1800's the Russians exerted reign over them. Until the Russian Revolution, they were usually classified as Lezgins, which was a general term describing all the ethnic groups in what is now Dagestan.

The Tabasaran speak Tabassaran and use a Cyrillic alphabet. It is considered one of the world's hardest languages and has 36 cases.

They are primarily Sunni Muslim of the Shafi school. Among some of the Tabasarans, heathen traditions have been incorporated into their Muslim practices. Some of these practices are the celebrations of sowing and plowing and the worship of old trees. In some places, they are very devout Muslim and tend to be influenced by Islamic fundamentalism. In some places, due to bad treatment by the government, they have become anti-Communist, anti-Russian, and anti-Christian. The number of Christian adherents and evangelicals among them is unknown. There are Bible portions, the Jesus film, and Christian audio recordings in Tabassaran.

http://www.ksafe.com/profiles/p_code5/1606.html

<http://www.tabasaran.com/relig.htm>

http://www.hfe.org/_old/prayer/caucasus/caucus5.htm

<http://www.redeemercommunity.org/Mission%20Files/BLTC%20Newsletter%20Feb05.pdf>

<http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/tabasarans.shtml>

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<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

24637

Tajik (4,392)

The *Tajiks* are of the Indo- Iranian affinity block. They are found throughout Eastern Europe and Central Asia, however, the largest populations of them are found in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan. They are believed to be the original Persian population of Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. The *Tajiks* are also known as the Afghani Tajik, the Persian Tajik, Tadzhiq, and Tadzhiqi. Their primary language is Tajiki, however, most speak Dari. The literacy rate among the Tajik men is about 10% and even lower among the women.

The *Tajik* place a lot of emphasis on etiquette. The young must greet the elders. When friends and relatives meet, they shake hands and pat each other's beards. Men will often bow with their right hand over their check, and women, with both arms across her chest. They never remove their hats while talking to another, unless a very serious situation is being discussed. They often go out of their way to greet and help strangers, however in recent times, some have become a little more cautious.

The *Tajiks* that live in the more rural areas work as migrant farmers and herdsmen. They farm wheat, barley, and grain. Some live a semi-nomadic life. These Tajiks will often plant their crops in the spring, take their herds to highland grazing grounds during the summer, then return to harvest their crops in the fall. When working in the fields, men wear turbans over colorful caps. Rural women tend to wear veils.

The Tajiks living in more urban areas often work as skilled artists or traders. Women in the urban areas wear shawls. Many Tajik houses are square, with flat roofs. Many have moved to the cities and will work on farms during the summer, then return to the cities

for the rest of the year. This has caused job instability and tension has developed between the Uzbeks and Tajiks, as they often compete for jobs.

The Tajiks are 99% Sunni Muslims of the Hanafite sect. They are very devout and are known to be strong in their faith and adhere closely to its beliefs. Islam is seen in every part of their lives. There are a few Ismaili Shias that live in the more remote areas. Although they are devout Muslim, spiritism and folk Islam is seen among the Tajiks. There are few Christians among the Tajiks. Only 01% of the Tajiks in Turkmenistan claim to be evangelical. They have portions of Scripture, the Jesus film, the God's Story video, and Radio Broadcasts available in their language.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

<http://www.china.org.cn/e-groups/shaoshu/shao-2-tajik.htm> <http://www.chsource.org/Tajik.htm>

<http://www.imb.org/centralasia/pray.htm>

<http://www.russianservice.com/regions.asp?Main=Uzbekistan>

<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/ins/uzbeki95.pdf> [www.gl.iit.edu/govdocs/afghanistan/People in Afgh.](http://www.gl.iit.edu/govdocs/afghanistan/People%20in%20Afgh)

24638

Tatar (55,858)

The *Tatar* people are of the Ural Siberian people cluster and the Turkic affinity block. They are found in all of the former Soviet Union and in places in Turkey and China. Their main population is found around the Volga region of Russia. In Turkmenistan, they are found mostly around Ashkhabad, Dashuwuz, and Cheleken, Charjew, Tagtabaz. They are also known as the Dada, Dadan, Kazan Tatar, Tatar, Tata'er, Tura, and Turkish Tatar. They speak Tatar, which belongs to the Turkic language family of the Altaic language system. About thirty percent of the Tatars speak Russian.

The Tatar people survived Mongolian invasion in the thirteenth century as well as the Russian conquest in the sixteenth century. By the nineteenth century, their cities were among the great cultural centers in the Islamic world. It was in the nineteenth century that the Tatar dispersed to Central Asian countries.

Most of the Tatar people have lost their tribal structure. They've become settled and are mostly peasants and merchants. In Russia, some work in manufacturing industries and petroleum refineries. Others work on community farms. In more urban areas of Russia, they live like the other Russians.

The father is the head of the household for the Tatar people. He is responsible for the family income and strenuous labor. Women are usually responsible for household duties like cooking, cleaning, and carrying water. Sometimes they also take care of livestock.

Marriages are monogamous and intermarriage between the Tatar and other ethnic groups are acceptable. Marriages between cousins do happen, but they are uncommon. During the wedding ceremony, the newlyweds drink sugar water from the same cup as a symbol of a sweet life together. Sometimes the groom moves in with the wife's family, and does not return to his own family until the first child is born.

Several ceremonies are held for children. Three days after a baby is born, the baby receives a religious blessing. Seven weeks later, the child's cradle rites are performed. In many places, forty days after the child's birth, the child is bathed in water that is taken from 40 different places. This is a ceremony intended to bring good health to the child. The child is usually given an Islamic name, with the surname of the father or grandfather.

The Tatar are mostly Sunni Muslim of the Hanafite branch, however, most are not devout. Folk Islamic practices are common, such as the belief in supernatural powers like the "evil eye." Many, in other areas of the world, eat pork, which is forbidden in Islam and many do not take part in Islamic fasts. In some places, they celebrate festivals, such as the Saban Festival, or the "rites of spring," which have their origins in shamanism. Many are suspicious of Christianity due to the Russian Orthodox Church's attempt to convert them through coercion. In Turkmenistan, the Tatar are about 1.50% Christian adherent, with few, if any, known evangelicals. They have portions of Scripture, the Jesus film, the God's Story video, and radio broadcasts available in their language.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

<http://realafghan.com/history/language.htm>

<http://www.china.org.cn/e-groups/shaoshu/shao-2-Tatar.htm> <http://www.chsource.org/Tatar.htm>

24639

Turkmen, Turkoman (4,685,993)

The *Turkomani* people are of the *Turkmen* people cluster. They are found in Turkmenistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey, India, Uzbekistan, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Ukraine, Tajikistan, and Syria. More than 3 million Turkmen live in Turkmenistan, mostly along the outer portions of the country. They are also known as the *Anauli*, *Azerbaijani*, *Chaghatai*, *Esari*, *Goklen*, *Jagarta*, *Trukhmeny*, *Turkoman*, and *Yomud*. They speak Turkmen which belongs to the Oguz group of Turkic languages. This language borrows many words Arabic and Persian, as well as Russian. After converting to Islam, they used an Arabic script, then a Latin alphabet was used from 1920-1940. Since 1940, however, it has used a Cyrillic script. Each tribe among the Turkmen speaks its own dialect of the language.

Links to the Prophet Noah are included in the Muslim traditions of the Turkmen people. According to these traditions, Noah gave the Turkmen lands to his son Yafes and his descendents. Allah made the Turkmen successful and increased their numbers. The Turkmen were granted the qualities of spiritual richness and courage. Allah also gave them the capacity to recognize the realities behind events. According to these traditions, Allah named these people Turk Iman, meaning "made from light, whose essence is light."

The *Turkomani* are a tribal group and divide themselves into tribal confederations by territory. They used to be called, "children of the desert" because they used to rob caravans of Persian traders. At one point, they were also involved in slave trading. Turkomani.

The *Turkomani* are known as being strong, hospitable, sincere, and trustworthy, as well as hot-headed and vengeful. They are known to be tall and thin. Men generally wear baggy pants, coarse shirts, and wool hats. Women wear jewelry and cover their heads. The society is male dominated and the older males in the family have the most authority. Sons must be obedient and respectful of elders, especially their fathers. Women are under the authority of men in their society. Family is very important to the Turkomani. Marriages are often arranged and families tend to intermarry in order to preserve wealth. They tend to marry within their tribe.

The Turkomani are Sunni Muslim of the Hanafi branch, however, mysticism and other religious traditions are still practiced. There are few, if any, known believers or churches among these people. There are currently portions of the Bible, the Jesus film, Christian audio recordings, and radio broadcasts available in their language

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

<http://www.farsinet.com/pwo/people.html>

<http://www.ksafe.com/profiles/clusters/8039.html>

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24646

Udi (20)

The *Udi* people are of the Caucasus people cluster. They are mostly found in Azerbaijan and Russia, however small groups of them are also found in Turkmenistan and Georgia. In Turkmenistan, they are found on the left bank tributaries of the Turianchai River around the village of Nidzh. They are also known as the Udi, Uti, Alban, and Urum people. They are an ancient people who speak Udi which is in the Lezgin group of the Dagestani branch of Caucasian languages. This is a written language can be traced back to a Caucasian Albanian language from the 5th century that supposedly disappeared in the 10th century. They use Azerbaijani, Georgian, Armenian, and Russian as their literary languages. They are believed to be the descendents of the Caucasus Albanians.

The Udi people are most closely related in culture to the Azerbaijani people. In other countries, they are 90% Christian adherent. The percentage who are Christian adherents in Turkmenistan are unknown. They are only about 1% evangelical in Turkmenistan. They only have portions of the Bible available to them in their language.

http://www.hfe.org/_old/prayer/caucasus/caucus5.htm

http://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/ai113_folder/113_articles/113_zaza_udi_language.html

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php>

24648

Ukrainian (23,097)

The *Ukrainian* people are of the Eastern Slav people cluster. They are found in almost 40 countries of the world, however, the largest groups of them are found in Russia and the Ukraine. Massive resettlements of Ukrainians dating from the end of the nineteenth

century brought them to Central Asia. They speak Ukrainian, which borrows from Polish. *Ukrainian* is an eastern Slavic language and is very close to the 9th century Slavonic used before the Slavonic from Bulgaria arrived with Christianity in the 10th century. In the latter half of the 19th century this language was banned, but has persevered and is becoming more widespread. It became the official language of the Ukraine in 1990.

Ukrainians consume an enormous amount of spirits. It affects the whole of the society, from the workforce, lifespan, and the complete moral atmosphere of the country. It is estimated that there are nearly 1 million confirmed chronic alcoholics or potential alcoholics in Ukraine.

Factors that contribute to the level of consumption include the lack of economic opportunity, demoralism, and no faith in professed ideals. "Alcohol is an anesthetic that helps to survive the operation called life," as quoted by Bernard Shaw. Traditionally, drinking for the average Ukrainian is a ritual and is a part of any social event or family occasion. Generally when family or friends get together, a bottle of vodka comes out. It is considered poor manners to refuse to drink when everyone is partaking. It is seen as an affront and a show of no respect for those around. Among the Ukrainians, education is greatly valued.

Most of Ukrainian children receive a high school education and many of those go on to attend the university or some other form of higher education. Kiev University in Ukraine is recognized as one of the top schools in the world.

Many of the Ukrainians are Orthodox Christians. According to some, the Apostle Andrew sailed through the Black Sea and landed in the area that is known as the Ukraine and preached the Gospel to the tribe's people. The late 10th century saw the arrival of Christianity in the Ukraine with the baptism of *Prince Vladimir*. In 988 the Prince accepted Christianity as the religion of the territory and had everyone baptized.

A split in the Church, the Roman Church from the Orthodox Church, occurred in 1054. The Orthodox Church later split into three segments, all having some relation to the Moscow controlled Russian Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. In 1596 a number of Ukrainian Bishops seeking to achieve for their brethren a level of recognition similar to that of the Catholics, brought their church into full union with the Pope. Although they were in union with the Pope, they were allowed to maintain their distinct liturgy and rites. The Soviets, in their attempt to crush the Ukrainians spirits, destroyed hundreds of churches in the 1930's.

This union and the New Economic Policy eventually produced regrettable consequences for Ukraine. Beginning in the late 1920s, Joseph Stalin sensing nationalistic ideas developing in Ukraine and deciding to show the rest of the empire what happens to problem children brutally reversed both trends. Peasant landholdings were forcibly collectivized and crops were extorted to support industrialization. The resulting artificial famine in 1932 and 1933 cost the lives of an estimated 5 million to 7 million Ukrainians. In the mid-1930s Stalin initiated mass arrests and executions of his opponents or possible

opponents, resulting in the devastation of Ukraine's intelligentsia by the end of the decade. Meanwhile, in Galicia an extreme form of nationalism, embodied in the *Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN)*, developed and called for independence at any cost. In the latter half of the decade he smashed the Ukrainian intelligence agency and went after the *Ukrainian Orthodox Church* destroying over 250 buildings. *Stalin* sought the complete helplessness and hopelessness of the people, even to the point of wanting to deport the whole country.

Having a reputation as a known rebellious region, Ukraine suffered more than the average under the Russians. The first war and the famine were over. As the world approached another World War, the Ukrainians first greeted the Germans as liberators perhaps partly as a result of the 7 million persons Stalin had murdered through the "famine." The tactics of the Nazis quickly transformed this hope. The war, along with the famine, took over half of the male and a quarter of the female population. Six million Ukrainians died in the fighting of WWII.

Many of the Ukrainian people are Orthodox Christians. Many are also non-religious. The percentage of Christian adherents is about 69% and the percentage of evangelicals is estimated to be about 12.50% percent. The Bible, God's Story video, the Jesus film, gospel audio recordings, and Christian radio broadcasts have been translated into their language.

<http://www.usukraine.org/cpp/resources/education.shtml>.

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/europe/ukraine/culture.htm>.

<http://reachukraine.org/regional/people.htm>. <http://www.irex.uz/?id=publications&file=art006>

<http://www.brama.com/survey/messages/7479.html> http://www.mswia.gov.pl/eng_mn_narod_1_list.html

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

<http://www.ethnologue.com>

http://www.ukraineobserver.com/archive.php?section=READERS_FORUM&issue=127.

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24647

Uyghur (1,802)

The *Uighur* people, whose name literally means "allied," are of the *Uighur* people cluster and the Turkic affinity block. They mostly live in northwestern China, however significant populations of them can be found in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, with a smaller population in Afghanistan and Turkmenistan.

They are also known as the *Huihe*, *Kashgar*, *Kashgar Turki*, *Kashgar-Yarkand*, *Taranchi*, *Uighuir*, *Uiguir*, *Uigur*, *Weiwuer*, and *Yuanhe*. They originated from the Turkish nomads who resided in Siberia. In 840AD, they were forced to leave their homeland and many fled to western China. They are said to be the ancestors of the Huihui of China. During the seventh century Arabs and Persians immigrated to China for trade. Those who became permanent residents built mosques and intermarried with the Han. Their offspring was identified with other Muslim immigrants during the thirteen and fourteenth century. They lived along the Silk Road which allowed them to become the middle men

between the Orient and Europe. Uyghur, an Altaic Turkic language, is their heart language.

The *Uighur* have maintained their culture and simplicity though living an isolated life, though they have been able to have contact with other cultures. They have been described as both simple and sophisticated. The Uighur are known to be proud, happy and independent.

More traditional men wear a qiapan, which is a long gown with a distinctive, slanted collar. Women wear broad sleeved dresses with black waist coats. Many, however, are starting to dress more western. Most Uighurs wear a small cap that has four pointed corners. Long hair, for women, is regarded as a sign of beauty. In the past, girls braided their hair into a dozen pigtails. When women marry, they often wear their hair in two pigtails.

The Uighur are Sunni Muslim. While they used to be Muslim in name only, the Uighur are becoming more devout in some areas. While the Bible has not been translated into their language, the New Testament and Scripture portions have. The Jesus film, God's Story video, Christian radio broadcasts, and Christian audio recordings are also available in their language. There are few, if any, known Christians among them.

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/kidsweb/world/pakistan/pakpeop.htm>

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=uig

<http://www.asiaharvest.org/pages/profiles/china/chinaPeoples/U/Uyгур.pdf>

<http://www.china.org.cn/e-groups/shaoshu/shao-2-uygur.htm>

<http://www.paulnoll.com/China/Minorities/min-Uyгур.html>

24649

Uzbek, Northern (452,380)

The *Uzbek*, whose name literally means “master of oneself,” are a Turkic people group. They are also known as the *Ouzbek*, *Ozbek*, *Uzbeki*, *Northern Uzbek*, *Uzbeki*, and *Wuzibieke*. The northern Uzbeks are usually the Uzbeks that are north of Afghanistan. Those in Afghanistan and Pakistan are usually called Southern Uzbeks.

The Uzbek are found throughout Central Asia, with almost 20 million of them residing in Uzbekistan. Afghanistan has the second largest population of Uzbeks and Tajikistan has the third largest population. In Turkmenistan, they are mostly found along the border with Uzbekistan. Larger populations of them are found near the cities of Tasauz, Cardzon, and Gaurdak. They speak Northern Uzbek, which is a Turkic language of the Altaic language family. It is closely related to the Uighur language. Most Northern Uzbeks are bilingual, with many speaking Russian.

The Uzbeks are believed to be descendants of Central Asian Turks who aided Genghis Khan. The unity of the Turks and Mongols eventually faded and different kingdoms formed. The Uzbeks descended from these kingdoms.

Most *Uzbeks* in Turkmenistan live in cities. The Uzbeks living in more rural areas tend to make a living as merchants and craftsmen. These people are often skilled silver and goldsmiths, leather workers, woodcarvers, and rug makers. Uzbeks living in more urban areas tend to dress in European style clothing, though some still wear more traditional clothing.

Family is very important to the *Uzbek*. *Uzbek* families are patriarchal, with the male ruling over several generations. They often live with extended families, with three generations under one roof. Unlike other groups, marriage between siblings or between other close relatives is forbidden. Most marriages are arranged and it is not uncommon for them to marry Uighurs or Tartars. It is very uncommon to see a single adult in Uzbek society. Daughters must marry in order of age. Women are expected to have their first baby within the first year of marriage. Traditionally, the groom's family had to offer gifts to the bride's family and cover the cost of the wedding feasts. The ceremony would take place at the house of the bride, then after the ceremony, she would be taken to the groom's home. Sometimes, friends and family would take the bride after the ceremony, and the husband would have to offer gifts to "redeem" her.

The *Uzbek* often live in villages headed by an elder. Several villages make up an elat, which is governed by a council of elders. Uzbeks interact with various ethnic groups, but tend to have closer relationships with the Uighurs and Kazaks.

The Uzbek are Sunni Muslim, most from the Hanafite branch. Islam is an important part of the everyday life of an Uzbek, however, there are still some traditional beliefs mixed in with their practice of Islam. There are few Christians among the Uzbek, with only about 0.15% in Turkmenistan being evangelical. They have portions of Scripture, the Jesus film, God's Story video, Christian radio broadcasts, and Christian audio recordings available in their language.

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Missiological Implications

1. *Evangelical Christians must seek ways of gaining the respect and acceptance toward western people on the part of the people of Turkmenistan.* The people of Turkmenistan have a history of people betraying and oppressing them. In addition, many equate Christianity with Russian Orthodoxy and Russian oppression. For this reason, the message of Jesus Christ must be spread through relationships that are built on trust and understanding. This will help in tearing down barriers and stereotypes.

The first step for Evangelical Christians is to overcome this barrier is prayer. The battle is a spiritual one, so missionaries need prayer to face it. A second method for overcoming the stereotype of Christians and westerners is an incarnational life-style. Muslims must have contact with strong Christian families. Christians must live open and transparent lives before their Muslim friends and neighbors. The more contact a Christian has with a Muslim, the better the opportunity to share what devoted followers of Christ should look like. A Christian should study the culture and know what is offensive and avoid those behaviors. They should refrain from eating pork or drinking alcohol in the presence of a Muslim, as this is very offensive. Likewise, men or women should not wear shorts or tight fitting clothing for this is not appropriate.

2. *Evangelical Christians should seek to contact and aid the Korean Christians in Turkmenistan and encourage them to reach out to the Turkmen in Turkmenistan and neighboring countries.* In many cases, the Koreans will have better contact with the people than any westerner who may be viewed as Russian. Evangelism and church starting may depend on the Koreans.
3. *Evangelical Christians should introduce the concept of house churches and other types of small Christian groups to the peoples of Turkmenistan.* Building large church buildings will probably be both costly and ineffective. Steadily reproducing churches that meet in houses and other places might provide the best alternative to Christian advance in this country.
4. *Evangelical Christians must provide churches in Turkmenistan into which these people can grow in a relationship to God and join in corporate worship.* The house church movement method, mentioned above, might be the best approach for this nation.
5. *Evangelical Christians should help the believers in Turkmenistan counter the teachings of President Saparmurat Niyazov and his religion of Ruhnama.* This false teaching that is being forced upon the people is obviously counter to biblical understanding and will separate the people from the truth of God. Ways to counter these teachings without leading to massive persecutions should be sought.
6. *Evangelical Christians should seek ways to guide the peoples of Turkmenistan to Christ and His service while allowing them to continuing their function and life within the cultures of the land.* If a person converts to Christianity, it is important to respect local customs, or Christians will loose even more credibility.

For example, it may not be wise to encourage a Muslim woman who has become a believer to stop veiling. Since veiling is not in opposition to the teachings of the Bible, to encourage her to stop, would just be to make her more

western and not more Christian. If the woman does unveil and her husband and family are not believers, this creates a lot of problems and confirms that Christian women disrespect their husbands. The woman can be seen as morally loose and in rebellion. This is not the message Christians want to give. A new convert's testimony will have no value if the first sign of his or her faith is perceived as rebellion and immorality.

7. *Evangelical Christians must seek to help the peoples in Turkmenistan and those who seek to evangelize them to develop plans for sharing the Gospel with the Muslims in Turkmenistan.* Any method that attacks Islam or the Prophet will be met by strong resistance. The approach must be tailored to each group and even to a person within the group. A careful and sensitive approach to sharing the Message of Jesus Christ with Muslims in Turkmenistan is imperative.

Christian witnesses must remember that a vital first step in evangelism is a relationship between the witness and the person receiving the witness. Muslims have a great sense of pride in themselves as well as their religion, and to damage that sense of pride could be detrimental to the relationship a Christian is trying to establish.

When having theological discussions, Christians should not focus on the difference between the religions or quickly raise issues that would cause an argument. For example, referring to Jesus as the Messiah or the Spirit of God would be acceptable to a Muslim, since those are titles the Quran gives Him. Referring to Christ as the Son of God would be considered blasphemy and the Muslim would be offended. The wise witness will start with common ground and seek to develop understanding and trust in a non-threatening way.

It is permissible to express that you do not agree with the views of Islam. To do something, such as calling Mohammed a pedophile or the anti-Christ, as some public figures have done, will quickly shut the door to further communication. Demeaning their prophet or holy book in any way will anger them and possibly get the missionary kicked out of the country or imprisoned.

8. *Evangelical Christians should adopt and express the Turkmenistan quality of hospitality.* Hospitality is a key aspect in working among Muslims. It is a common element among Muslims worldwide, whether in the Middle East or Indonesia. Failing to practice the customs of hospitality can lead to an appearance of being rude or cold, which could possibly shut the door to further meetings with neighbors and friends.
9. *Evangelical Christians should seek to find a way to introduce the Gospel into the cultures of the Turkmen or Turkomani in Turkmenistan and in the surrounding counties as well.* Since this people group is predominantly Muslim, it is obviously important in seeking to bring Turkmenistan to Christ. The major

groups of Turkmen in neighboring countries only add to the imperative nature of this outreach.

10. *Evangelical Christians should accept and implement the mission of reaching the peoples of Turkmenistan.* Many indigenous believers in Turkmenistan are not reaching out to their neighbors. It is important to disciple them and encourage them to reach out to those with the same or a similar culture.
11. *Evangelical Christians should seek ways to train more leaders for the few churches and Christian movements that exist in Turkmenistan.* There is a lack of leadership among the indigenous church. Workers are needed to disciple and train local believers so that they are able effectively lead the local body of believers.

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