

MONGOLIAN

SOME USEFUL PHRASES IN MONGOLIAN

Сайн байна уу? Миний нэр Жон.

[saɪn baɪn u: mi'ni: ner dʒon]

/Sain baina* uu? Minii ner John./

Hi. My name is John.

Таны нэр хэн бэ?

[ta'ni: ner xen be]

/Tanii ner hen be?/

What is your name?

Сонин юу байна?

[so'nin yu: baɪn]

/Sonin yuu baina*?/

How are you doing?

Би чамд хайртай.

[bi tʃamd xair'taɪ]

/Bi chamd hairtai./

I love you.

Ямар сайхан морь вэ!

[ja'mar sai'xan 'mori βe]

/Yammar saihan mori we!/

What a beautiful horse.

Бие засах газар хаана байна вэ?

[bi'je dza'sax ga'dzar xaan baɪn]

/Biye dzassahh gadzar haana baina we?/*

Where is the restroom?

Маш их баярлалаа.

[maf ix ba, jarla'laa]

/Mash ihh bayarlalaa./

Thank you very much.

Сайн байна.

[saɪn baɪn]

/Sain baina*./

It is good.

Баяртай.

[, bayar'taɪ]

/Bayartai./

Good-bye.

baina*, хаана*: the short vowel at the end of a word is not pronounced. So these are pronounced like 'bain' and 'haan'

Special thanks goes to Tserenchunt Legden for her contributions to this pamphlet.

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

1. Mongolian is spoken by over 7 million people, not just in Mongolia, but also in some parts of China (Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region) and Russia (Buryatia and Kalmykia) as well.
2. As a member of the Altaic language family, Mongolian shares structural similarities to Turkic and Tungusic language groups. The Mongolian vocabulary is rich in early Turkic, Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese elements that reflect the country's nomadic, Buddhist, and Asian heritage. Mongolian continues to adopt words from Russian and English, but very much retains its own distinctive character.
3. The Mongol Empire (1206-1368) was history's largest land-based empire of all time. This empire and its successor states had enormous influence on subsequent world history.
4. Since the 1990s, Mongolia has been transitioning to a market economy and is predicted to be the fastest growing economy in the region. With its extensive land and mineral deposits, Mongolia attracts foreign investments and businesses.
5. While you don't need to know Mongolian to order at a Mongolian BBQ restaurant (because it isn't actually Mongolian!), most bigger cities do have Mongolian restaurants, and you can impress your friends by ordering your *buuz* in Mongolian!

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 www.iub.edu/~celcar.



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Center for Languages of the
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WHO ARE MONGOLS AND WHERE DO THEY LIVE?

Mongols (ethnic Mongolian speakers) are descendants of the people unified by the great

Inner Asian conqueror Genghis Khan before his death in 1227.

Today Mongols live primarily in Mongolia, a country in East and Central Asia that borders Russia to the north and China to the

east, south, and west. A large population of Mongols also live in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China, as well as in Xinjiang, the Tibetan plateau, and parts of Russia.

WHAT KIND OF LANGUAGE IS MONGOLIAN?

Mongolian refers to a number of closely related languages and dialects. Mongolian, the official language of the independent nation of Mongolia, is properly called Khalkha Mongolian, after the four Khalkha provinces that were carved out of this region in the 17th century. Closely related dialects of Mongolian are spoken in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region of China, and more distantly related forms of Mongolian are spoken by the Buryats of Siberia and the Kalmyks of European Russia, Xinjiang, and Tibet. Despite their linguistic differences, speakers of all these forms of Mongolian view themselves as people of one ethnicity and culture, a view encouraged by their common use of traditional Mongolian script until the breakup of the Mongolian cultural world in the 20th century.

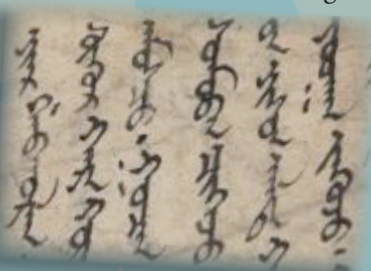
In addition, a number of smaller Mongolic languages are spoken in northeastern and western China and in Afghanistan by descendants of Mongol soldiers stationed there during the Mongol Empire.

Most varieties of Mongolic languages share a number of important characteristics. The verb is always the

last word in the sentence, and while the order of other words in the sentence is flexible, typically the subject comes first and the direct object comes just before the verb (SOV). In place of prepositions as in English, the grammatical function of the nouns in a sentence is indicated with case suffixes. Also Mongolian is agglutinative, which means that suffixes indicating only one grammatical meaning are added to a word root in a fixed order. Finally, Mongolian has vowel harmony, which means that all the vowels added in the suffixes must match the front or back nature of the vowel of the root to which they are added.

WHAT ALPHABET DO MONGOLS USE?

Throughout their history, Mongols used a number of alphabets. From the beginning of the 13th century, Mongolian was written using the Uyghur script. Today it is known as the Classical Mongolian Script, and it is the only script in the world written vertically and left to right. In the 1930s, the Latin script was introduced in Mongolia, however, this language



reform was soon abolished and the Russian Cyrillic script was adapted to write Khalkha Mongolian. Speakers and scholars in Mongolia found this script well-suited to the language because

it allowed few ambiguities in spelling, and therefore is the alphabet still used to write Mongolian in Mongolia today. However, Mongols of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China still use the beautiful Classical Mongolian Script with its centuries-old tradition of calligraphy. A modified version of this script, known as Clear Script, has been used by some Mongols living in the Xinjiang Autonomous region of China.

WHAT IS MONGOLIAN CULTURE LIKE?

Historically, Mongols are a nomadic people, herding livestock on the Mongolian plateau. Religiously,

they were adherents first of shamanism and then of Buddhism. But like many other Central Asian cultures, Mongolia culture has been influenced by the cultures of Tibet, China, the Central Asian oases, and Russia throughout the recent centuries.

Mongolian culture has been derived from the traditional life of steppe herdsman. The mainstays of Mongolian

herding are horses, cattle, camels, sheep, and goats, which provide milk, meat, clothing, and even fuel for the hearth via dry animal droppings. To this day, many Mongolian families migrate seasonally three or four times a year with their herds to customarily assigned pastures.

Traditional Mongolian society was strongly aristocratic and hierarchical, with an insistence on order and proper behavior. However many of these cultural practices were affected by the Soviet influences of the 20th century, including abolishing the Buddhist sangha (clergy) and nobility, eliminating “superstitious” and “feudal” customs, and by establishing universal



education. As the world's second Soviet socialist state in the years following 1921, industry (particularly mining) and farming were

strongly encouraged to diversify and modernize the economy. Furthermore, western science, technology, and culture, became increasingly important in Mongolian society. Since the peaceful democratic revolution of 1990, Mongolia has established the only stable market democracy between Central Europe and Korea, and privatization and globalization have followed as matters of national policy.

