

BURYAT

SOME USEFUL PHRASES IN BURYAT

Сайн байна!

[sain baina]
/Sain baina!
Hi (How are you?)

Сайн!

[sain]
/Sain!
Hi! (Good)

Би Эмили гэжэ нэрэтэйб.

[bi emili gɛʒɛ nɛrɛtɛib]
/Bi Ėmili gɛzhɛ nɛrɛtɛib./
My name is Emily.

Ши хэн гэжэ нэрэтэйбши?

[ʃi xɛn gɛʒɛ nɛrɛtɛibʃi]
/Shi khɛn gɛzhɛ nɛrɛtɛibshi?/
What is your name?

Ши хаана түрөөбши?

[ʃi xɑ:nɑ tʏrɔɔbʃi]
/Shi khaana tʏrɔɔbshi?/
Where were you born?

Ши моритой гүш?

[ʃi moritɔi ɡyʃ]
/Shi moritɔi ɡyʃh?/
Do you have a car? (literally 'Do you have a horse?')

Би шамда дуратайб.

[bi ʃɑmdɑ dʏrɑtɑib]
/Bi shamda dʏrɑtɑib./
I love you.

Һайн даа.

[hain da:]
/Hain daa./
Thank you.

Баяртай!

[bajartai]
/Baiartai!
Good-bye!

Special thanks goes to Kathryn Graber for her contributions to this pamphlet.

FIVE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD LEARN MORE ABOUT BURYATS AND THEIR LANGUAGE

1. Buryat is spoken natively in Russia, northern Mongolia, and China. Additionally, you can find large groups of Buryat speakers in many Central Asian countries, such as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. And there are even growing communities of speakers in the US!
2. Buryat is structurally very similar to Mongolian (an Altaic language), but its vocabulary has been heavily influenced by Russian (a Slavic language), so it is the perfect language to study if you are interested in both Altaic and Slavic languages.
3. Some traditional Buryat arts that are still being practiced today include horsehair weaving, blacksmithing, and jewelry making.
4. Buryat culture is steeped in folklore. Many of these legends, proverbs, and sayings have been passed orally through generations and generations of people, including heroic epics like "Geser," created more than a thousand years ago!
5. Buryat culture includes strong philosophical ideas about the nature of the world and the human's place in it, as expressed through enduring traditions of shamanism, Buddhism, and mythology.

ABOUT US

The Center for Languages of the Central Asian Region (CeLCAR) at Indiana University develops materials for learning and teaching a wide variety of Central Asian languages.

For more information, go to celcar.indiana.edu.



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Center for Languages of the
Central Asian Region (CeLCAR)

WHO ARE THE BURYAT PEOPLE AND WHERE DO THEY LIVE?

The Buryat people are an indigenous, traditionally semi-nomadic people living in the countryside of East Europe and Central Asia. Modern day Buryats are descendants of 13th century Siberian and Mongolian people from the Lake Baikal Region in southern Russia. Today, the Buryat population is estimated to be about 500,000, with the majority of Buryats located in the Republic of Buryatia (also known as just Buryatia), northern Mongolia, and northwestern China. However, smaller clusters of Buryats can also be found in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and the United States.



WHAT KIND OF LANGUAGE IS BURYAT?

Buryat belongs to the Altaic group of languages, which includes languages such as Turkish, Mongolian, and arguably even Korean and Japanese. Altaic languages have historically been spoken across areas of Asia and Eastern Europe, and are named after the Altai Mountains in Central Asia. Buryat belongs to the Mongolic group of Altaic languages, along with Mongolian, Dagur, Kalmyk, Monguor, and Dongxiang.

Buryat has many dialects, including Khori, Lower Uda (which has the strongest Turkic influence), Alar-Tunka, Ekhirit-Bulagat, and Bargut. Because of significant differences in vocabulary, some also choose to distinguish between Russia Buryat, Mongolia Buryat, and China Buryat.

Similar to other Altaic languages, Buryat is a subject-object-verb (SOV) language. And like many other Central Asian languages, Buryat features vowel harmony, wherein the vowel quality of a vowel in a word directly affects the vowel quality of the other vowels within the word.

Another feature of Buryat is the use of postpositions, so instead of saying “on the table” like in English, a Buryat speaker would say “stol déère” (table on).

WHAT ALPHABET DO THE BURYAT USE?

Throughout history, the Buryats have used a number of alphabet systems. Traditionally Buryats wrote in variations of the vertical Mongolian script, but they adopted the Russian Cyrillic alphabet system under Russian influence. Then in 1931 the Buryats began using a modified version of the Latin alphabet, before switching back to Cyrillic in 1939, which is what they still use today.



The modern literary language of Buryat is based on the Khori dialect.

WHAT IS BURYAT CULTURE LIKE?



Traditionally, Buryats, also known as Buryads, are a semi-nomadic people, herding livestock and erecting yurts around the countryside. Although the majority of contemporary Buryats are more prone to establishing permanent residences, many still prefer to settle in the countryside like their ancestors.

The historical roots of Buryat culture are closely related to their Mongolian neighbors. However, Buryat culture has also been heavily influenced by Russian culture. Today, Buryats living west of Lake Baikal and Olkhon tend to live a more Russified life and have abandoned their nomadism for agriculture. However, the more eastern Buryats have held on more closely to the roots of their ancestors, and some of them have continued herding.

Through their long contact with neighboring peoples, the Buryat people have been introduced to Buddhism and Russian Orthodoxy, leading many Buryat people to adopt these religions. Soviet authorities harshly repressed church and religion in the 1930s, but by 1946, the Buddhist church was officially re-established. Modern Buryat culture is heavily steeped in Tibetan Buddhism and shamanism.

Because Buryats are known for being herdsman and fishermen, it should be no surprise that the main ingredients of their ethnic cuisines are milk, beef, and fish. Probably the most well-known culinary treat of the Buryat is buuza, also known as pozy, which is a meat dumpling. Every Buryat woman knows how to prepare pozy, and they take pride in not only the excellent taste, but the beautiful design as well.

