

# **KHAKASS**

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**The Khakass Republic or Khakassia (23,855 square miles or 61,784 square kilometers) is an autonomous republic within the Russian Federation. Located in Krasnoyarsk Krai at the far northwestern end of the Altay Range in south-central Siberia, it differs from other Siberian republics in at least two ways. First, the Khakass, while Turkic-speaking, are actually Orthodox Christians, not Muslims, Buddhists, or shamanists. Another difference is that ethnic Russians outnumber the Khakass. For example, in 1959, 48,000 Khakass were living in Khakassia, forming 12 % of the total population. By 1979 there were 57, 300 Khakass, forming 11.4 % of the population. The Russians now constitute the remaining 80-90 percent of the population of Khakassia.**

**The Khakass Republic extends along the left bank of the Yenisey River, upon the wooded slopes of Kuznetsk Ala-Tau and the Sayans, in the western portion of the Minusinsk depression. Lake Baikal lies 1,000 kilometers to the east. The Abakan (a tributary of the Yenisey) and Chulym rivers drain the area. The capital is Abakan and the next largest city is Chernogorsk (a coal-mining center). While the terrain in southern and western regions is hilly, the northern and eastern parts of the region are flat, black-earth steppelands (the Abakan-Minusinsk Basin). The**

climate is continental, with the average temperatures between  $-15^{\circ}\text{C}$  and  $-21^{\circ}\text{C}$  in January, and between  $17^{\circ}\text{C}$ -- $19^{\circ}\text{C}$  in July.

The origin of the name *khakass* is in the word *hagias* -- *hjagas*, used by the Chinese for an ancient tribe in the Sayan Mountains. Historically, the Khakass have gone by several different names: the Tatars of Minusinsk, the Tatars of Abakan, the Turks of Abakan, the Turks of the Yenisey. The Khakass themselves call themselves by their own tribes, including *sagai*, *khas*, *pelyr*, *shor*, *koybal*, *hyzyl-kizhi*).

The Khakass language belongs to the Uighur-Oguz group in the eastern Hun branch of the Turkic languages. While the structure and the basic vocabulary of the Khakass language are of Turkic-Tatar origin, the language contains many loan words from the Chinese, Mongolian, and Russian languages.

The first Russians arrived in Khakassia in the seventeenth century. The Khakass Autonomous Region was established in 1930. In 1992 became an official autonomous republic in the Russian Federation.

Formerly nomadic herders, the Khakass now occupy themselves with farming, hunting, or livestock-breeding. The republic produces timber, copper, iron ore, barite, gold, molybdenum, and tungsten.

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