

Location: The small Yugur (not to be mistaken for the *Uyгур*) minority live in the Gansu corridor. They are one of the most unique people groups in China, speaking two completely unrelated languages. The Enger (Eastern) Yugur live in the eastern part of the Sunan Yugur Autonomous County in northern Gansu Province.¹ A 1987 study listed 4,000 speakers of Enger Yugur, representing about a third of all Yugur.

Identity: The Enger Yugur, who speak a Mongolian language, have been combined with the Turkic-speaking Saragh Yugur to form the official Yugur minority in China.

Language: Enger Yugur is a Mongolian language. Only a handful of people, living in the Dahe District of Sunan Yugur County, can speak both Yugur languages. Enger Yugur is closely related to Bonan, Tu, Dongxiang, and Mongolian. “Its phonology is closer to the first three languages, whereas in vocabulary and grammar it is somewhat more akin to Mongolian.”² A significant number of Yugur, living in Jiuquan, Huangnibao, and parts of Sunan County, can now speak only Chinese. In addition, some Yugur are bilingual in the Tibetan language.

History: Most scholars believe the Yugur are descended from a nomadic tribe known as the Huiqu. The Huiqu were first recorded during the Tang Dynasty (AD 618–907). In the mid-800s, “heavy snowfall, combined with an attack from the forest-dwelling Kirgiz from the north, forced the

Yugurs to flee their Mongolian homeland.”³ They moved to Gansu where they came under the control of the Tibetans. The Yugur region was largely unknown and cut off from the world for centuries until the completion of the Lanzhou-Urumqi railway line in 1963 which passes through the Yugur area.

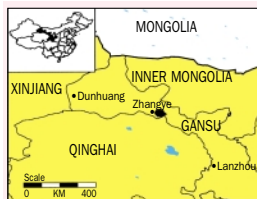
Customs: The Yugur practice bird burials, similar to the Tibetans. Dead corpses are cut up into pieces and taken to a mountaintop where ravens and other birds of prey come and devour the flesh. Historically the Yugur were divided into nine separate clans. Each clan controlled its own herding area.

Religion: When the Yugur first arrived in the area in the ninth century, they believed in Manichaeism. They were soon converted to Buddhism by the Tibetans. Today most Yugur remain followers of Tibetan Buddhism. In recent years there has been a revival of the ancient shamanistic religion and the cult of the “Emperor of Heaven,” *Han Tengri*.



Tallis Chang

Christianity: Although few Enger Yugur today have ever heard the name of Jesus Christ, the region had many Christians in the past. The Ongkuts developed a widespread Christian culture, witnessed to by the many Christian crosses found by archaeologists.⁴ The Yugur are thought to be the descendants of this tribe. When Marco Polo visited Dunhuang, near the Yugur’s homeland, he reported, “It is true there are some Turks who hold to the religion of the Nestorian Christians.”⁵ In 1992 the first Enger Yugur people believed in Christ. Today there are approximately 50 Christians.



Population in China:
4,000 (1987)
4,810 (2000)
5,800 (2010)

Location: Gansu
Religion: Tibetan Buddhism
Christians: 50

Overview of the Enger Yugur

Countries: China

Pronunciation: “Eng-gur-Yoo-gur”

Other Names: East Yugur, Enger, Mongolian Yugur, Shira Yugur, Shera Yugur, Eastern Yogor, Yugur, Yugu, Yogur

Population Source:
4,000 (1987 LAC);
Out of a total Yugur population of 12,297 (1990 census)

Location: NW Gansu: Sunan Yugur County: Kangle, Hongshiwo, and Qinglong townships of Kangle District, and Dongtan and Beitian townships of Huangcheng District

Status:

Officially included under Yugur

Language: Altaic, Mongolian, Eastern Mongolian, Mongour

Literacy: 59%

Dialects: 0

Religion: Tibetan Buddhism, Shamanism, Christianity

Christians: 50

Scripture: None

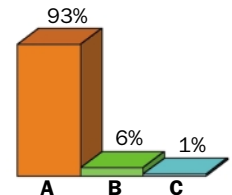
Jesus film: None

Gospel Recordings:
Yugur, East #04864

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: YUY00

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