

# 10

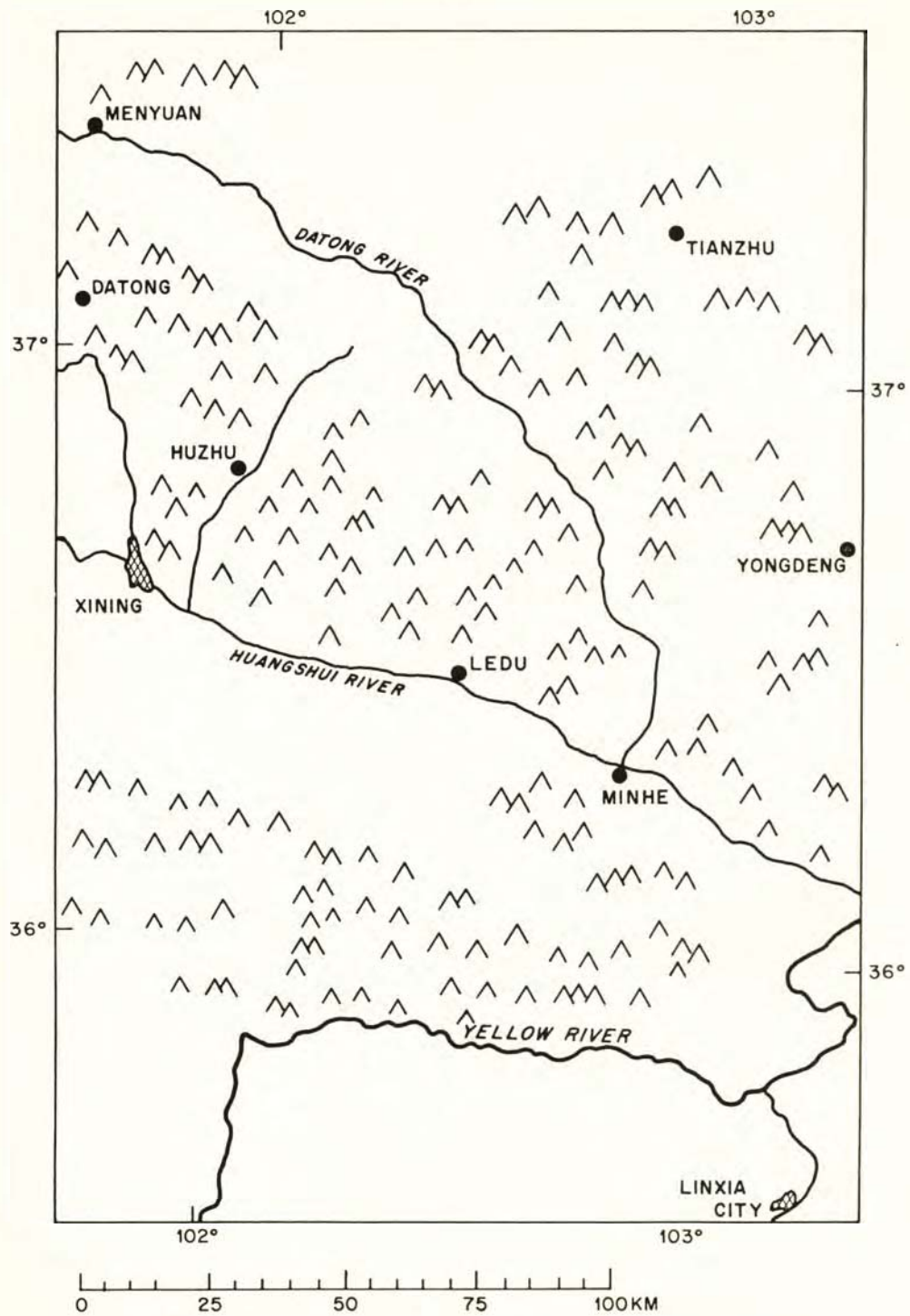
## Tu

### Size and Location

The Tu 土 live on the south slopes of the Qilian mountains on both banks of the Huangshui and Datong rivers. Numbering 159,426 in 1982,<sup>1</sup> the Tu are mainly concentrated in the Huzhu 互助 Tu autonomous county, about 45 kilometers from Xining, the capital of Qinghai province. Other Tu live in Minhe 民和 and Datong 大通 counties of Qinghai, while relatively few Tu are scattered in Ledu 乐都 and Menyuan 门源 counties of Qinghai and in the Tianzhu 天祝 Tibetan autonomous county as well as Yongdeng 永登 and Linxia 临夏 districts of Gansu province (see Map 10).<sup>2</sup>

### History<sup>3</sup>

The history of the Tu can be said to have begun in 1227 when the Mongol general Subudei occupied the area where the Tu presently live. When the Mongols arrived there, they found a few Tibetans, Uigurs and Shato groups.<sup>4</sup> During the period of the Mongol world empire, the Uigurs living in the Tu area were used as minor officials. Mongol officers and men began to intermarry with the local population almost as soon as they had arrived in the Tu area, so that by the time the Ming armies conquered the area in 1371, the beginnings of a new nationality which we now call Tu had already been made. The process, however, was by no means complete, but continued for perhaps another five hundred



Map 10. Tu

years. According to Tu clan records discovered in the early twentieth century, there were sixteen clans which in the early years of the Ming dynasty (late fourteenth century) had the following backgrounds: eight Tu (White Mongol),<sup>5</sup> five Shato, one Mongol (Black Mongol), one Turkish (i.e. Uigur), and one Chinese (Han). Roughly speaking, half of the present Tu population (leaving out differences in the size of clans) was already Tu at that time, while the other inhabitants still considered themselves members of their own original ethnic groups.

#### Language and Literature<sup>6</sup>

The Tu language belongs to the Mongolian group of the Altaic family of languages. Its two main dialects are Huzhu and Minhe. Some sixty percent of its vocabulary is basically the same as Mongolian. Tu also includes a sizeable number of Chinese loan words for secular use, while religious objects are expressed by Tibetan loan words.<sup>7</sup> There is a very small number of Turkic loan words as well. The Tu in Datong county no longer speak Tu but speak Chinese exclusively. The Tu do not have their own script but use the Chinese script instead.

The Tu call themselves Mongol, except those living in Minhe, who form a minority, where the word is pronounced Monggor.<sup>8</sup> This latter term has mistakenly been used by some Western scholars as the general name for all Tu. Because the word Monggol is the same as that for the Mongol nationality, the Tu often also call themselves Chagaan Monggol (White Mongols) and the Mongols Xara Monggol (Black Mongols).<sup>9</sup>

The Tu language has six short and five long vowels, as follows:

<u>a</u> as in <u>xana</u> 'everybody'	<u>aa</u> as in <u>xanaa</u> - 'to cough'
<u>e</u> as in <u>ken</u> 'who'	<u>ee</u> as in <u>deel</u> 'clothing'
<u>i</u> as in <u>qira</u> 'yellow'	<u>ii</u> as in <u>iiqa</u> 'too, excessive'
<u>o</u> as in <u>olə</u> - 'to get'	<u>oo</u> as in <u>ooku</u> 'fat'
<u>u</u> as in <u>unee</u> 'cow'	<u>uu</u> as in <u>uur</u> 'gas'
<u>ə</u> as in <u>kədə</u> 'several'	

The vowel ɛ is used only for Chinese loan words.

The nine diphthongs are:

<u>aii</u> as in <u>naiiman</u> 'eight'	<u>uii</u> as in <u>fuii</u> 'forest'
<u>auu</u> as in <u>dauu</u> 'song'	<u>uaa</u> as in <u>ɣuaa</u> 'to wash'
<u>əuu</u> as in <u>səuu</u> 'armpit'	<u>ue</u> as in <u>ɣdzuen</u> 'cause'
<u>ia</u> as in <u>tiag</u> 'walking stick'	<u>uai</u> as in <u>tolɣuai</u> 'head'
<u>iuu</u> as in <u>niuudur</u> 'today'	



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In addition, əii, iau, and ua are used only for Chinese loan words.  
There are twenty-three consonants:

<u>b</u> as in <u>dabdzə</u> 'salt'	<u>z</u> as in <u>zaazi</u> 'terrible'
<u>p</u> as in <u>pudee-</u> 'to envelop'	<u>ts</u> as in <u>tsənla-</u> 'to accomplish'
<u>m</u> as in <u>samla-</u> 'to comb'	<u>q</u> as in <u>qinee-</u> 'to laugh'
<u>f</u> as in <u>fungu-</u> 'to rub'	<u>j</u> as in <u>jasə</u> 'bone'
<u>v</u> as in <u>valəasə</u> 'city'	<u>dʒ</u> as in <u>tədʒin</u> 'forty'
<u>d</u> as in <u>daaldə-</u> 'to sell'	<u>tɕ</u> as in <u>tɕə</u> 'you' (sing.)
<u>t</u> as in <u>taraa</u> 'food'	<u>g</u> as in <u>gədəsə</u> 'intestines'
<u>s</u> as in <u>sala</u> 'branch'	<u>k</u> as in <u>kun</u> 'person'
<u>n</u> as in <u>nəkə-</u> 'textiles'	<u>x</u> as in <u>xamdə</u> 'together'
<u>l</u> as in <u>labdzə</u> 'leaf'	<u>ŋ</u> as in <u>ŋuaasə</u> 'body hair'
<u>r</u> as in <u>raal</u> 'river'	<u>ɕ</u> as in <u>ɕarə-</u> 'to ascend'
<u>ʂ</u> as in <u>suaida-</u> 'to fall'	

The consonants dʒ, ts, and dʒ are used only for Chinese loan words.

The Tu language is closely related to Mongolian, Enger (Eastern Yugur), Bonan, Daur, and Dongxiang in phonetics, morphology, and vocabulary. Like the Bonan and Dongxiang languages, Tu places the stress on the last syllable of words and has retained some old sounds and words from Middle Mongolian. A few examples of identical or nearly identical words in several Mongolian languages are:

Tu	Daur	Bonan	Dongxiang	Enger	Mongolian
<u>bu</u>	<u>bi</u>	<u>bə</u>	<u>bi</u>	<u>bə</u>	<u>bi</u> 'I'
<u>taavun</u>	<u>taaw</u>	<u>tavong</u>	<u>tawuan</u>	<u>taawən</u>	<u>tabun</u> 'five'
<u>ken</u>	<u>xən</u>	<u>kang</u>	<u>kien</u>	<u>ken</u>	<u>xen</u> 'who'
<u>mude-</u>	<u>mədə-</u>	<u>mədə-</u>	<u>miedzie-</u>	<u>mede-</u>	<u>mede-</u> 'to know'
<u>kəle-</u>	<u>xəl-</u>	<u>kal-</u>	<u>kielie-</u>	---	<u>xele-</u> 'to speak'

The Tu language preserves certain features of Middle Mongolian of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, like initial h or its altered form f, final n, final vowel or altered form. Examples are:

Tu	Script Mongolian	Middle Mongolian	Mod. Mong.	
<u>fulaan</u>	<u>ulagan</u>	<u>hulayan</u>	<u>ulaan</u>	'red'
<u>xalga</u>	<u>alga</u>	<u>halaga</u>	<u>alga</u>	'palm of hand'

Tu

<u>ula</u>	<u>agula</u>	<u>ayula</u>	<u>uul</u>	'mountain'
<u>najan</u>	<u>naya(n)</u>	<u>nayan</u>	<u>nayan</u>	'eighty'

It also preserves l in the final syllable, e.g.

Tu	Middle Mongolian ( <u>Secret History of the Mongols</u> )	Modern Mongolian	
<u>tqaaldza</u>	<u>čayalsun</u>	<u>čaas</u>	'paper'
<u>moldza</u>	<u>mölsün</u>	<u>mös</u>	'ice'
<u>səuuldza</u>	<u>sülsü</u>	<u>sös</u>	'gall bladder'; 'courage'

Some Tu words dropped their initial vowel, which is different both from Script Mongolian and Modern Mongolian, such as

Tu	Script Mongolian	Modern Mongolian	
<u>ne</u>	<u>ene</u>	<u>ene</u>	'this'
<u>vesə</u>	<u>ebesü(n)</u>	<u>öbs</u>	'grass'
<u>sagə-</u>	<u>asagu-</u>	<u>asuu-</u>	'to ask'

Most Tu words of Mongolian origin still retain the same meaning as in Mongolian, but in several cases the meaning has changed somewhat. Some Tu words have acquired extended meanings, e.g., Mongolian aralj- and Tu raaldzə- mean 'to exchange', but the Tu word can also mean 'to lose (hair)' and 'to change (name)'. The Mongolian verb xeel- refers to the making of pig sounds, but the corresponding Tu verb xaiila- refers to the sounds of virtually all animals the Tu are familiar with. On the other hand, some Tu words have narrower meanings than their Mongolian equivalents. Tu tarə- means only 'to sow' but Mongolian tar- also means 'to disperse', 'to scatter', and 'to be separated'. In other cases, Tu and Mongolian words have somewhat related meanings, e.g. Tu raal 'river' and Mong. aral 'bay, island'; Tu gee-, 'to let go', and Mong. gee- 'to drop, to lose'; Tu gol 'ditch' and Mong. gol 'river'. The Tu language has also retained some words that are no longer found in Mongolian. Middle Mongolian (as in the Secret History of the Mongols) hayul- and Tu xauulə- 'to speed'; Middle Mongolian bayi- and Tu baii- 'to erect'.

The Tu language has two dialects, Huzhu and Minhe, with relatively large differences between them in phonology, vocabulary and grammar. The main differences are, first, presence of long vowels in Huzhu and their absence in

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Minhe, as in taada and tada 'near', fuuda and xuda 'pocket'; toos and tusə 'oil'; and deel and der 'clothing'. Second Huzhu x and f are pronounced q and x, respectively, in Minhe. Examples are:

Huzhu	Minhe	
<u>xuraa</u>	<u>qura</u>	'rain'
<u>xalong</u>	<u>galung</u>	'hot'
<u>xoolo</u>	<u>golo</u>	'throat'
<u>fulaan</u>	<u>xulang</u>	'red'
<u>fune</u>	<u>xuni</u>	'smoke'
<u>foodə</u>	<u>xotu</u>	'star'

Third, Huzhu final l is pronounced r in Minhe, as in gal and gar 'fire', and xargal and xargar 'turd'. Fourth, Huzhu has more Tibetan loan words whereas Minhe has more Chinese loan words. Fifth, the plural suffix in Huzhu is -nggula or -sge but is -sə in Minhe, e.g. diuunggula or diuusge and diausə, 'younger brothers', and gernggula or gersge and gersə, 'houses'.

The Tu have a rich heritage of oral literature. Songs relating the creation myths occupy a major place in their repertoire. One cycle of songs called honi, tells of the creation of the sheep (< Mongol honi 'sheep') and also of several other animals.<sup>10</sup> The preeminent saga of the origin of man and the universe is the Geser epic, also popular among the Mongols, Tibetans, and several other nationalities.<sup>11</sup> The myth of the creation of plants is told in the tale šdie udurni udurde 'In the days of antiquity'.<sup>12</sup> It is also known as "Laremba and Qumenso," the chief hero and heroine of the story, and is often sung by a man and woman at weddings.<sup>13</sup> The Tu call this kind of song ulaan duu, 'mountain song.'

Another favorite of oral literature deals with Mangus, the monster that devours humans and animals. Similar tales are also found in other parts of Asia.<sup>14</sup> Another literary type is the riddle song which, like the mountain song, is sung alternately by two persons. Each riddle song is structured into three parts. Some involve three countries (Tibet, the Tu country, and China), three birds (parrot, peacock and cuckoo) or three stages of various economic activities, like farming, liquor making, and weaving.<sup>15</sup>

### Society<sup>16</sup>

The Tu family has traditionally been patrilineal, extended, and patrilocal and was the collective owner of all assets of its members. Several families comprised a clan which, since the early Ming dynasty, was headed by a tusi 土司 who was appointed by the Chinese central government.<sup>17</sup> Although



we do not have complete records, it is possible that the first tusi were appointed on the basis of their having already been clan leaders, and that the Ming government merely renamed an old institution. We do know that in several cases families of tusi traced their ancestry to the Mongol imperial clan of Borjigid. The tusi was the ultimate owner of his clan's territory, a custom that apparently had been preserved from the nomadic, pre-Ming period. In practice, however, each family, as already noted, enjoyed all the privileges and obligations of ownership, even though the tusi merely granted them their land in perpetuity. Another custom surviving from nomadic days was the method of taxation which was not by land, as among the Chinese, but by the number of persons in each family. Besides taxes, the tusi also received from all commoners, but not nobles, *corvée* labor and military service.



Illus. 19. Tu Costumes

Marriage was arranged and exogamous. The latter practice, while strictly observed among the nobility, was often ignored among the commoners. While the great majority of marriages followed the normal custom of the bride moving in with her husband's family, there were two special kinds of marriage which apparently were borrowed from the neighboring Tibetans. One was called the "marriage to the pole" by which a girl stayed with her family, took in lovers and

bore children. Her offspring took her family's name and were treated as equals in the matter of inheritance. The other practice was "marriage to the girdle" where the girl, staying with her family, slept with a guest who upon departure left his girdle behind. In case the girl became pregnant, she could get "married" to the girdle.

At the birth of a child the room in which it was born immediately became off limits to all men. The mother and child would stay confined to that room for a whole month, and only the closest female relatives were permitted to enter. Above the entrance a cypress bough or a ball of wool would be hung. During the first month most people except the closest family members were also barred from entering the courtyard. On the third day after birth the father went to the home of his wife's parents to announce the birth. On the seventh day he would visit a lama of the Red Hat sect and ask him to tell his child's fortune. On the twentieth day the child's head was shaved and the father would pay a second visit to his wife's parents. At the end of the month a kind of coming-out party was held for the child, which was attended by the parents of both husband and wife as well as by guests. Before the guests arrived the mother would ask the child's paternal grandfather to give the child a name. This celebration was held on the twenty-ninth day for a boy or on the thirtieth for a girl. Children were often named after Buddhist deities or given auspicious names like Courage, Tiger, and Prosperity. In families with few children or where several children had already died, a child was sometimes dedicated to a particular shamanistic spirit, obviously to protect him from evil spirits. When the child reached the age of about thirteen, another shamanistic ceremony, called the festival of release, was celebrated.

Burial customs among the Tu have undergone great changes over the past fifty years. In the past most adults were interred and only lamas received cremation. Children were given "sky burial," a practice harking back to the nomadic days, whereby the child's corpse was placed on a wooden platform high up in a tree. This custom was still practiced in some communities as late as the 1950s. The Tu of Minhe county also continued, some to this day, to bury dead adults by interment, but most other Tu now practice cremation, thereby following the prevailing custom among the Han.<sup>18</sup>

### Religion<sup>19</sup>

The predominant religion among the Tu was Tibetan Buddhism, or Lamaism, but the older shamanism was also very popular as late as the twentieth century. Lamaist monasteries were found in almost every valley in the Tu region while there was not a single structure belonging to the shamans. The lamas outnumbered shamans perhaps a hundred to one and were extremely wealthy



while the handful of shamans eked out a precarious existence as farmers.

Lamaism did not reach the area where the Tu presently live until 630 to 650, and it took centuries before it began to exert a pervasive influence among the population. During the time of the Mongol world empire, Buddhism received official support from Hubilai Han. The Mongol troops who entered the area found it almost devoid of people. Some members of a Turkic group, called Shato, joined the conquerors, as did a handful of Tibetans.

Most of the Buddhist monks in the Tu region belonged to the Yellow Hat Sect, and all forty-two monasteries and branches belonged to this sect. Members of the older Red Hat sect lived with their families in villages. The monasteries were independent of Lhasa, and within a monastery each of its various major institutions had much autonomy.

A monastery derived its income from various sources. The oldest sources were domains from which it collected tax and rent. Some of these domains were quite extensive. The Tuguan Living Buddha, for example, established seven villages on his domains.<sup>20</sup> Herds of sheep, cows, and horses constituted another form of income. These animals were mostly kept in Mongolia and the region around Höhnuur (Kokonor) and every three years a monastery inspector came to check the herders' accounts and to collect the income.

Oil and grain mills provided another large source of revenue for the monasteries. The typical annual lease price for one oil mill was 300 pounds of oil, and a grain miller had to pay a pig weighing a minimum of 120 pounds. The oil that was not consumed for food or lamps was shipped to Lanzhou and sold there. Other, less important sources of income included forests and bridge tolls, and the collection of alms outside the Tu region. For example, in 1914 the Tuguan Living Buddha went to the Yugur region in Gansu and collected 124 cows, 146 horses, 90 sheep, and 2,000 taels. Although after 1723 the Chinese government forbade monasteries to collect taxes for their own use, lamas devised ways to extract a portion of taxes from their subjects before passing on the legal amount to government collectors. The most important source of monastic income was, however, money lending. The monks charged the same rate, thirty percent and sometimes higher, as Chinese money lenders, but while the latter were often compelled to write off parts of outstanding loans, the Buddhist monks had the reputation of extracting full payment at all costs.

The social position of the shamans among the Tu was the same as that of commoners. Although every village had at least one shaman, he was not necessarily exclusively consulted by his fellow villagers. It was quite common for a village to invite a shaman from another village. Unlike the Buddhist monks, no institution or guild bound the shamans together. Generally, a shaman inherited his position. In fact, the Tu felt so strongly about the need to perpetuate the tradition of shaman status in certain families that a shaman

without a son was obliged to find his successor among his brothers' sons. There were white (i.e. good) and black (evil) shamans, the latter being used for purposes of revenge. Some shamans were considered disciples of the Taoist god of the five roads, an indication of the Chinese influence among the Tu. More important, however, were the disciples of the twelve tengris (heavenly spirits), a tradition that clearly had its origins on the Mongolian steppes.

The Tu also had another, quasi-religious type of person, called the kurtain.<sup>21</sup> Anyone, regardless of age or family, could become a kurtain after he became possessed by one of several Taoist spirits. Usually this happened in youth, and the spirit generally would leave a kurtain when he reached an advanced age. The position of kurtain was never passed on from father to son. Moreover, before a person could be recognized as a kurtain, he had to pass a rigorous examination in an open assembly presided over by the abbot of the local monastery. If a person failed the test, his reputation in his village was forever ruined, and he could never hope to become a kurtain for the rest of his life.

#### Recent Developments<sup>22</sup>

The Huzhu district was peacefully occupied by Communist troops in September 1949. Soon thereafter land reform and agricultural reorganization commenced which at first exempted the large holdings of the numerous Buddhist monasteries. By 1958, however, all land was brought under the communes being organized among the Tu as everywhere else.

The Huzhu Tu autonomous county was established on February 17, 1954, and in the same year several Tu townships were also created in other parts of Gansu. At that time the Tu accounted only for 13.5 percent of the county's population, and although no more recent figures are available, I estimate the Tu share to be even lower today. In contrast to their low percentage in the total population, but entirely consonant with central nationalities policies, one finds disproportionately large numbers of Tu in various government (as distinct from party) posts. As early as the establishment of the Huzhu autonomous county in 1954, nineteen percent of the membership of the first People's Congress and forty-two percent of the county government were Tu. By the end of the 1970s, more than 1,200 Tu cadres were reported at various levels of government. In addition, there are some Tu in the Qinghai provincial government and in the National People's Congress.

The Huzhu autonomous county has also experienced considerable development in the fields of education and health care as well as in the economy. Roads and telephones are now found in all parts of the county. In 1951 a liquor factory was built which has produced the Huzhu baijiu, a vodka-like liquid which is well known in many parts of Qinghai. Additional plants were built



in 1957 for generating electric power and grinding flour, which were later joined by factories for cement, soap, coke, and bricks.

# Notes

<sup>1</sup>Minzu yanjiu 23 (1983), 80. In 1973, the Tu population stood at 100,000. See Jiankuang, v. 5, 28.

<sup>2</sup>Zhaonast 1981 1.

<sup>3</sup>Adapted from Jiankuang, v. 5, 29, and Schram, Monguors, v. 1.

<sup>4</sup>The Uigurs had fled there from the Hexi Corridor of Gansu around 1036 in order to escape domination by the Tangut state of Xixia. The Shato had been part of the Western Turk federation. When the latter came to an end in the 630s, some Shato moved east, first to the Hexi Corridor, then, perhaps around 900, to the present Tu area in eastern Qinghai.

<sup>5</sup>For the distinction between Black and White Mongols, see the Language section below.

<sup>6</sup>Linguistic information is taken mainly from Zhaonast 1981.

<sup>7</sup>The most extensive treatment of this subject is by Róna-Tas 1966.

<sup>8</sup>Schröder makes the same point in his Volksdichtung, v. 1, 18.

<sup>9</sup>Jiankuang, v. 5, 28-29.

<sup>10</sup>Nineteen honi songs in transliteration and German translation are in Schröder 1959, 21-68.

<sup>11</sup>Published in manuscript form in Geser Rēdzia-wu.

<sup>12</sup>See Schröder 1970.

<sup>13</sup>Zhongguo, 153.

<sup>14</sup>Schröder 1959, 69-127.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid, 146-174.

<sup>16</sup>Adapted from Schram, Monguors, v. 1, 41-103, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>17</sup>For an interesting discussion of the origins of Tu clan names and their changes to Chinese-style names, see the article by Li.

<sup>18</sup>Zhongguo, 152.

<sup>19</sup>Jiankuang, v. 5, 33, Zhongguo, 152, and Schram, Monguors, v. 2.

<sup>20</sup>The Tuguan Living Buddha was the head of the largest monastery in the Tu area, called Youning 佑宁, also known as Erguolong 尔郭隆 and, in Tibetan, dGon-luñ.

<sup>21</sup>Schröder 1959, 10 ff., calls this person gurtum.

<sup>22</sup>Zhongguo, 149-151.