



## WHO ARE THE TSAATAN FOREST PEOPLE? (图)

<http://www.firstlight.cn> 2010-08-30

High ranges of Sayan Mountains covered by thick forests, river valleys of Shishged, Tengis, Bus, Jams on northern border of Mongolia - these are places where the few remaining families of Tsaatan tribe, known from ancient times as Forest People, are living.

Tsaatans are Turkic people from Tannu Tuva, a republic belonging to Russia and just across the border from Huvsgul province of Mongolia.

After WWII when Tuva was separated from Mongolia and joined to the former USSR, there were attempts to move Tsaatans back to Tuva by force. But Tsaatans braved high mountains, fast rivers and border posts to return back to their ancestors' place in northern Huvsgul.

So, a small Turkic speaking tribe lives amidst the remote stretches of Northern Mongolia preserving their lifestyle, culture and traditions, ancient beliefs.

No one knows exactly how many of them are there. Tsaatans themselves estimate around 200 people with 400 reindeers.. The latest population census of 1979 recorded 480 people in Tsagaan Nuur area listed as Uighurs.

"My daughter is now 24 year old. I wonder whether she will make fire at her own family hearth... No man around. She can not ride in forests looking for a man to marry. Maybe she should just make a baby, who will support her later on," sighs old Tsend. Three of them - an old mother, her daughter and 6-yr-old grandson from her elder son - live in Eastern Taiga area. All they have are five reindeers.

"No reindeers, no Tsaatans," they say bitterly. They still wait for reindeers to be imported from Tuva as the government promised a decade ago. Recently the SOS-Taiga Foundation set up by David Vellatalla, an Italian ethnographer raises funds to continue the project. This is the only hope left for the Tsaatan people.

[存档文本](#)