



Miridge Conner

Location: More than 50,000 Yutian Uygurs live in Yutian and Qira counties, about 160 kilometers (99 mi.) east of the city of Hotan in China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.¹ Between Qira and Yutian the desert landscape is broken by occasional green fields and reedy marshes.

Identity: The Yutian Uygurs are visibly, culturally, and historically a distinct group. As one Chinese writer notes, "The Uygurs of Yutian differ from the Uygurs of other parts."² Married Yutian women are easily identified by their tiny black lambskin cap called *tailebaike* which "looks like an inverted teapot on the head."³ This kind of cap, which used to be given to the host on the occasion of a wedding or funeral, has now become the accepted headgear for married Yutian women.

Language: The Yutian Uygur may have once possessed their own distinct language, but today they are considered to be speakers of the Hotan dialect of Turkic Uygur. Hotan and Lop Nur are the two dialects different from standard Uygur. "All other forms of speech are more vernaculars of a common dialect spoken everywhere in Xinjiang."⁴

History: Yutian used to be an independent kingdom called *Jumi*. After the Jagatai state broke up in 1370, it was succeeded by several local states, including *Jumi*. One historian notes that "the ancestors of the Yutian people are said to have moved here from Kashgar."⁵ This fact is reflected in the style of the Yutian Uygur's homes which are similar to those of the Uygurs in the Kashgar area.

Customs: Elderly Yutian Uygur women wear a long gauze when going out, covering all but their eyes. The hairstyle of unmarried women is very unusual: "A fringe covers their forehead and hair from the temples reaches the neck in front. In addition, the top of the head is shaven and pigtails fall from the back.... On approaching marriage, a young girl may let the hair grow on the top of her head. At the age of twenty-eight she may wear a long gown and comb back her hair."⁶ Former generations of Yutian Uygur women wore huge earrings, but today it is rare to see these. The Yutian men's hat is also unique among the Uygur. Made of lambskin, its color inside contrasts with the color of the outside of the hat.

Religion: As with almost all the Turkic-speaking peoples of China, the Yutian Uygur are Sunni Muslims. Seven centuries ago many of the Turkic peoples in China and Central Asia were Christian. The last Christian group of Uygurs were forcibly converted to Islam around 1390.⁷

Christianity: There are no known Christians or church fellowships among the Yutian Uygur. In 1947 God gave a specific vision to the Han Chinese *Bian Chuan Tuan* Church of Shaanxi Province: to preach the gospel along the Old Silk Road from Xian all the way to Jerusalem. "When they arrived in southern Xinjiang several months later, they led some Uygurs to Christ and established a fellowship. There were scores of Uygur

believers... but no sooner had it begun when persecution from the local Muslim authorities scattered them completely."⁸



Population in China:
 50,000 (1997)
 53,900 (2000)
 68,000 (2010)
Location: Xinjiang
Religion: Islam
Christians: None Known

Overview of the Yutian Uygur

Countries: China

Pronunciation: "Yuu-tee-en-Wee-Gur"

Other Names: Yutian

Population Source:
 50,000 (1997 AMO);
 Out of a total Uygur population of 7,214,431 (1990 census)

Location: S Xinjiang: Yutian and Qira counties

Status:
 Officially included under Uygur

Language: Altaic, Turkic, Eastern Turkic, Southeast

Dialects: 0

Religion: Sunni Islam

Christians: None known

Scripture: None

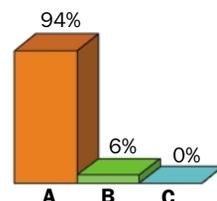
Jesus film: None

Gospel Recordings: None

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: None

Status of Evangelization



A = Have never heard the gospel
B = Were evangelized but did not become Christians
C = Are adherents to any form of Christianity