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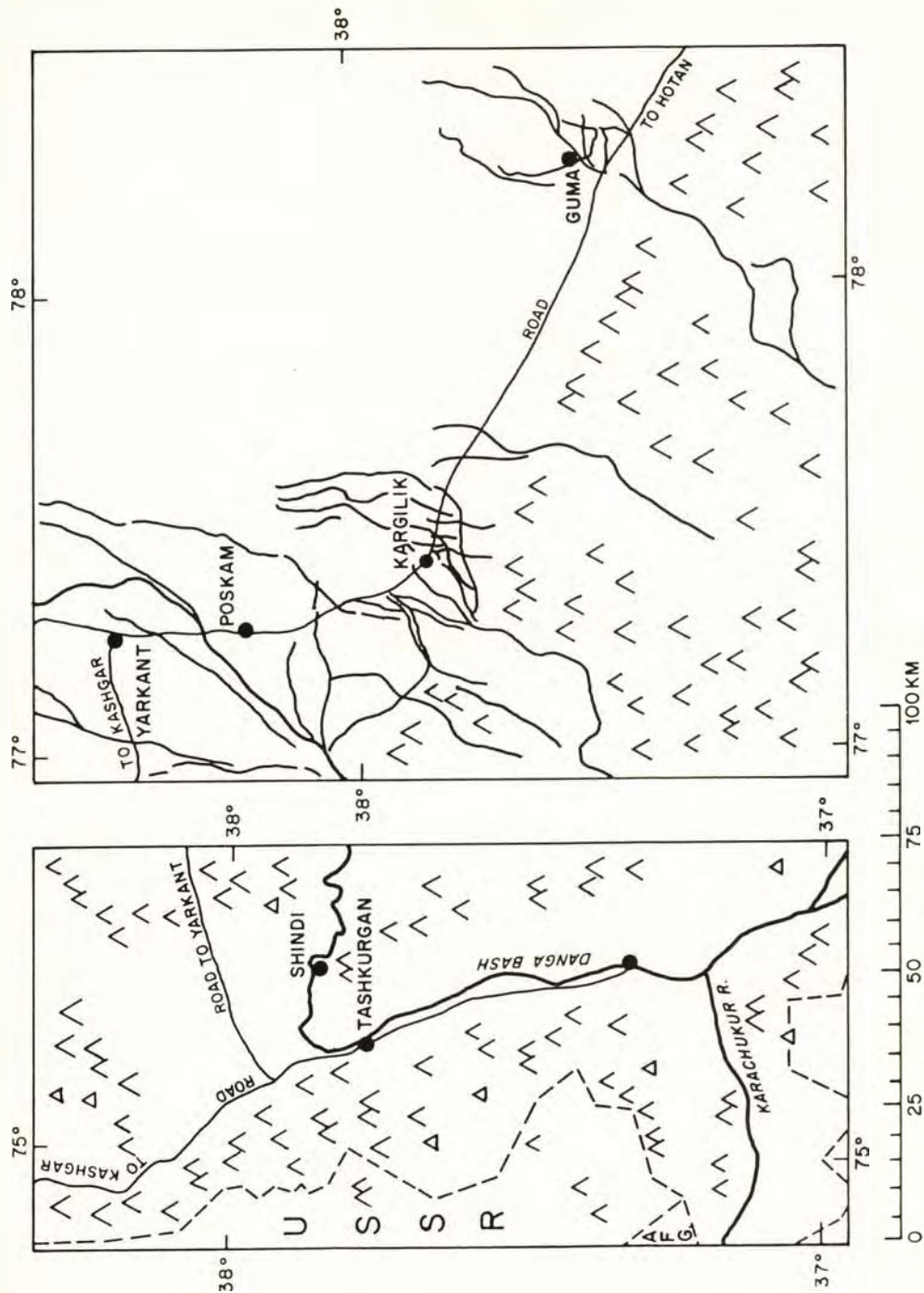
Tajik

Size and Location

China's Tajiks 塔吉克 live in the southwestern corner of Xinjiang. Sixty percent are concentrated in the Tashkurgan (Stone Town) Tajik autonomous county on the Pamir plateau. In 1958 88.4 percent of its population was Tajik, the rest being Uigur, Kirgiz, Han, and Sibe.¹ Recent migration of other nationalities, especially of the Han, reduced the Tajiks' share to slightly over eighty percent by 1982, although the total Tajik population increased from 15,000 to 26,503.² Smaller groups of Tajiks live in the neighboring districts of Yarkant, Poskam, Kargilik, and Guma (see Map 20.).³ Other Tajiks live in Afghanistan and the Soviet Union, particularly in the Tajikistan SSR.

History

In the second and third centuries the area of the Pamirs where the Tajiks presently live began to be ruled by a state called Hepant 竭盘陀 (East Iranian: Mountain Road). Hepant seems to have had a history of about 500 years and reached the peak of its power during the Nanbeichao period (420-589). Historical records mention a capital with a circumference of five kilometers and twelve other towns. A place in the southern part of Tashkurgan, called Kezikurgan (Princess Town)⁴ could be the site of the former Hepant capital. That state had more than ten Buddhist temples with a total of about 500 priests, making it an important center of Theravada Buddhism.



Map 20. Tajik

Tajik

The word Tajik first appeared in the eleventh century and was used to refer to all Iranian-speaking Islamic nomadic tribes in that part of Central Asia.⁵ In later times the term became more restricted to its present use in the eastern Pamirs.⁶ The ancestors of most Tajiks presently living in Tashkurgan are believed to have migrated from Wakhan at some undetermined time.⁷

Language and Literature⁸

The Tajik language belongs to the eastern branch of the Iranian group of the Indo-European family of languages. Most Tajik in China speak the Sarikol language,⁹ while a much smaller group speaks the Wakhan language, a closely related Pamir language mostly spoken in the western part of the Pamirs, a region nominally controlled by Afghanistan.

The Tajik language has seven vowels, as follows:

i as in iʃ 'cold'
e as in pet 'round'
a as in maʃ 'we'
u as in dud 'uncle'

u as in utʃ 'very'
o as in nodz 'nose'
ə as in xəʃ 'goodbye'

The nine diphthongs are:

iu as in iu 'one'
eu as in neu 'nine'
ʷu as in kʷtʷu 'mountain cave'
əu as in təu 'you' (sing.)
ɛi as in tɛi 'wedding'

ai as in nai 'not'
ui as in dʒui 'place'
wi as in xwi 'temperament'
oi as in boi 'rich'

There are thirty consonants:

b as in xeb 'yesterday'
p as in pond 'road'
m as in mom 'grandmother'
w as in mewo 'fruit'
v as in vurdʒ 'horse'
f as in taklif 'to invite'
ʒ as in ʒes 'ten'
θ as in θwm 'hot'
dz as in pindz 'five'
ts as in tsavur 'four'
z as in puz 'chest'
s as in seʒ 'today'

l as in mul 'livestock'
r as in tor 'black'
dʒ as in dʒald 'quick'
tʃ as in tʃog 'knife'
ʒ as in kaʒ 'stubborn'
ʃ as in ʃer 'donkey'
j as in jax 'sisters'
g as in puʒan 'tomorrow'
k as in kol 'head'
ɣ as in joʷdz 'flour'
x as in xats 'water'
q as in qand 'sugar'

d as in tred 'room'

t as in tamar 'you' (pl.)

n as in mon 'apple'

ε as in suεε 'even, level'

χ as in maχ 'nail'

h as in inhum 'prize'

Stress usually is on the last syllable, but there are some exceptions, such as flu 'together' and χubaθ 'self'. Suffixes do not carry stress.

Many Tajiks are also able to converse in Uigur and Kirgiz, especially since better roads have improved transportation between the Pamirs and the major cities of Southern Xinjiang. As one would expect, the use of Chinese has also been increasing among the Tajiks. The Tajiks do not have their own script but use the Uigur script. The younger people also write in Chinese.

The most important form of literature is the folksong, ranging from two to more than ten lines per stanza, with the majority having four lines. One of the most popular traditional songs is "Mukamu."¹⁰

Religion

Islam came to the Tajik area and the rest of western Xinjiang in the late tenth century. In the beginning the Tajiks were members of the Sunni sect, but in the early eighteenth century they switched to the Ismail sect of Shiite Islam.¹¹ As Ismailites, the Tajiks have no mosques. Instead, they meet about once a week for prayer, conversation, and music. These meetings are presided over by the pir who is assisted by several khalifs.¹² The Tajiks also preserve some older forms of animism. They use amulets to ward off evil spirits which they believe live in various natural objects. Amulets consist of small bits of paper, with some writing by the pir, wrapped up in cloth or placed in a small box which is worn around the neck.¹³ Another vestige of pre-Islamic belief is the ostun, piles of rocks found along the paths in the Pamirs. These are quite similar to the Mongolian oboo. Believers place a rock on the pile, sometimes also a branch, and pour oil and flour on it.¹⁴

Society

The average household includes members of three generations. The eldest male presides over the family. In the past women had no inheritance rights and were strictly controlled by their husbands and fathers-in-law. They rarely married non-Tajiks, except occasionally Kirgiz and Uigurs.

Marriages were arranged. Once a marriage had been agreed to, the boy's family sent to the girl's family gold, silver, animals, and clothing as gifts. It was not uncommon to see seven-year old grooms and ten-year old brides.¹⁵ Weddings took place at the bride's home and were presided over by a pir. First those in attendance sprinkled some flour on the couple who then exchanged rings to which

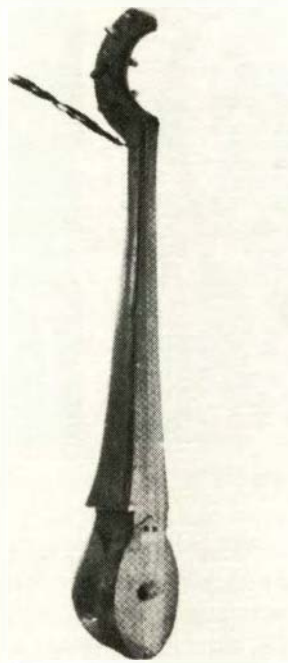
Tajik

were attached white and red cloth strips. Next the couple was asked to eat some meat and crusty pancake and drink some water. On the second day of the wedding to the strains of musical accompaniment, the couple mounted a horse and rode off to the groom's family. There the celebrations continued, usually until the third day. Finally, the bride took off her veil and the wedding ceremony was over.¹⁶

When a boy was born, three rounds were fired off or the men would shout three times, hoping that the boy would turn into a brave and strong man. When a girl was born, a toy broom was placed below her head to insure that she would become a good housekeeper. As during weddings, babies were sprinkled with flour.

Aside from family festivities, the two most important festivals are New Year's and the spring festival. On New Year's Day Tajiks eat hard-boiled eggs, brightly colored in red, blue, and yellow. At the time of the spring festival, families bake two different kinds of bread and prepare wheat porridge. Then they take it out to the fields to eat it and afterwards plow two or three rows. Small figures made of dough are fed to the draft animals, and dabs of porridge are smeared on their foreheads as well as on the four posts in the kitchen.¹⁷

Musical instruments are quite similar to those used in neighboring Kashgar and Afghanistan.¹⁸ A favorite instrument is the balazkum (see Illustration 40),



Illus. 40. Balazkum

played with a wooden plectrum. Another, now rather rarely seen, instrument is the seven-string tambur. Other Tajik instruments are derived from similar instruments used by the Uigurs and include the satar, with six brass strings, the tambourine-like dap, and the surme, a kind of recorder.¹⁹

The Tajiks have several extremely popular dances. In the sword dance one person holds a sword in his hand and rotates rapidly. The stick dance involves two dancers, each holding a stick in his hand, which he brings into contact with his partner's stick during certain intervals. The spoon dance involves one performer who holds a pair of wooden spoons in each hand and works them like castagnets. At the same time he plays charades with his audience, mimicking daily activities like hunting and herding. In the horse dance a dancer "rides" a "horse" made of a broomstick, which he feeds and beats until it dies (see Illustration 41). There are also the cock dance, the camel dance, the bird dance and the devil's dance (Illustration 42).



Illus. 41. Horse Dance (1914)



Illus. 42. Devil's Dance (1914)

The Tajiks live in houses built of wood and stone, with square flat roofs. Walls are built of stone and sod, and doors are found on the east side of buildings, close to one corner. There is a hole in the roof for ventilation. Most families also have an animal pen and kitchen building, all of them enclosed by a stone wall (Illustration 43). Some of the larger families also have a guest house and a



Illus. 43. Typical Tajik House (1914)

cart shed. Because of strong winds and snow drifts in the Pamirs, houses are roomy inside but rather low so that in winter the houses get completely covered by snow which reduces the amount of fuel needed to heat the houses adequately. Inside the residence all four sides are taken up by kangs, raised platforms made of adobe and heated by flues. Adults, guests, and the younger generation sit and sleep separately. The kangs are covered with rugs on which people sit. A stove is located opposite the entrance, and behind it is a small storage room for butter, meat, dried fruit, and other foods.

In early summer the herders lead their animals to their summer pastures higher up in the mountains and stay there until the first sign of the approaching winter. During that time they live in felt tents or adobe shelters.²⁰

Men wear a collarless, long-sleeved outer garment which reaches down to the knees and is tied with a belt (see Illustration 44). In cold weather a sheepskin overcoat is added. The principal headgear is a round lambskin hat lined with black velvet. Its top is embroidered and has ear flaps. Women wear dresses and embroidered hats with a veil hanging down in back. When going out women place a piece of cloth on top of their hat. This cloth is usually white, except for newly married women who prefer red. Ornaments worn by women include brooches, earrings, necklaces, hairpins and rings made of silver (see Illustration 45).²¹ Both men and women wear felt or woolen stockings (see Illustration 46) and

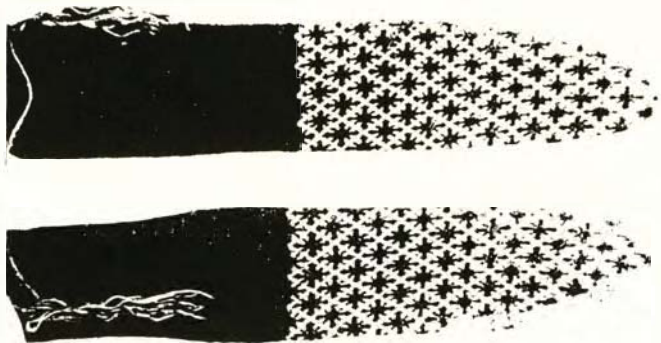


Illus. 44. Traditional Tajik Costumes



Illus. 45. Tajik Jewelry

Tajik



Illus. 46. Tajik Socks



Illus. 47. Tajik Clogs

sheepskin kneeboots.²² When working around the house Tajiks often wear a kind of wooden clog with about 10-cm high stilts, somewhat reminiscent of Japanese geta (see Illustration 47).²³

Tajiks are fond of lapsha, a kind of pea or bean soup, and dairy products, especially butter, yoghurt, and cottage cheese. Their favorite drink is milk tea but kumiss, greatly favored by the neighboring Kirgiz, is not very popular among the Tajiks. They also eat a wide variety of meats, especially mutton and mountain goat,²⁴ but they do not touch pork, dog meat, and meat of animals that were not slaughtered.²⁵

Recent Developments²⁶

The Tashkurgan area was taken over by the Communist army in December 1949. After much preparatory work Puli 蒲犁 county was converted into the Tashkurgan Tajik autonomous county on September 17, 1954. Since then the county has registered material progress in several fields. In early 1950 food production was slightly over one million jin (585,000 kilograms) or about 55 kilograms per capita. By 1960 the area had become, we are told, self-sufficient in food and fodder, but no absolute figures are available. The main crops are highland barley, peas, and wheat. After spring planting farmers become herders, taking their animals to highland pastures. In the fall they lead the animals down again and harvest their crops.²⁷ As a sideline, Tajiks also engage in hunting mountain goats and trapping marten.²⁸

A modest degree of industrialization has also taken place. While the county had no manufacturing at all in 1950, it now boasts ten small shops which make farming and herding implements. There is also a tanning shop and a hydroelectric generating station. Most townships have veterinary stations, and about half of them use tractors. A new strain of sheep, the so-called Dunbash sheep, has been introduced. It is a fat-tailed sheep which grows fast and can reach a weight over 100 kilograms.

Transportation has been greatly improved. Before 1950 a trip from Tashkurgan to Kashgar would take half a month by camel and six to seven days by horse. After the army completed an all-weather road in 1958 travel greatly speeded up, but no actual times have been published. A trip by jeep probably takes about two days. The county seat has stores, a school, a bank, a post office, a hospital, a book store, and a meteorological station. Some townships also have elementary schools.

Notes

¹Jiankuang, v. 3, 26. In 1909 the Tajik population of Tashkurgan was estimated at 570 households with about 3,000 persons. Schultz, 87.

²The latter figure is based on the 1982 census. See Minzu yanjiu 23 (1983), 81.

³Zhongguo, 230.

⁴This site was already commented on some eighty years ago by foreign travelers. See, e.g., Schultz, 64.

⁵According to Tajik folklore, the name Tajik means "royal crown." Jiankuang, v. 3, 27.

⁶Zhongguo, 232-233.

⁷Schultz, 21.

⁸Linguistic information is based on Gao.

⁹The most complete treatment of the Sarikol dialect is by Pakhalina.

¹⁰Zuopin xuan, v. 2, 394.

¹¹Zhongguo, 235.

¹²Schultz, 65.

¹³Op. cit., 66-67.

¹⁴Op. cit., 68.

¹⁵Op. cit., 71.

¹⁶Zhongguo, 231. For more details of Tajik weddings, see Schultz, 72-75.

¹⁷Schultz, 76-77.

¹⁸Additional information on musical instruments and dances can be found in Schultz, 71-84.

¹⁹See Illustration 1 in the chapter on the Uigurs.

²⁰Zhongguo, 231.

²¹Schultz, 47.

²²Zhongguo, 231.

²³Schultz, 35.

²⁴Op. cit., 32.

²⁵Zhongguo, 231.

²⁶Unless otherwise noted, information for this section has been taken from Zhongguo, 236.

²⁷Zhongguo, 231.

²⁸Schultz, 43.