

## **2014 – TSUDAKHAR PEOPLE**

Looking for a classy furry hat in a bazaar in Russian cities such as Moscow or Krasnodar or Makhachkala? Ask around for the Tsudakhar Dargin men and before long you'll have the hat you're looking for. Throughout Russia many Tsudakhar men are known as hat sellers.

The Tsudakhar hail from central Dagestan at the western edge of the Dargin family of languages. Many Tsudakhar speak Dargin and Russian, but their heart identity is as Tsudakhar People; and it's the Tsudakhar oral language which they speak in their home villages in the Tsudakhar region, and when they're working together selling hats.

The Tsudakhar people—at least 20,000 total, living in eight major towns and many smaller villages—have been staunch Muslims for more than 600 years. Islam in central Dagestan is not only a religion; it also is interwoven with the structure of society. The male council of elders in each village oversees religious behavior and communal decisions. There is great pride in Islamic identity, but when conflicts emerge there is little tradition of grace and reconciliation. And, as we approach death, how can we know if we will receive uncertain grace from a stern and distant God?

Among the Tsudakhar, one person—Sef-utdin\*--has found the grace of Jesus for life now and for all eternity. A Russian friend got delivered from drunkenness through Jesus, and through this friend Sef-utdin found the joy of salvation himself. Now he wears not only a beautiful Tsudakhar Dargin hat, but also “the helmet of salvation.”

*Pray that the helmet of salvation which adorns Sef-utdin's life will spread to many more Tsudakhar hat sellers. Pray that the Fruit of the Spirit, by the grace of Jesus, will spread through many Tsudakhar lives and families and clans and villages.*

*\*--name changed*

### **Names of Tsudakhar Towns/Villages:**

1. Tsudakhar
2. Koopa
3. Telagu
4. Verkhni Arshi
5. Kare-kadani
6. Tash-kapur
7. Tarlimakhi
8. Alpati
9. Koole-bukhna
10. Ainikab
11. Verkhni Ubekimakhi