



**Population:**  
 4,810 (2000)  
 5,800 (2010)  
 7,150 (2020)  
**Countries:** China  
**Buddhism:** Tibetan  
**Christians:** 50

## Overview of the Enger Yugur

**Other Names:** East Yugur, Enger, Mongolian Yugur, Shira Yugur, Shera Yugur, Eastern Yogor, Yugar, Yugu, Yogur, Huihe, Huihu, Huangtou Huihe, Sali Weiwu, Sali Weiwuer, Sali Uygur, Xila Weiguer, Xila Yugur

**Population Sources:**  
 4,000 in China (1987, *Language Atlas of China*)

**Language:** Altaic, Mongolian, Eastern Mongolian, Mongour

**Dialects:** 0

**Professing Buddhists:** 65%

**Practising Buddhists:** 40%

**Christians:** 0.9%

**Scripture:** none

**Jesus film:** none

**Gospel Recordings:** East Yugur

**Christian Broadcasting:** none

**ROPAL code:** YUY

The small Yugur (not to be mistaken for the Muslim *Uygur*) people group lives in the Gansu corridor in north-west China. They are one of the more 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.<sup>1</sup> Their main locations are in Kangle, Hongshiwo and Qinglong townships of Kangle District in Sunan Yugur County, and Dongtan and Beitan townships of Huangcheng District. A 1987 study listed 4,000 speakers of Enger Yugur, representing about a third of all Yugur. 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.

The Enger Yugur, who speak a Mongolian language, have been combined with the

Most scholars believe that the Yugur are descended from a nomadic tribe known as the Huiqu.<sup>3</sup> 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.'<sup>4</sup> They moved to Gansu, where they came under the control of the Tibetans.

The Yugur practise wind burials, similar to the tradition of 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.

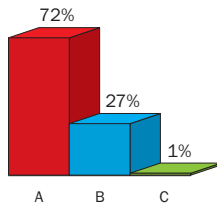
When the Yugur first arrived in the area in the 9th century they believed in Manichaeism. The Tibetans soon converted them to Buddhism. Today most Yugur remain



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followers of Tibetan Buddhism. In recent years there has been a revival of ancient shamanism and the cult of the 'Emperor of Heaven', *Han Tengri*.

## Status of Evangelization



**A** = Have never heard the gospel  
**B** = Have heard the gospel but have not become Christians  
**C** = Are adherents to some form of Christianity

Turkic-speaking Saragh Yugur to form the official Yugur minority in China. Only a handful of people living in the Dahe District of Sunan 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.'<sup>2</sup> A significant number of Yugur, living in Jiuguan, Huangnibao and parts of Sunan County, can now speak only Chinese. In addition, some Yugur are bilingual in the Tibetan language.

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, as we know from the many Christian crosses found by archaeologists.<sup>5</sup> 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.'<sup>6</sup> In 1992 the first contemporary Enger Yugur people believed in Christ. Today there are approximately 50 Christians.