



# Religions in Mongolia

by Ven. Dr. T Bulgan for ACRP EC meeting in Bandung,  
Indonesia, 2015

# Basic Beliefs of World Religions Buddhism

Basic Beliefs of World Religions Buddhism (Buddhists) The founder of Buddhism was a man called Buddha. He was a rich prince who left his palace and tried to find a way to end all suffering. He decided on eight rules. • These rules the Buddhists follow are called the Noble Eightfold Path. The Eightfold Path says that:

- o Buddhists must not harm any living thing.
- o Buddhists must be kind.
- o Buddhist must live in a right way.
- o Buddhist must not think of themselves.
- o They must think of others.
- o They try to understand suffering.
- o They must think deeply while sitting still.

• While thinking deeply and sitting still, Buddhists are trying to find their inner selves. • Many young Buddhist men become monks either for life or for short periods of time.

- o Monks wear orange robes.
- o Monks shave their heads.
- o Monks live in poverty and rely on others to supply their needs.
- o Buddhists believe if they give to the monks they will become better persons.
- Buddhists pray to ancestors who have died. They believe the dead relative can help them.
- Buddhists practice their religion individually in their homes or by going to a temple or shrine.
- o Many Buddhist homes have a statue of Buddha
- Buddhist ideas originally came from the Hindu religion. There are similar beliefs in the two religions.
- o Reincarnation – After death, Buddhists believe they can come back again and again as a better person.
- o Nirvana – Buddhists believe that when a person dies they eventually enter Nirvana. Then that person no longer exists.



## On background of religions



*Various forms of religious beliefs like Shamanism been widely practised throughout the history of what is now Mongolia, with such beliefs being common among the nomads of central Asia. They gradually gave way to buddhism but shamanism has left a mark on Mongolian religious culture, and it continues to be practiced. The Kazakhs of western Mongolia traditionally practise Islam.*

# Chingis Khaan on religion

The most interesting period of the religious attitudes of the Mongols was the period when Genghis Khan founded the Great Mongol Empire. Genghis Khan and his successors idolized Shamanism and holy spirits. The shamans, who worshiped the Eternal Blue Sky, were never banned by other religious denominations.

Karakorum, the capital of Great Mongol Empire, was one of the great cultural, religious and political center of the world. Buddhists, Christians, Nestorians, Muslims and Confucians co-existed by setting up their own temples and monasteries. History tells us that the monasteries and temples had their own governing centers and head authorities.

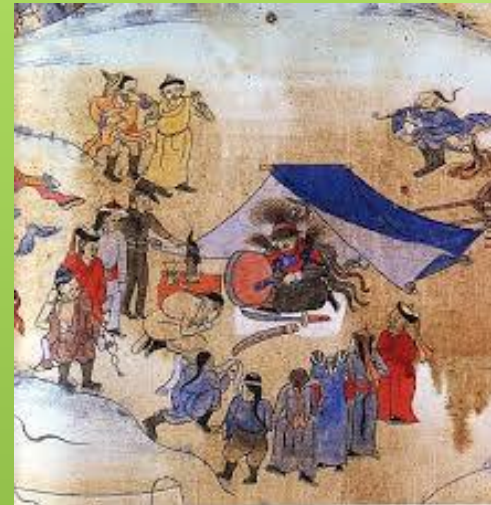




# Shamanism

The native religion of Mongolia is, like the language, related to the Turkish tradition and would also have similarities with the Tibetan Bön. In general this religion is referred to as shamanism . Rather often shamanism refers to a specific form of this religious phenomena present in Siberia, and although there is a relation with this form it is not the same. Above this `shamanism` implies that a religious specialist is needed and central to it's faith and practices while in fact it is an animist religion with an arsenal of beliefs and practices in which a shaman not necessarily is involved.

This native religion is not unequivocal, with a unequivocal doctrine, but rather a diversity of local beliefs and practices, which by a number of common characteristics can be lumped together. Central in this belief is the worship of the Blue, Mighty, Eternal Heaven (*köke tngri*, *erketü tngri*, *möngke tngri*) . There is a total of 99 *tngri* or heavenly creatures of which Köke Möngke Tngri (Eternal Blue Heaven) is the chief.



# Buddhism

Historical documents traces that the first contact of the Mongolians with Buddhism back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. By that time the T'o-pa Wei dynasty would have some influence on the Juan-juan dynasty which dominated Mongolia at that time (Moses 1977: 23-4). A later Buddhist influence is that of the Kitan in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, from which at the time of writing a stupa in Kerulen Bars Khota and the remainings of Buddha statue at Khalkhin Gol. In 1125 the Kitan dynasty falls and Mongolia reverts to a disorganized collection of warring tribes in which Nestorianism, Manicheism and shamanism are the main religions. (Moses 1977: 34-9)

It is in the time of the Great Khans that the Tibetan form of Buddhism gains influence in Mongolia. In the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Chinggis Khan conquers Tibet. The leader of the biggest empire ever was known for his religious tolerance, having Nestorian Christians, Moslems, Manicheists and shamans within his realm.



# Christianity



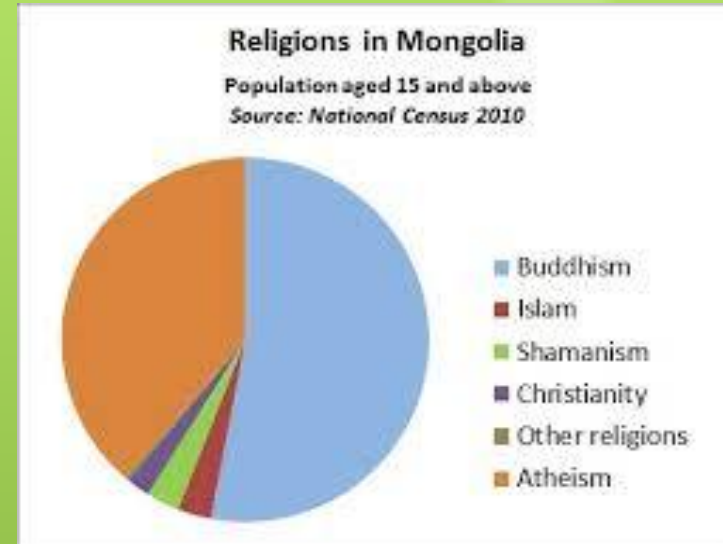
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The Judaist doctrine allowed its citizens to follow Buddhist teachings. In Karakorum, along with shamanism, there was a Buddhist lamasery, two mosques, one Christian church and 12 temples of other religions. Beginning with the Great Khan, Genghis, the Mongolian Khans and nobles never discriminated against the religious denominations of conquered nations and let them co-exist on an equal footing.

Khubilai Khan celebrated in his own country the festivities of various religions. The history of Yuan dynasty says that people observed together such festivals as the birthday of Christ and his rebirth. The same was observed by Muslims who celebrated Jewish and Buddhist religious events.

# Comparision on religion



Religion	Population	Share %
Non-religious	735,283	38.6
Religious	1,170,283	61.4
<b><u>Buddhism</u></b>	1,009,357	53.0
<b><u>Islam</u></b>	57,702	3.0
<b><u>Shamanism</u></b>	55,174	2.9
<b><u>Christianity</u></b>	41,117	2.1
Other religions	6,933	0.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	1,905,566	100.0



# Religious tolerance

We have referred to the bold initiative of Chinggis Khan in the 13<sup>th</sup> century to invite Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and Daoists to live together on the steppes of Mongolia: a gesture that continues to find expression in the openness of the Mongolian people, who treasure the religious customs passed down from generation to generation, and who show a profound respect for traditions other than their own.

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## Interreligious activity

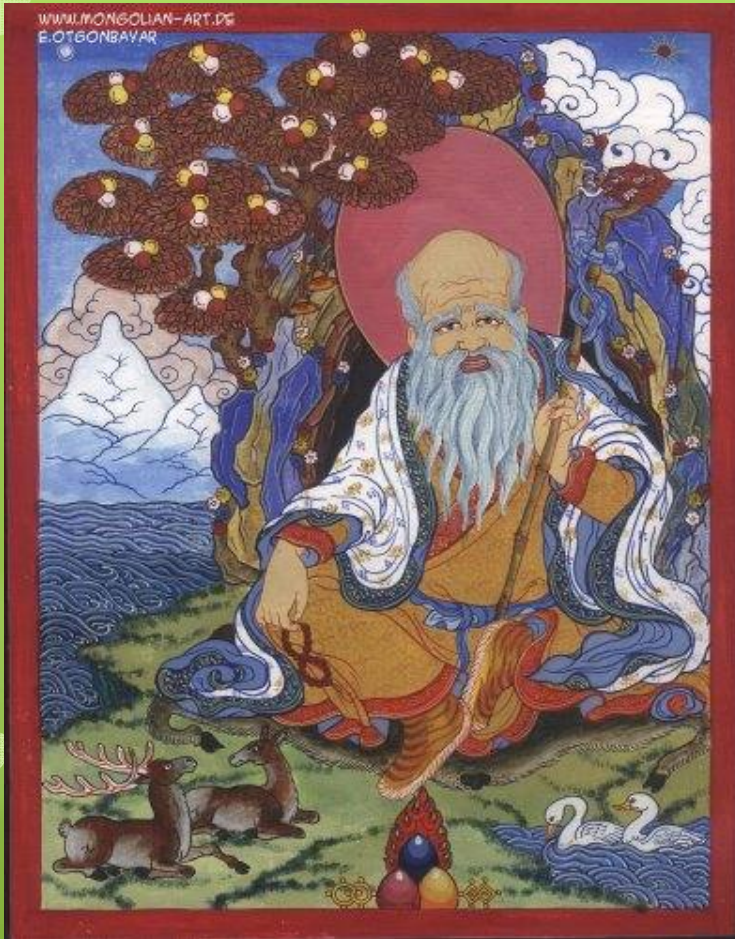


## International day of peace





# Harmony of religions



- Today Mongolia tolerates all religions and so far there 186 religious organizations are registered. Although Buddhism, Islam and Shamanism are registered to be the main religions in Mongolia, all religions are tolerated. Only when it might be a threat to the national safety, it can be restricted.

# Mongolia for peace and religion

- **UNITED NATIONS**
- **GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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- A/61/L.11/Rev.2                      14 December 2006

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- **Sixty-first session**

- Agenda item 44

- **Culture of peace**

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- Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Gabon, Gambia, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Madagascar, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), **Mongolia**, Morocco, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Sudan, Suriname, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Uzbekistan: revised draft resolution

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- **Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace**

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- *The General Assembly,*

- *Reaffirming* the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,[1] in particular the right to freedom of thought, of conscience and of religion,.....

- [1] Resolution 217 A (III).



# ACRP GC in Incheon, Korea, 2014



# ACRP EC in Bandung, Indonesia 2015



