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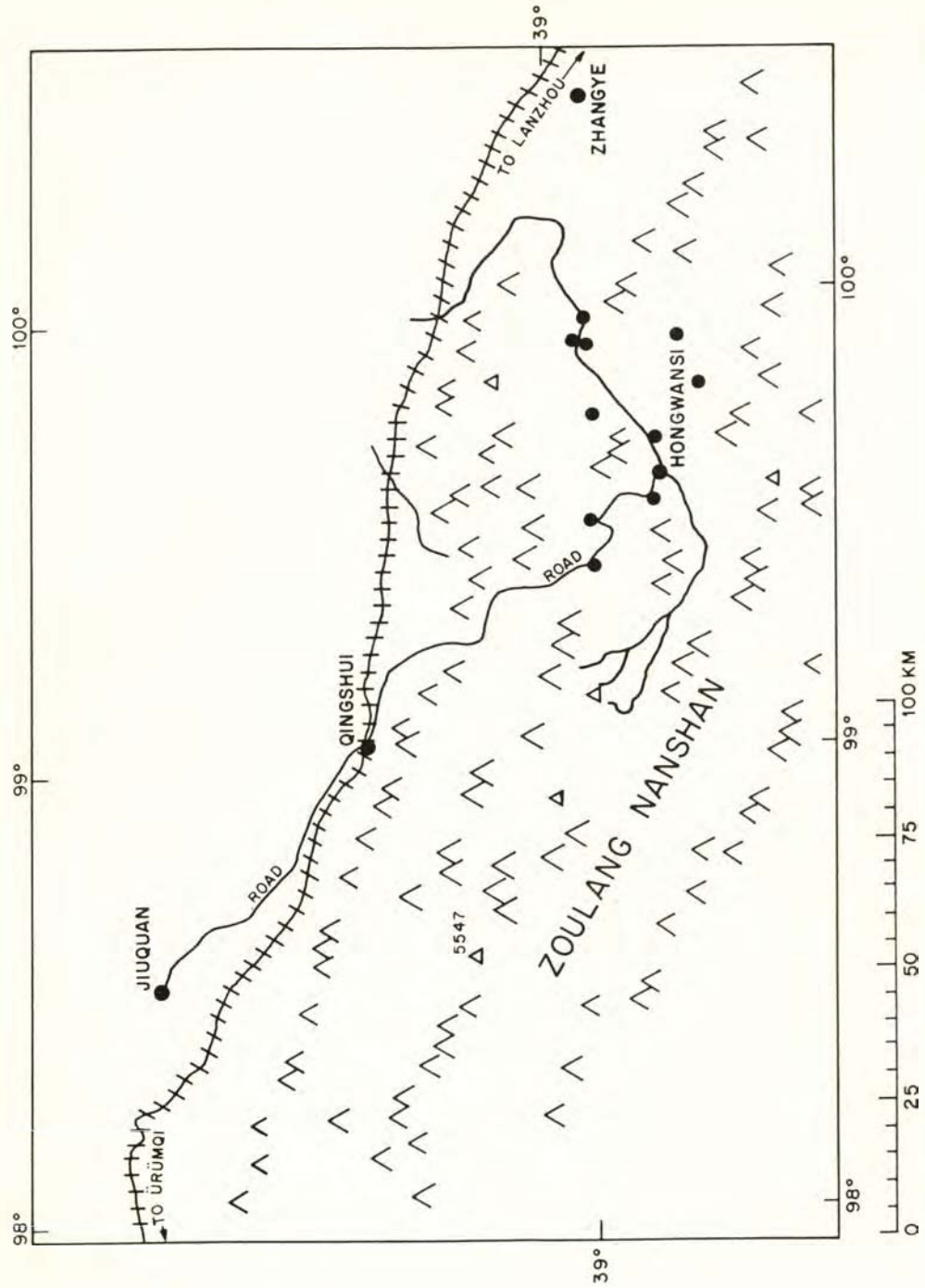
Yugur

Size and Location

In the central portion of Gansu's Hexi Corridor lives one of China's smaller nationalities. Numbering a mere 10,569 persons in 1982,¹ the Yugurs 裕固 are, linguistically, extraordinarily complex. Close to 90 percent of them live in the Sunan 肃南 Yugur autonomous county while the remainder lives in the Huangnibao 黄泥堡 township of Jiuguan 酒泉 city (see Map 6).²

History³

The Yugurs' historical roots reach back to the Uigurs of the Orkhon valley. In the mid-ninth century, heavy snowfall, combined with an attack by the forest-dwelling Kirgiz from the north, forced the Uigurs to flee their Mongolian homeland. A portion of them moved to Guazhou 瓜州 (modern Dunhuang 敦煌), Ganzhou 甘州 (modern Zhangye 张掖), and Liangzhou 凉州 (modern Wuwei 武威), where they came under Tibetan (Tufan) control and became known as the Hexi Huihu 河西回鹘. In 851 a Chinese in Shazhou 沙州 by the name of Zhang Yichao 张义潮 took advantage of the succession war that had been raging among the Tibetans since 842 and led the people of various nationalities in Shazhou in a revolt which then spread to eleven prefectures, including Gua, Yin 伊, Su, and Gan. For the next twenty years the Hexi Huihu were under Zhang Yichao's control, but when Zhang died in 872, the Huihu conquered the city of Ganzhou and established their own khanate which came to



Map 6. Yugur

exert considerable power in the region. Consequently they became known as the Ganzhou Huihu.

Tibetan military power began to wane by the tenth century but the Ganzhou Huihu continued to grow in strength. They gradually gained control over Lanzhou and Hezhou and thus control over the sole link between the weakening Tang dynasty and Central Asia. Finally, the Ganzhou Huihu defeated the Chinese administrations in Shazhou and Guazhou and added them to their own territory. With these last conquests, the Ganzhou Huihu's political power extended along the entire Hexi corridor. The main Huihu population centers were around Guazhou, Shazhou, Liangzhou, Helanshan 贺兰山, Qinzhou 秦州, Heluochuan 合罗川, and Suzhou. The state was headed by a khagan who was assisted by a prime minister, secretaries and other officers, some of whom were Chinese. Below the central administration, however, the various clusters of Huihu population enjoyed considerable autonomy, each of which was led by a headman.

In the early eleventh century, the Tangut state of Xixia 西夏 started a war with the Hexi Huihu and conquered Ganzhou in 1028. When the Tanguts started to resettle some Huihu, the remainder fled westward beyond the Great Wall at Jiayuguan 嘉峪关 to take up herding. Shortly after this move, in 1073, the Huihu reportedly numbered more than 300,000 persons. Although we do not know how many Huihu had lived in the former Huihu khanate, the figure of 300,000 is quite substantial, especially for a herding society. We may, therefore, be justified in surmising that neither their exodus nor the living conditions in their new environment had any major adverse impact on them. The apparently slight control of the Tanguts over the Huihu was removed sometime between 1209 and 1226 when the Mongols destroyed the Xixia state and assumed control over the Huihu. It is thought that between 1241 and 1246 Godan was placed in charge of a province which included the present-day Sunan autonomous county.⁴

The period from the mid-eleventh century to the sixteenth century is of decisive importance in the history of this nationality. It was then that the Huihu continuously interacted with neighboring nationalities. While some Huihu were absorbed by other nationalities, most of them were gradually transformed into a new and distinct nationality which today we call Yugur. Extant historical records, like the *Yuan shi* and *Ming shi*, call the Yugur Shari Yugur, meaning Yellow Uigur.

As the Yuan court retired to Mongolia and the Ming dynasty took over China, the local rulers of Turfan and Hami, and the Oirats engaged in protracted warfare among themselves. Eventually the Ming established a precarious foothold in the border regions and *pari passu* brought the Yugurs under the control of some commanderies (*wei*). Before too long, however, these commanderies came under attack by Turfan and were eventually destroyed.

Some of the people living under these commanderies, including the Yugurs, then decided to seek greater security inside the Great Wall. Consequently, the Yugurs moved eastward and settled in the areas of Sunan and Huangnibao near Jiuquan. The Yugur legends still speak of this trek from the Western Region.⁵ At the time of their move all Yugurs were still practicing herding and hunting. Later those who settled in the Huangnibao area began to farm and gave up hunting and herding entirely, while the Yugurs in the Sunan area retained their former way of life. Of the three tribes living in the latter area, the Nemans, who lived at higher elevations, kept Tibetan oxen, sheep, goats, horses, and a cross between a Tibetan and Chinese ox at least until the 1930s. The two lower tribes kept fewer Tibetan sheep and goats but more Chinese oxen and camels. One noteworthy feature, not found among the Enger (see next section), was the animal pen which was encircled by a one-meter high adobe wall.⁶

Language and Literature

Those Yugurs living in the Dahe 大河 and Minghua 明花 districts, in the western part of Sunan county, speak Yohur 尧乎尔, a language belonging to the Turkic group.⁷ Yugurs living in the same county's eastern part, specifically in Kangle 康乐, Hongshiwo 江石窝, and Qinglong 青龙 townships of Kangle district and Beitan 北滩 and Dongtan 东滩 townships of Huangcheng 皇城 district, speak Enger 恩格尔, a Mongolian language. Both languages are officially called Yugur. A third group of Yugurs, living in the Huangnibao township of Jiuchuan city and Qiantan 前滩 township in the Minghua district of Sunan county, speak Chinese.⁸ The number of speakers is about one-third in each of these three groups, with only a relative handful of Yugurs, living in the Dahe district, speaking both Yohur and Enger. A few Yugurs speak Tibetan.⁹ Virtually all Yugurs in all groups are able to use Chinese as a lingua franca.¹⁰ The Yugurs do not have their own script.

Yohur is closely related to Uigur and Salar. It still preserves many features of the language of medieval Turkic literature. Some examples are bedzin 'monkey', oyat 'willow', and man 'meat soup'.¹¹

The eight vowels of the Yohur language are:

<u>a</u> as in <u>at</u> 'name'	<u>o</u> as in <u>ot</u> 'fire'
<u>ə</u> as in <u>əley</u> 'hand'	<u>u</u> as in <u>uzuq</u> 'false'
<u>e</u> as in <u>eren</u> 'man'	<u>ó</u> as in <u>ót</u> 'gallbladder'
<u>i</u> as in <u>inge</u> 'sister-in-law'	<u>y</u> as in <u>gyj</u> 'pine tree'

There are twenty-five basic consonants, as follows:

Yugur

b as in bol- 'to become'
p as in pudəy 'book'
m as in mal 'cattle'
d as in don 'robe'
t as in tay 'mountain'
n as in men 'I'
l as in lomaq 'story'
g as in tuge- 'to finish'
k as in kun 'day'
ŋ as in məŋ 'thousand'
x as in jaxsi 'good'
ɕ as in ɕol 'arm'
q as in aq 'white'

ɣ as in dzaɣəy 'saddle'
h as in haja 'palm' (of hand)
dʒ as in dʒyt 'emaciated'
tʃ as in kətʃy 'small'
j as in jol 'road'
dʒ as in adʒa 'father'
tʃ as in tʃən 'woman'
ʃ as in baʃ 'head'
z as in uz 'ox'
s as in bes 'five'
z as in zona 'honeybee'
r as in bər 'one'

In addition, the consonants f, ʃ, and v are used for Chinese loan words.
 There are six guttural vowels, as follows:

ah as in aht 'horse'
əh as in p'əhk 'to open'
eh as in jeht 'meat'

oh as in oht 'grass'
uh as in tuht 'to do, to make'
øh as in øhk'p'e 'lung'

The guttural sound disappears when a word is combined with a suffix or with another word to form a compound, e.g., tuht 'to do' + ti < thutti 'did'; aht 'horse' + t'eryen 'cart' → hət t'eryen 'horse cart'.

Yohur also has relatively many words with double consonants. A few examples are rkam 'box', mərs 'cat', əjt- 'to ask', and aht 'below'.¹²

Enger is related to Bonan, Tu, Dongxiang, and, of course, Mongolian. In its phonology, it is closer to the first three languages, whereas in vocabulary and grammar it is somewhat more akin to Mongolian.¹³

Enger has the following eight short and seven long vowels:

a as in arəa 'method'
e as in emel 'saddle'
i as in dətʃin 'forty'
y as in dyye 'time'
o as in og- 'to give'
ø as in møkør- 'to button up'
u as in hgu- 'to die'
ə as in məŋəan 'thousand'

aa as in aar 'back, behind'
ee as in degeree- 'to leap'
ii as in iidaə 'stingy'
yy as in vyre- 'to collapse'
oo as in mooreə 'horse'
øø as in møønde 'safe'
uu as in uula 'mountain'

The twenty-five basic consonants are as follows:

<u>b</u> as in <u>baatə</u> 'hero'	<u>dʒ</u> as in <u>dʒala-</u> 'to ask'
<u>p</u> as in <u>piire</u> 'waist'	<u>tʃ</u> as in <u>tʃewer</u> 'skilful'
<u>w</u> as in <u>wetʃan</u> 'sick'	<u>ʃ</u> as in <u>ʃera</u> 'yellow'
<u>m</u> as in <u>mənʒan</u> 'thousand'	<u>j</u> as in <u>jose</u> 'manners'
<u>d</u> as in <u>dət/in</u> 'forty'	<u>g</u> as in <u>gəʀəsən</u> 'wild animal'
<u>t</u> as in <u>toloʒui</u> 'head'	<u>k</u> as in <u>kyyten</u> 'cold'
<u>dz</u> as in <u>dzuunaa</u> 'fly'	<u>ŋ</u> as in <u>ʃəŋar</u> 'straw'
<u>s</u> as in <u>sal</u> 'skin raft'	<u>ʕ</u> as in <u>ʕadʕə-</u> 'to prick'
<u>n</u> as in <u>niin</u> 'cow'	<u>q</u> as in <u>qusun</u> 'water'
<u>ɳ</u> as in <u>ɳii-</u> 'to laugh'	<u>x</u> as in <u>xorən</u> 'twenty'
<u>r</u> as in <u>raaldʒə-</u> 'to exchange'	<u>ʁ</u> as in <u>ʁajarla-</u> 'to borrow'
<u>l</u> as in <u>ʕal</u> 'fire'	<u>h</u> as in <u>hon</u> 'year'
<u>ʕ</u> as in <u>ʕaan</u> 'red'	

The consonants ʕ, ts, ʒ, and ɣ are used only for Chinese loan words. Enger also has many double consonants.

Unlike Yohur, Enger has both long and short vowels. However, the distinction between the two vowels is not as strict as in some other Mongolian languages, as some words can be pronounced either way. It has back round vowels u and o and front round vowels y and ö. Diphthongs include ia, io, ua and uai. Many words in Enger retain the initial h, a noted feature of Middle Mongolian, as represented in the *Secret History of the Mongols* (SHM) but lost in Modern Mongolian.¹⁴ Examples include hodən, 'star', hodun (SHM), but Mong. od; hon, 'year', hon (SHM), but Mong. on; harwan, 'ten', harban (SHM), Mong. arab; hgor, 'ox', huker (SHM), but Mong. üher.¹⁵

Many words have lost their initial vowel which is still retained in Mongolian, e.g., laan, 'red', Mong. ulaan; hdaa, 'smoke', Mong. utaa; and tsige, 'father', Mong. etseg.¹⁶ Other words retained their final vowel which in Mongolian tends to be omitted. Examples are xara, 'black', Mong. xar; hge, 'mother', Mong. ex; and shara, 'yellow', Mong. shar.¹⁷ There exists vowel harmony both within word stems and between word stems and suffixes, but it is observed in only relatively few words. The stress in Enger words is generally on the last syllable.¹⁸

About one-third of the entire Enger vocabulary consists of loan words of which the largest number are of Chinese origin.¹⁹ Examples include gambu < ganbu, 'cadre'; shong < shuang, 'double'; xuma < huma, 'sesame', and gungtsang < gongchang, 'factory'.²⁰ There are, as expected, more Turkic loan words in Enger than in Bonan, Tu, or Dongxiang.²¹ They include such words as mula < Uigur bala, 'child'; tash < Uigur tash, 'rock'; and angla-, Uigur angla-, 'to hear, to listen'.²² The few Tibetan loan words are largely for religious terms, such as ndorong < dgon-pa, 'temple', and mbag < bag, 'mask', referring to the kind used in tsam, a Tibetan religious dance.²³

Finally, Enger shares with Yohur certain words that do not belong to any other language. They include gair, Yohur ger, 'bowl'; lar, Yohur lar, 'language', hdai, Yohur ahdej, 'small', and ma, Yohur ma, 'also'.²⁴

The Yugur oral tradition consists of songs, sayings, folktales, and epics.²⁵ Most of the songs seem to be derived from other nationalities. For example, the well-known huar, described elsewhere,²⁶ comes from the Hui, the drinking songs from the Mongols, the layi from the Tibetans, and the banquet songs from the Tu.²⁷ In addition, the Yugur have their own indigenous folksongs which, unlike the huar, are not extemporaneous. They usually have three stanzas of six lines each, of which the first four lines contain nonsensical words and only the last two lines carry the story. Examples of such folksongs include "The Song of Wearing Headdress," sung by girls when they reach puberty, and the "Wedding Ballad."

The most famous folktales are "Mola" (Child)²⁸ and "The Magic Archer Shoots the Wild Goose" which preserves the Yugurs' legend about their presumed tenth-century progenitor. Epics are in the form of long narrative poems, like "Huangdaichen and Sanamake," the story of a girl in love with a sultan.²⁹

Society³⁰

Originally the Yugurs were organized into nine clans. Located in the Kangle area were the Datoumu 大头目, Dongbage 东八个, Luor 罗尔, Sigema 四个马, and Yangge 杨哥 clans, while the Xibage 西八个 and Wuge 五个 clans resided in the Jinqian 金泉 area. Each of these clans had their own herding areas. The Helengge 贺郎格 and Yalage 亚拉格 clans, however, lived in the Jinqian and Minghua region closely interlocked with one another.³¹

All Yugurs were governed by a datoumu (great chief) who decided on all problems affecting all tribes except the Helengge and Yalage and presided over annual conferences which clan chiefs attended. Each clan was headed by a chief and associate chief. All three officials were hereditary, and during Qing times the datoumu was given a court appointment as the qizu huangfan zongguan 七族黄番总管 (manager of the seven yellow barbarian tribes).³² Another post was the zongquantou 总圈头 who was appointed by the clan chief, in consultation with the lamas, and who invariably came from a rich herder's family. His term of office ran from one to three years. It was renewable, and some zongquantou served more than thirty years. The xiaoquantou 小圈头 was another post, also staffed by the clan chief. In some clans the poor herders who could not afford the tea horse tax took turns serving as xiaoquantou. Terms of office were also one to three years but usually ran to six to seven years. In addition to working full time as herders for the clan chief, the xiaoquantou also served him as messengers, errand boys, and collectors of the tea horse tax.

Chapter 6

A clan held several meetings each year to apportion various taxes. These meetings were convened and presided over by the clan chief, and each family sent some representatives to them. Nominally all decisions were made on a democratic basis, but in reality all important decisions were made by the clan chief and the zongquantou. During the republican period the Yugurs living in the Sunan area also had two qihu 伙 and several laozhe 老者. The qihu (lit. seven households) had considerable power, as all important matters, such as the replacement of the zongquantou, had to be settled in consultation with them. The laozhe (elders) in the Minghua and Jinquan areas were appointed by clan heads and carried out some work for them. In the Kangle area, the laozhe were appointed by the retiring zongquantou and fubang 辅帮 and served as advisors to the clan chief.



Illus. 12. Yugur Man



Illus. 13. Yugur Woman

The Yugurs practiced only monogamy. Hermanns did not hear of any cases of polygamy, and he asserts that the Yugurs did not know the meaning of polyandry.³³ Marriages were usually arranged by the parents when the children were twelve or thirteen years old. Weddings took place when they were fifteen

to seventeen years of age. On both occasions the boy's family presented sizeable gifts to the girl's family. The larger wedding gift, the sooner the wedding was to be. Normally the bride moved in with the husband's family, except when she had no brothers, in which case the groom moved in with her family. It is not certain whether the groom, as was the custom among other nationalities, also adopted his bride's family name. If no groom could be found for a girl, she could be married to "heaven." Under this convention, the woman could take up with any man in order to bear his children.

In normal marriages, on the morning of the wedding day, relatives of the bride dressed her with a married woman's hairdo and then accompanied her to the groom's family where the wedding feast was held. After all guests had been provided with mutton, the bride and bridegroom were ushered in separately. Two men stepped forward and recited the wedding speech, during which one of the men held high the boiled upper thigh of a sheep, wrapped in sheep wool and decorated with streamers. After the speech, the groom received a red silk belt and his mouth was brushed with butter. This was followed by a kind of benediction, which signified that the couple was now married. One of the men then presented the groom with the sheep thigh which the latter placed at the foot of the Buddhist image which all houses had. He then kowtowed first to heaven, then to the Buddha image and finally to the assembled guests. The new couple had to eat the thigh on the wedding day but kept the bone for several years.

The dead were disposed by interment, cremation, and "sky burial," i.e., the corpse was placed on a platform which was secured to branches high on a tree. After the anti-religious purges of 1958, many Yugurs stopped interment and "sky burial" and changed to cremation.³⁴

The Yugurs live in tents. The older kind, now quite rare, is round like a Mongolian house, while the more common kind is rectangular in shape and very similar to the tents used by Tibetans. It has walls about one meter high, while the center is held up by two-meter poles. It is covered in felt made from black yak hair (See Illustration 14).³⁵

Religion

When the Yugurs first arrived in Gansu in the ninth century, they still believed in Manichaeism, but after about a century, under the influence of their Tibetan neighbors and overlords, they converted to the Yellow Hat sect of Lamaism.³⁶ Each tribe had its own temple, and temple officials participated in the tribes' important affairs.³⁷ Although not a single Yugur monk belonged to the Red Hat sect, most of them married and lived in their own houses. Only unmarried monks lived in the temples.

Lamaism remained the official religion of the Yugurs until well into the second half of this century, but of greater influence among the common Yugurs



Illus. 14. Yugur Tents

was an older religion, the cult of the emperor of heaven, Han Tengri. This god had two main assistants, the Ongol Han to his right and the Solrol Han to his left. Each of these three gods had two assistants, bringing the total to nine, and each of the nine had thirteen hans as assistants. This cult was in the hands of the altshod whose functions were similar to those of the shaman. Men became altshod either through a trance-like experience or by way of a dream. An altshod presided over the sacrifices to the emperor of heaven which a family could conduct at any time. On such occasions a sheep was sacrificed.³⁸ The altshod also served as a medicine man.³⁹ The last altshod died in 1935.

Recent Developments

The Sunan Yugur autonomous county was established on February 20, 1954, with its seat at Hongwansi 红湾寺. The county consists of twenty-three townships. The Huangnibao nationality township was created in April of the same year.⁴⁰ Some of the Yugurs still engage in hunting as a sideline, and since 1958 they have also raised deer. The deer farms are of considerable economic importance to the Yugurs as a large buck can yield as much as ten kilograms of horn each year, which is then sold to the state for use in the preparation of pharmaceutical compounds. The autonomous county operates small power stations which supply electric power to most homes. In addition, there are

factories for making rugs, farming and hunting implements, and coking coal.⁴¹ At the time of its creation, Sunan county had only four elementary schools with a total of about seventy students. By 1980 it had one complete middle school, six junior middle schools, and many elementary schools. A few middle school graduates have gone to institutions of higher learning in Gansu and elsewhere.⁴²

Notes

¹Minzu yanjiu 23 (1983), 81.

²Jiankuang, v. 5, 52; Zhongguo, 165.

³Historical information has been mostly adapted from Zhongguo, 165-167; see also Jiankuang, v. 5, 52-53. Additional information can be found in Pinks, 62, 116.

⁴Kotwicz, 438. Godan was the son of Ögödei hagan who died in 1241. Ögödei's widow served as interim caretaker of the empire until 1246, during which time she is believed to have appointed Godan to his provincial post.

⁵Mannerheim, 5.

⁶Hermanns, "Uiguren," 87.

⁷Actually, the name of this language is pronounced Yugur, the same as the general name that also includes Enger. To avoid confusion, Chinese linguists have chosen to call the Turkic language spoken in the western part of Sunan County 尧乎尔 Yaohur in putonghua but locally pronounced Yohur.

⁸Zhaonast, 1.

⁹Chen, 66.

¹⁰Jiankuang, v. 5, 52; Zhongguo, 165.

¹¹Chen, 70. See also Lin, 189.

¹²Lin, 188.

¹³Zhaonast, 1.

¹⁴Op. cit., 2.

¹⁵Op. cit., 77-78.

¹⁶Op. cit., 80.

¹⁷Op. cit., 79.

¹⁸Op. cit., 2.

¹⁹Op. cit., 3.

²⁰Op. cit., 82.

²¹Op. cit., 3.

²²Op. cit., 84.

²³Op. cit., 85.

²⁴Op. cit., 84.

²⁵Zhongguo, 171; Jiankuang, v. 5, 57.

²⁶For example, in the chapter on the Dongxiang nationality.

²⁷Zuopin xuan, v. 2, 434.

²⁸The text, in Chinese translation, is found in Zuopin xuan, v. 2, 447-451.

²⁹The first part of this epic, entitled "Love," is found, in its Chinese translation, in Zuopin xuan, v. 2, 438-444.

³⁰Information on Yugur society has been obtained from Zhongguo, 168, unless otherwise noted.

³¹Hermanns lists a total of eleven clans and one "sub-clan" (Unterstamm), of which eight belonged to the Enger group with 133 households (Zelte, 'tents') and the rest to the Yohur group with eighty-seven households ("Uiguren," pp. 80-81). Kotwicz merely remarks that there were five Enger and two Yohur clans (p. 440).

³²Jiankuang, v. 5, 53. The term Huangfan was still used at the turn of this century. Mannerheim 1.

³³Hermanns, "Uiguren," 87. Unless otherwise noted, the remainder of this section is based on Hermanns, 83-86.

³⁴Zhongguo, 171.

³⁵Hermanns, "Uiguren," 87.

³⁶Thomsen, 564.

³⁷Jiankuang, v. 5, 54.

³⁸Hermanns, "Uiguren," 89-90.

³⁹Op. cit., 96.

⁴⁰Zhongguo, 169; Jiankuang, v. 5, 55.

⁴¹Zhongguo, 172; Jiankuang, v. 5, 58.

⁴²Zhongguo, 173; Jiankuang, v. 5, 59.