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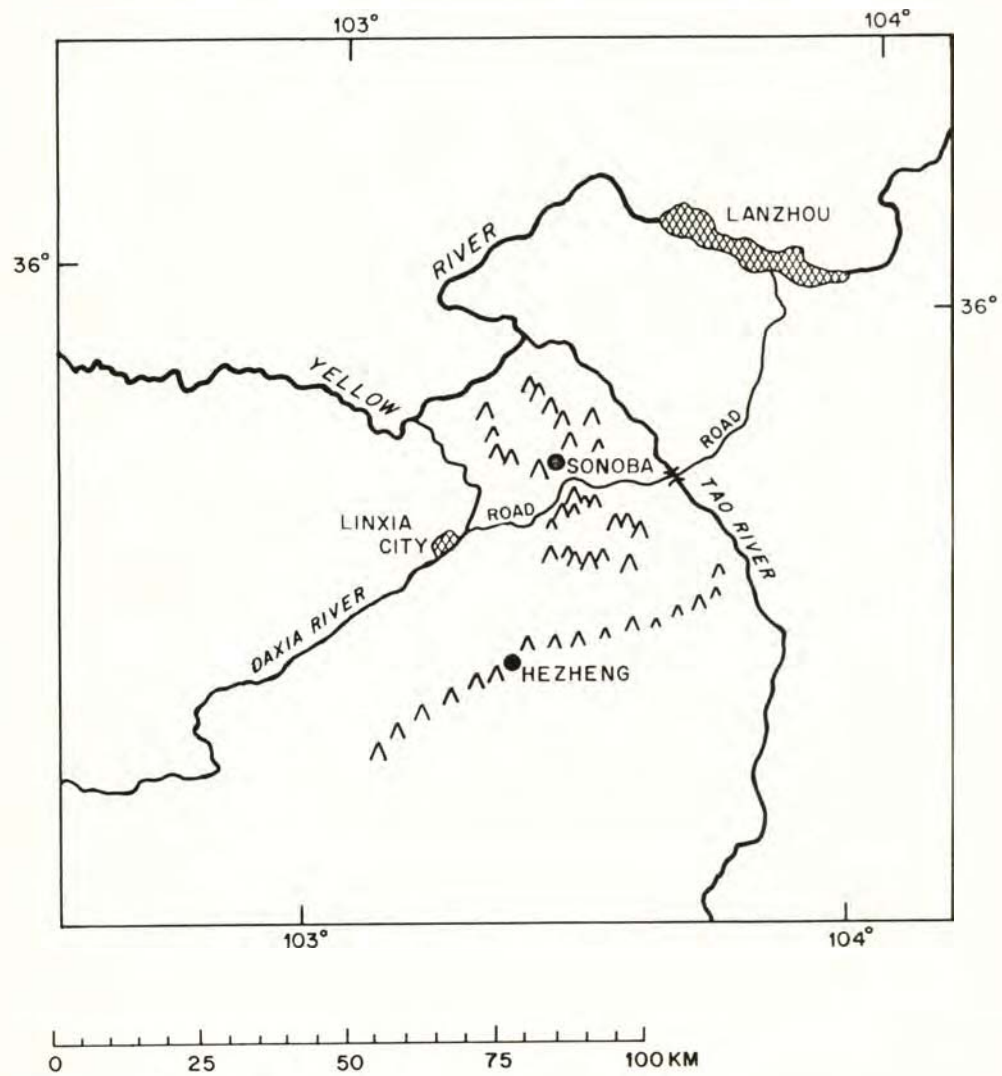
Dongxiang

Size and Location

A total of 279,397 Dongxiang 东乡 were reported in 1982, an increase of about 120,000 since the late 1960s.¹ Almost two-thirds of them live in the Dongxiang autonomous county in Gansu province.² This county, established on September 25, 1950, is located inside the Linxia Hui autonomous prefecture and borders on the Tao 洮 river in the east, the Daxia 大夏 river in the west and the Yellow River in the north. It covers an area of 1,462 square kilometers.³ Smaller groups of Dongxiang form compact communities in Hezheng 和政 county and Linxia 临夏 city, both also in Gansu province (see Map 9). Still smaller groups are scattered throughout the provincial capital, Lanzhou, and Dingxi 定西 district as well as the Ningxia Hui autonomous region.⁴

The seat of the Dongxiang autonomous county is at Sonoba 锁南坝, 2,640 meters high in a dry mountain area from which radiate nineteen mountain ranges, from fifteen to thirty kilometers in length.⁵

Before 1950, the Dongxiang were known as "Dongxiang Hui" or "Mongolian Huihui," but the Dongxiang referred to themselves simply by what is now the official designation.⁶ The word is Chinese and goes back to the time of Chinggis Khan (see below) when the present area of the Dongxiang autonomous county was part of Hezhou 河州 ([Yellow] river prefecture). Hezhou was divided into four areas (xiang)—north, south, east, and west—and today's autonomous county lay in the eastern (dong) area.⁷ It is not known when the Dongxiang began to call themselves by this Chinese administrative term. Some foreign observers have



Map 9. Dongxiang

called the Dongxiang "Santa,"⁸ but the Dongxiang use this word only when referring to a practicing Muslim. In other words, the term Santa is a religious rather than an ethnic or linguistic designation.⁹

History

The Dongxiang's origin is still a matter of debate because relevant documents shed little light on the problem. One oral tradition describes the Dongxiang as the descendants of Mongol soldiers who during Chinggis Khan's campaigns settled in the Hezhou region (now the area around the Dongxiang autonomous county) where they ultimately lost their military function and status.¹⁰ Some place names tend to support this theory; for example, Dazidi (The Place of the Dazi) refers to the Dazi 鞑子, an old Chinese epithet for the Mongols, somewhat akin to the European term Tartar. Likewise, Zhayingtan 扎营滩 (Encampment Beach) is said to be the site of an old Mongol garrison, and Mading 马丁 suggests a place where the Mongol army grazed its horses. Furthermore, historical records reveal that when in 1226 Chinggis Khan attacked the Tangut state of Xixia for the second time, the Hezhou area became an important staging area where a military farm (*tuntian*) was established. During Mönghe's reign, Hezhou was used as a major strongpoint in the campaign against the Tibetans. After Hubilai conquered the Tangzang area of northern Tibet, he established in Hezhou the three offices of *zongwang* 宗王, *tümen* (Mong. thousand) and *tufan xuanwei* 吐蕃宣慰. The incumbent of the *zongwang* office was Ananda, one of Hubilai's many grandsons. He embraced Islam during Chengzong Timur's reign (1295-1307), and most of the 150,000 troops under him followed suit.¹¹

Another theory sees the Dongxiang as part of the Jagatai khanate which flourished during the Yuan period in what is now Chinese (Xinjiang) and Soviet Central Asia. There they converted to Islam but were thereafter discriminated against by other Mongols who presumably resisted conversion.¹² To avoid further friction, the Islamized Mongols were compelled to move eastward by way of Xingxingxia. When they reached Zhenfan 镇番 (today's Minqin 民勤 county in Gansu), they split into two routes. One group crossed the Helan 贺兰 mountains and went to Hetao 河套 where their descendants are today's Muslim Mongols of the Alashan Left Banner of Inner Mongolia. The other group turned south, crossed the Yellow River and settled in the Hezhou area.¹³

A third notion, held by only a few persons, claims that the Dongxiang had originally been Hui living in the present Dongxiang area who over the centuries mingled with Han and Mongols.¹⁴ Judging by linguistic and other evidence, the last theory is probably incorrect. I am inclined to support the first theory, but at any rate there is a general consensus that the main stock of the original Dongxiang was Mongol, not Hui. Later, during the Ming and Qing dynasties,

these Mongols began to intermarry with Hui, Han, and Tibetans living in the area.¹⁵ Surnames among the present-day Dongxiang population are reminders of this intermingling. Surnames like Ma 马 and Mu 穆 are clearly of Hui origin. Dongxiang families with names like Wang 王, Kang 康, Zhang 张, Gao 高, and Huang 黄 say they descended from old Han families. Place names like Tangwangchuan 唐汪川, Wangjiaji 汪家集, Zhangjiacun 张家村, Gaojiazhuang 高家庄, and Miaerling 庙儿岭 also reflect old Han residences.¹⁶ The least numerous surnames are those of Tibetan origin; in fact, only the Yang 杨 clan in Yangzhijia 羊脂家 claims descent from Tibetans.¹⁷

Language and Literature

Dongxiang is one of several Mongolian languages which, in turn, belong to the Altaic language family. The Dongxiang language has no dialectal variations, but one can discern some slight distinctions among the three vernaculars. Some fifty percent of all Dongxiang speakers belong to the Sonoba vernacular which is spoken in the townships of Sonan 锁南, Chuntai 春台, Pingzhuang 坪庄, Mianguchi 免古池, Dashu 大树, Yanling 沿岭, Dabankong 大板空, Dongyuan 东源, and Baihe 百和 in the Dongxiang autonomous county, as well as in Linxia and Hezheng counties. The Wangjiaji vernacular is spoken by about thirty percent of the Dongxiang population who live in Wangjiaji 汪家集, Guoyuan 果园, Nalesi 那勒寺, and Daban 大板 townships in the autonomous county, as well as the Guanghe 广河 and Kangle 康乐 counties. The remaining twenty percent of Dongxiang speakers speak the Sijiaji vernacular in Sijia 四甲, Tangwang 唐旺, and Kaole 考勒 townships in the autonomous county as well as Yongjing 永靖 county.¹⁸

The Dongxiang language has five vowels, as follows:¹⁹

a as in asa- 'to ask'
e as in eme 'woman'
i as in ijie- 'to eat'

o as in oron 'place, locale'
u as in ula 'mountain'

The twenty-two consonants are:

b as in bayan 'rich'
ch as in chigvan 'white'
d as in dosi 'friend'
f as in fugie 'big'
g as in ga 'small'
gh as in ghua 'two'
h as in hodun 'star'

l as in lauji 'man'
m as in mo 'road'
n as in nan 'sun'
p as in puzha 'bean'
q as in qiemu 'iron'
s as in sao 'seat'
t as in tosun 'oil'

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hh as in hhela 'they'

j as in jien 'clothing'

k as in kien 'who'

kh as in khan 'five'

w as in weine 'to be'

x as in xieni 'night'

y as in yasun 'bone'

zh as in zhaleo 'youth'

Quite a few words in the Dongxiang lexicon resemble words of the same meaning in Modern Mongolian, and some are even identical to words presently used in Inner Mongolia. Many other words are close to the Middle Mongolian spoken in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This is, of course, not surprising because it was at that time the Dongxiang were cut off from the mainstream of Mongolian life and, hence, from later changes in the Mongolian language. A remnant of Middle Mongolian in Dongxiang is the intervocalic -g- and -d-, as in nogosun 'wool' and shidun 'tooth'. Both words are still written this way in the traditional script used in Inner Mongolia, but are there now pronounced noos and shüd, respectively. Other Middle Mongolian relics found in Dongxiang are the initial consonants h- and f- which are no longer found in either the spoken or the written Mongolian of Inner Mongolia. Examples are hodun 'star,' Mo. Mong. odo; hulun 'red,' Mo. Mong. ulagan; funiegen 'fox,' Mo. Mong. ünegen; fugie 'cattle,' Mo. Mong. üher.²⁰

Certain grammatical features, such as declension, adverbial use, and the like, are also similar to Modern Mongolian and are especially close to Tu and Bonan.²¹ On the other hand, Dongxiang also contains features not found in Modern Mongolian. For example, it has neither long vowels nor vowel harmony. Also, in some words, final -r and -g are absent, e.g., kha 'hand,' Mo. Mong. gar; hie 'house,' Mo. Mong. ger; bula 'spring' Mo. Mong. bulag; cha 'time,' Mo. Mong. chag.

Because of their long association with the Hui and Han, the Dongxiang have relatively many Chinese loan words. Examples of old words include cha < cha 'tea', shu < shu 'book', and baisai < baicai 'cabbage'. Since 1949 many newer Chinese loan words have found their way into the Dongxiang language, including daibiao < idem 'representative', pipin < pipin 'criticize', and gunshe < gongshe 'commune'.²² An interesting phenomenon is the combining of a Chinese loan word with a native, i.e., Mongolian-based, word. For example, the word pingo alima 'apple' < Chin. pingguo 'apple' + Mong. alim-a 'pear'. Likewise, sunshu mutun 'pinetree' < Chin. songshu 'pinetree' + Mong. modon 'tree', and honho moron 'Yellow River' < Chin. huanghe 'Yellow River' + Mong. mören 'river'.²³

Arabic loan words are mostly religious terms, such as guran 'Koran', imamu 'imam', and alan 'universe'. There are also several Turkic loan words in the Dongxiang language which are similar or identical to words in Uigur and Salar among the Turkic languages. Some of these words are also found in other Mongolian languages, such as Tu, Bonan, and Eastern Yugur (Enger). Here are four examples:²⁴

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	'apricot'	'fog'	'frog'	'stone'
Dongxiang	<u>orou</u>	<u>tuman</u>	<u>baga</u>	<u>tash</u>
Uigur	<u>oryk</u>	<u>tuman</u>	<u>paqa</u>	<u>taʃ</u>
Salar	<u>irux</u>	(Chin.loan)	<u>bava</u>	<u>daʃ</u>
Tu	(Tib.loan)	<u>manan</u>	(Tib.loan)	<u>taʃ</u>
Bonan	<u>oreg</u>	<u>mokə</u>	<u>lamdagi</u>	<u>taɕiə</u>
Enger	(Chin.loan)	<u>manan</u>	<u>baga</u>	<u>tʃulo</u>
Mongolian	<u>güilesü</u>	<u>manan</u>	<u>melehei</u>	<u>chilagu</u>

The Dongxiang nationality never had its own script. In the past the relative handful of literates used the Arabic script for religious purposes and Chinese for secular transactions. At present a script based on the Latin alphabet is being introduced in the Dongxiang autonomous county on an experimental basis.²⁵

Because they lacked their own script, the Dongxiang's literature is entirely oral. The most popular genre is the legend. It is a valuable source of information on ancient Dongxiang history and customs. One legend is called "Lu's Wife Beheads the Python" which is an allegory of the struggle between good (man) and evil (snake) and probably originated long ago when the Dongxiang may have still had a matriarchal society.²⁶ Another, and even more popular, legend is the romantic love story of "Milagahei and Haidiya 米拉加黑与海迪娅".²⁷ Another genre is called "life stories" (生活故事 *shenghuo gushi*), somewhat akin to folktales, which seem to have some basis in historical fact but are, like legends, heavily fictionalized.²⁸ One example of a folktale is "The White Feather Garment."²⁹

Fairy tales and stories of clever people are also found among the Dongxiang. What the stories about the effendi are for the Turkic-speaking peoples of Xinjiang, the stories of Yusiha 玉斯哈 are for the Dongxiang.³⁰

Traditional Dongxiang poetry is almost entirely dominated by the so-called *huar* 花儿 (literally, flowers), a form that the Dongxiang share with other nationalities living in eastern Qinghai and southern Gansu. They are short songs consisting of only one stanza with either four or six lines which virtually everyone can sing.³¹

Relatively little can be reported about contemporary Dongxiang literature. It is entirely written in Chinese. Currently the most prominent literary person is the poet Wang Yulang. His best work to date is the long poem "Ana" 阿娜 which has some political overtones.³² Contemporary prose is written by Wang Yuxiang, a 47-year-old worker in a clothing factory in Lanzhou. He started writing in 1965 but, owing to Mao's "cultural revolution," most of his work remained unpublished until recently.³³



Illus. 18. Dongxiang Costumes

Religion

Before the Communist takeover there were three Muslim sects among the Dongxiang. Sixty-eight percent of the total population belonged to the Old Teaching (老教 lao jiao) which was introduced in the late eighteenth century.³⁴ The New Teaching (新教 xin jiao), introduced around the turn of this century, had far fewer adherents but was politically ambitious. Numerous clashes broke out between these two sects, thanks to a large extent to the support given to the New Teaching by the Ma clan which dominated Gansu and Qinghai provinces during much of the republican period. There was also a third sect, called the Newly Awakened Teaching (新兴教 xin xing jiao), but it had very few adherents and practically nothing is known about it.³⁵

As late as the 1940s the Dongxiang area had 595 mosques, nine religious schools (medrese), twelve major religious leaders, such as ahongs and mullahs, and over 2,000 religious personnel. This averaged out to one mosque for every thirty households and one religious professional for every nine households. In addition, it is reported that the number of annual expenditures for various religious purposes came to thirty-four.³⁶

Recent Developments

Communist troops occupied the area south of Lanzhou in August, 1949. About a year later, on September 25, 1950, the new authorities created the Dongxiang autonomous area and in 1955 changed its title to autonomous county.³⁷ During 1953 and 1954 nationality townships (minzu xiang 民族乡) were also created in areas outside the autonomous county where appreciable numbers of Dongxiang resided. They included Alimatu 阿里麻土, Gangou 甘沟, and Liangjiashi 梁家寺 of Hezheng 和政 county and Anjiapo 安家坡, Fujia 付家, and Hulinjia 胡林家 of Linxia city.³⁸

In 1979 the Dongxiang autonomous county had a population of 177,000 persons, of whom 122,000 were Dongxiang.³⁹ Others belonged to the Han, Hui, Tibetan, Tu, and Salar nationalities. Some progress was made in the recruiting of cadres among the Dongxiang and other minorities, but available data are insufficient to form a clear picture. In 1973, during the "cultural revolution," it was reported that sixty-seven percent of all cadres at the county and commune levels were minorities,⁴⁰ with Dongxiang presumably in the majority. Some five years later, however, one source stated that the county had more than 600 Dongxiang cadres at all levels,⁴¹ while another source said that this figure represented more than thirty percent of all cadres.⁴²

The mainstay of the Dongxiang economy is farming, the major crops being potatoes, wheat, highland barley, barley, millet, and corn. Of these, potatoes take up most of the more than 400,000 mu (about 65,880 acres) of acreage. The Dongxiang's potato mash (dough?), grainy and sweet, is used in making various snacks, liquor, vinegar noodles, and many other food items which have found wide acceptance among members of other nationalities in parts of Gansu and Qinghai. Other cash crops are broad bean, hemp, sesame seeds, and rape seeds. Along the banks of the Tao and Daxia rivers are grown large quantities of melons and fruit, and in the mountainous areas are many kinds of wild medicinal plants.⁴³

In the past some ninety percent of the Dongxiang area suffered from severe soil erosion. This problem has been somewhat alleviated in recent years through massive afforestation. As a result, over one-third of the steep slopes are now cultivated. Food production in 1978 was seventy percent higher than the largest crop recorded before 1949.⁴⁴

In recent years a few industrial plants have been erected in the Dongxiang area. These are mostly factories for making generators, farm implements, cement, flour, and bricks. All-weather roads connect Sonoba with Lanzhou and Linxia cities and, within the county, unimproved roads connect Sonoba with every township seat.⁴⁵

Notes

¹Minzu yanjiu 23 (1983), 80; Zhongguo, 139. An unofficial figure of more than 220,000 Dongxiang in 1981 was published in the preface, p. 1 of Dongxiangzu minjian gushi ji.

²Since 1980 this county has been a part of the new Bonan, Dongxiang, and Salar autonomous county.

³Liu 1981, 1.

⁴Jiankuang, v. 5, 18.

⁵Zhongguo, 145-146.

⁶Jiankuang, v. 5, 18.

⁷Liu 1981, 1.

⁸E.g., Poppe, 9.

⁹The term Santa was also used in this sense among the Salars as much as sixty years ago. Louis M. J. Schram reports that at that time Tibetans and Tu in the Xining area referred to Muslim converts of Mongol origin as Santa. He cites Smedt and Mostaert, Dictionnaire monguor-français (Beijing, 1933), p. 324, as deriving the term from Mongolian sarta'ul 'Musulman'. See Schram, The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Frontier: Their Origin, History, and Social Organization (Philadelphia, 1954), p. 23 and note 5 on the same page.

¹⁰Jiankuang, v. 5, 19.

¹¹Zhongguo, 140.

¹²Jiankuang, v. 5, 19.

¹³Zhongguo, 140.

¹⁴Jiankuang, v. 5, 19.

¹⁵Zhongguo, 141; Muramatsu, 83-84.

¹⁶Zhongguo, 140.

¹⁷Zhongguo, 141.

¹⁸Liu 1981, 4.

¹⁹The phonemes are transcribed according to the new experimental script described in Nasunbayer, Dongxiang urou surukuni. See also note 24 below.

²⁰Nasunbayer 1976, 317.

²¹Liu 1981, 3.

²²Liu 1981, 22.

²³Liu 1981, 24.

²⁴Liu 1981, 25.

²⁵Schwarz.

²⁶"Lu furen zhan mang 孀婦人斬蟒", Dongxiangzu minjian gushi ji. 1-6. Hereafter Gushi ji. Also known as "Lu guafu zhan mang," (Widow Lu Beheads the Python). See Zhongguo, 145.

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²⁷Op. cit., 18-32. The work includes eight other legends. Another version of "Milagahei and Haidiya" can be found in Zhongguo minjian aiqing gushi 中国民间爱情故事 (1980), 1-16. See also Zhongguo, 145.

²⁸Op. cit., 75-111.

²⁹"Baiyu feiyi 白羽飞衣," Zuopin xuan, v. 2 (Shanghai, 1981), 244-249.

³⁰Eight stories of Yusiha are included in Gushi ji, 122-137.

³¹Six huar are reproduced in Zuopin xuan, 242-244.

³²Zuopin xuan, 250-275. Ana is a Dongxiang word denoting "mother" (Nasunbayar 1976, 371.) Two other poems by Wang Yulang, namely, "Laizi Yesong dabande xinxi" and "Shengmingde yinxian" (see bibliography), are more propagandistic.

³³One of his love stories, "Gabula and Dabula," is listed in the bibliography.

³⁴Jiankuang, v. 5, 24.

³⁵Zhongguo, 144.

³⁶Jiankuang, v. 5, 24-35.

³⁷Jiankuang, v. 5, 21; Zhongguo, 145.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Liu 1981, 1.

⁴⁰Jiankuang, v. 5, 22.

⁴¹Zhongguo, 145.

⁴²Liu 1981, 1.

⁴³Jiankuang, v. 5, 18.

⁴⁴Zhongguo, 146

⁴⁵Ibid.