

# Yugur, Saragh

Approximately 10,000 Saragh (Western) Yugur live in the western part of the Sunan Yugur Autonomous County, in the narrow northern corridor of Gansu Province, China. The nearest town to the Saragh Yugur is Zhangye. Other Saragh Yugur communities are located in the Dahe and Minghua districts and in the Huangnibao area near Jiuquan City in western Gansu.

The Saragh Yugur, also known as *Yaofuer*, are the Turkic half of the official Yugur nationality. They live in a separate area from the Enger Yugur. Whereas Enger Yugur is a Mongolian language, Saragh

the Uygurs in Xinjiang, who also speak a Turkic language. A small number of people migrated back inside the wall to avoid the conflict between the Turfan and Hami rulers. They are believed to be the Yugur's ancestors.

Many Saragh Yugur live in yak-hair yurts. A visitor who comes by horseback should leave his whip, rifle, ammunition and all meat outside the yurt. The Yugur believe that the god of hair dresses in red and rides a reddish horse, so visitors dressed in red are not allowed inside a Yugur home.<sup>4</sup> The Yugurs are heavy drinkers. Each evening



**Population:**  
 9,870 (2000)  
 11,880 (2010)  
 14,600 (2020)  
**Countries:** China  
**Buddhism:** Tibetan  
**Christians:** 50



International Mission Board

## Overview of the Saragh Yugur

**Other Names:** West Yugur, Saragh, Saraygh, Sarig, Ya Lu, Yellow Uighur, Sari Yogur, Yuku, Yugu, Yohur, Yaofuer

**Population Sources:**  
 8,197 in China (1990, Asian Minorities Outreach)

**Language:** Altaic, Turkic, Eastern

**Dialects:** 0

**Professing Buddhists:** 60%

**Practising Buddhists:** 30%

**Christians:** 0.5%

**Scripture:** none

**Jesus film:** none

**Gospel Recordings:** none

**Christian Broadcasting:** West Yugur

**ROPAL code:** YBE

Yugur is a completely different language—a member of the Turkic family. The two Yugur groups have little contact with each other, but when they do meet they must use Chinese to communicate. One expert notes that Saragh Yugur 'still preserves many features of the language of medieval Turkic literature'.<sup>1</sup> Because they do not have their own script, written Chinese is in common use among the Yugur.

The Tibetans controlled the Yugur region until the Tangut state of Xixia conquered them in 1028.<sup>2</sup> The Tanguts, in turn, were annihilated by the Mongols in the early 1200s. The Chinese finally assumed control of the area during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). There were 300,000 Yugurs at that time, most of whom were living outside the Great Wall at Jiayuguan,<sup>3</sup> farther to the west of their present location. Today, their descendants are no longer called Yugur and probably have become part of

meal is followed by strong alcohol. Revelry often goes on far into the next morning. They do not consider themselves to be good hosts unless their guests get drunk.

The Saragh Yugur adhere to a mixture of Tibetan Buddhism and shamanism. Each family clan has a shaman who consults the spirit world for them.

This group had no knowledge whatsoever of Christianity until 1997, when about 15 Saragh Yugur believed in Christ after watching the *Jesus* film in Mandarin.<sup>5</sup> This number grew to around 50 believers by May 2000. The authorities in Sunan are strongly opposed to the introduction of Christianity. During the 1980s and early 1990s one mission agency sent workers several times to distribute gospel literature among the Yugur, but on every occasion the workers were arrested before they could complete their task.<sup>6</sup>

## Status of Evangelization

