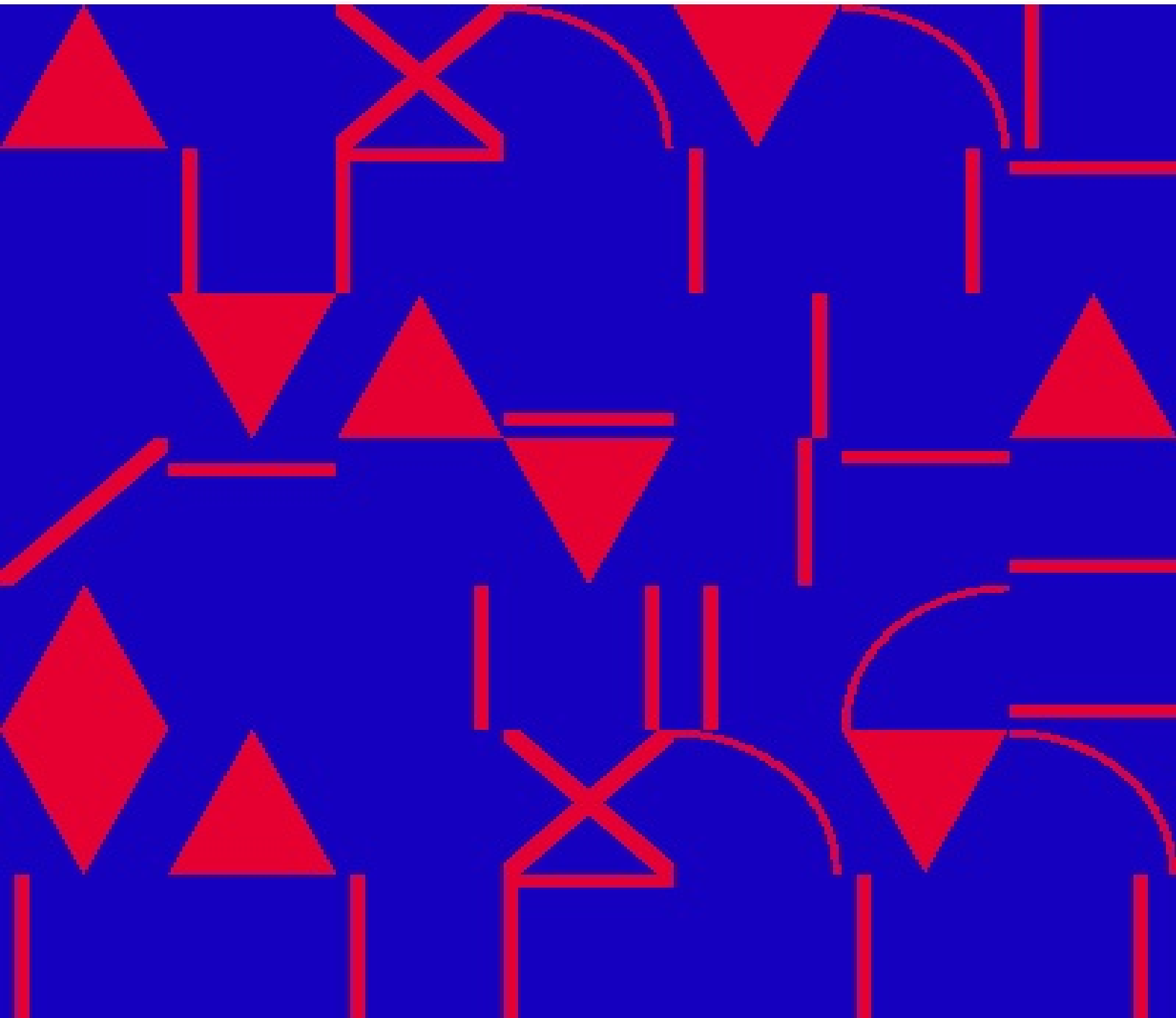
A Visit to the Sarö and Shera Yögurs

C. G. E. Mannerheim



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A VISIT TO THE SARÖ AND SHERA YÖGURS

by

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Introductory note.

During an expedition made in Central Asia and Northern China in the years 1906-1908 I had the opportunity of spending some days among the Sarö and Shera Yögurs, two small tribes which under the common name of "Huang-fan" (the yellow barbarians) inhabit the northern reaches of the Nanshan mountains in the district of Kanchow-Hsuchow, and part of the plain at its foot. In the hope of assisting in spreading some light upon these imperfectly known races, I offer

some extracts from my journal, a vocabulary of words noted down parallely, as used by both tribes, some anthropological measurements and a number of photographs, some of which were taken during my expedition, others representing an ethnographical collection which I made.

In making the vocabulary, the words have been taken down phonetically. Dr Ramstedt of the Alexander University at Helsingfors, has kindly supplied the Mongolian equivalent. In my anthropological and ethnographical observations I have followed the directions I found in "Notes and Queries" on Anthropology given by John George Garson, M.D. and Charles Hercules Read, F.S.A., and in "Ethnography", by the latter author.

Unfortunately some of the photographs have been less successful than others owing to the fact that a stress of work obliged me to postpone for some months the developing of some dozen films.

As the principal aim of my expedition lay altogether outside the spheres of anthropology and ethnography, and as I have had no opportunity to revise my more or less casually made observations, it is without the least claim to authority that I present this very unpretentious material to the kind consideration of the reader.

Helsingfors, August 10th 1909.

C.G.E. Mannerheim.

I

Among the Sarö Yögurs.

At dawn on December 13th 1907, we started upon our expedition, and we soon left behind us the pleasant little Chinese town Chin-t'a, with its halfrounded, irregular clay walls, so unlike the strictly symmetrical Chinese type, its narrow, winding alleys, its temple courts shaded by ancient gnarled trees, and its towers with their innumerable bells all tinkling in the wind. Our road led in a SE direction, past a temple with a high conical tower which except for the missing gilding still gave reason for the town's name, (*chin* 'gold', *t'a* 'tower'; *Chint'a* 'the golden tower') and we over the ruins of a wall, which formerly enclosed this oasis — one of the most northerly outposts of Chinese civilisation, in the sand and gravel ocean of the Gobi Desert.

Beyond the wall extended a sandy, sterile stretch of ground, which, at first thickly bestrewn with Chinese tombstones, rose gradually towards a low chain of hills lying in a ESE-WNW direction. In character, these resembled a number of narrow gravel ridges, some of which formed a crest, others rising in terraces. A slight pass which we rode through at about twelve kilometres from the town was the highest point reached that day, and the descent southwards was even less perceptible than our ascent. The only vegetation to be seen was some insignificant creeping brush, growing in tufts at lengthy intervals. About nine kilometres from the pass the belt of gravel merged into a sandy formation, dotted thickly with knolls on which grew more of the same creeping brush, though of somewhat larger growth. Some few kilometres further, reeds appeared, and these soon gave place to a typical porous soil with a strong salty deposit. As far as the eye could see, the same inhospitable kind of country extended, sparsely covered by grass towards the south, where it merged into the *Nan-shan* mountains, the outlines ol which could be discerned in the misty distance.

The great high road — joining *K'ou-li* (the territory inside the Great Wall) and *K'ou-wai* (the territory outside) has in *North Kansu an* E-W direction and at *Shuang-t'ingtzu*, twenty-seven kilometres from Chint'a, we crossed one of the innumerable etape stations which faithfully follow its course all the way from the Pacific Ocean to the distant plains of Russia and India. Some seven or eight kilometres south of the road, we rode past the first of the scattered dwellings of

the Yögur village of *Ma-chuang-tzu*. I dismounted to get a nearer view of three women who were busy in the yard of the house. They wore a strange costume such as I had never seen before. The eldest, a woman of fifty, with a Roman nose and a generally dignified appearance, was very talkative. She offered us tea, and told us they were Sarö Yögurs — a name which she repeated proudly several times. The other two women had prominent cheek bones, small eyes, thick ugly noses, and were of a common appearance. My camera, which I brought out carelessly, changed however the mental atmosphere at a stroke. There was a sudden end to confidences and there remained nothing for us but to continue our way to the village temple, distant 12-13 km to the south.

Built near the remains of a small ruin, the plain temple buildings soon rose before us, surrounded by a small group of wooden huts occupied by the lamas. None of the lamas were at home but the Chinese officer in command of the Shuangt'ingtzu mounted guard gave unhesitatingly orders that my things should be carried into the cleanest of the houses. All was arranged in a moment and the house looked as if we had always lived there. Hashim was busily washing rice, cleaning carrots and preparing the mutton for the ever-appetising *palao*, with which he had delighted us for the last seventeen months, Chou, my seventeen-year-old interpreter arranging the meteorological instruments, Lukanin, the Cossack of the expedition, and Hsu, a retired Chinese Colonel, now in my service, saw to the horses and equipments, while at the scanty kitchen fire, I tried to thaw my fingers, stiff from the cold December breeze, to start work on notebooks and maps.

The lamas, on their arrival, appeared somewhat surprised at our intrusion but though the first meeting was rather cool, the ice soon was broken, and my host, in particular, grew both hospitable and talkative.

Machuangtzu is a village of about forty houses spread over a wide area, occupied by people who call themselves *Sarö Yögur* ('yellow Yögurs') and called by the Chinese *Huang Fantzu* (huang 'yellow', fan 'barbarian'; 'the yellow barbarians') to distinguish them from the Tangutans, who are called *Hei Fantzu* (hei 'black'). A legend, imparted from father to son, says that more than a thousand years ago, their forefathers came from the west, where they had inhabited a city, bearing the name *Shiche-Hache*, called by the Chinese *Chenfu tun*. It lay, they said, a forty-five days' march to the west or southwest, on the shores of a river and was surrounded by high mountains. In Shiche-Hache, a temple had been built with many excavated caves in the mountain. — According

to another Yögur version, they had moved to their present dwelling places during the reign of the Emperor *K'ang-hsi*, to escape a contagious disease, the name of which my interpreter gave as cholera. Some of the tribe had settled in the mountains S and SE of *Hsuchow*, the remainder on the plain. Those who had settled nearest Hsuchow had become amalgamated with the Chinese, the others still retained their language. The ruin near the present temple had belonged to a race of people, having tails, whom the Chinese call *Kuzurkei*.

About forty kilometres eastward from Machuangtzu lies a village, called *Tung-heitzu*, also consisting of forty or fifty homesteads, with a temple, — and about thirty kilometres south of the town *Kaot'aj* there is still another called *Yumashan Huang Fantzu*, where the same language is spoken. Further south, at *Bayakhtag* and in the mountains south of *Kanchow*, there are also Huang Fantzu living, but they speak another language which resembles Mongolian, while the language spoken by those mentioned first, has a great resemblance to Khirgis and to the Turkish spoken by the Sarts. No Yögur written language has ever been heard of, neither could they tell me anything about their early history, of wars they had taken part in, or the names of their Princes or chiefs. I was also unable to gather any old songs or legends. They told me there were none, but it is possible that their suspicious nature, or the incompetence of my interpreter or other reasons, may have been the cause of their unwillingness to reveal them to me.

The temple at Machuangtzu is small and poor, and it was evident that it was seldom used. Three large rude paintings, brought from *Sining*, representing *Shykshatva* enthroned between *Tshulma* and *Shtsha-ryzyk*, decorate the principal wall, and old dirty, smoky Buddha pictures, in the form of banners, cover part of the side walls. Some of them were said to have been brought from the north and were probably of Mongolian origin.

There were seven or eight lamas, each living in his own clean little wooden house of two or three rooms, built and furnished in Chinese style. They told me they earned their living by keeping cattle, and by cutting wood. The contributions of the villagers, contrary to what is the custom in other Buddhist communities which I visited, are very insignificant. A number of boys, distributed about the lamas' houses, were being educated by them for the priestly office. The lamas alone can read and write, but the written language is Tangutan. A document written in a beatiful text-hand from the renowned lama monastery of *Gumbum*, these men could not decipher. They declared there are two Tibetan written languages of which they knew only one.

The local administration lies in the hands of a *pykh* and his assistant *yarkatshe*. The villages of Machuangtzu, Tungheitzu and Yumashan pay a yearly tax of thirteen horses to the Chinese government which is collected by the brigadier-general in Hsuchow, through an officer stationed at Khunkeitzu (about fifty km south of Machuangtzu).

All the houses I visited were fairly clean, and were built in Chinese style, only a few could be considered poor, taking into consideration the general circumstances.

The chief room in the house was provided with the traditional Chinese sleeping stove, *k'ang*, covered with a straw matting, and heated from outside. Opposite the door, stood a small Buddhist altar, sometimes decorated with a small banner, blackened by smoke and dirt. Another room contained a brick fireplace in which two or three shallow Chinese kettles were immured, for the preparation of tea, in the Mongolian way, with salt and butter. A pot was moved into the centre of the room, where it was placed on three unburnt bricks, while all the company present sat around upon the floor, using their own legs and heels as seats. All the household utensils I saw were of Chinese origin, with the exception of some turned Mongolian wooden cups, with wide flat bottoms. In the yards you often saw white flags, covered with Buddhist prayers — a certain remedy against sickness and other misfortunes. More expensive articles, such as bronze statues of Buddha, I only saw in the house of a lama, and in another the traditional prayer-cylinder.

The clothes were cut in Chinese fashion but usually made of home-spun material. The men wear a Chinese cap with a button, or a Mongolian felt cap, a long coat, or fur coat, bound round the waist with a long narrow home-woven scarf in grey, reddish-lilac, or blue, also a pair of half-loose trousers of coarse home-spun cotton, or skin, bound round the legs at the bottom by a broad, home spun bandage-like fastening. They wear coarse woollen stockings knitted in the Chinese way and Chinese shoes often garnished with a loose legging of blue cotton material. Neither shirts nor drawers are worn. The women's dresses resemble those of the men, but their summer costume is fashioned like that of the Chinese women, though somewhat shorter. The fur coat worn by both men and women is usually bordered with fur as the Khirgis and Mongolians wear it, and was of better quality than is usually to be bought in Chinese bazars.

The women's head dresses were very peculiar. To each of the plaits hanging over the breast, a long, narrow strip of cloth is fastened. This is decorated with small

the breast, a long, narrow strip of cloth is fastened. This is decorated with small pieces of coral and glass beads in various tints of violet. Below this hang a whole series of copper rings, used by the Chinese as thimbles, and the whole is finished off by a large metal ornament, from which a tassel hangs. This long head-dress reaches to the ground. Below this is fastened a bunch of small pockets, embroidered by the women in Chinese patterns. A long narrow piece of cloth hangs down the back on which a row of big white bone buttons is sewn. The head is usually covered by a Mongolian fur or felt cap. This curious head dress is only used by the married woman, but having once adopted it, she wears it till her death. Even in the grave it is not all removed, only the strips of embroidered cloth silver ornaments and bone buttons, she being allowed to retain her copper rings.

The Sarö Yögur has not much in the way of clothes. There is no holiday attire, not even a change of every-day clothes. Nothing new is bought till the old is falling to tatters. It is particularly difficult during the cold season to make purchases for an ethnographic collection, for if a Yögur sells a piece of clothing, he has nothing with which to replace it.

On visiting any of the Yögur homesteads, you are almost sure to find the men at home, the women being busy out of doors, looking after the cattle, carrying water etc. There is nothing in the way of handicrafts or home-industries, except weaving, basket-making and the knitting of stockings. The two latter, hardly to be called masculine occupations, are performed by the men. The coarse stems of a species of grass are used as knitting needles. The basket-work is very rude and primitive and greatly inferior to Chinese work. Cloth is woven by the women in long narrow strips which in quality as well as in the style of weaving closely resembles the work of Khirgis women. Their primitive looms stand in the yard, where the warp is fastened to two sticks driven into the ground while the finished material is wound round a third. The materials were coarse, but like that of the Khirgis, of good quality. It is almost the only saleable article possessed by them, and is sold in Hsuchow and Kanchow for 70 *tshokh* (900 *tshokh* = 1 *lan* = 1 r. 60 kop.) per Chin, *ch'ih* (0,33 m). There is no forging of iron. Not even blankets, those very necessary articles in an Asiatic household are made by the Sarö Yögurs, who get what they require from the Chinaman. There is no agriculture, the grazing of cattle is their only means of livelihood — and the Sarö Yögurs are purely a pastoral people though they have fixed abodes. Much of the live stock, which one sees in their care, belongs however to Chinamen in neighbouring villages and the Sarö Yögurs receive wool and some flour as payment for herding them.

Their chief articles of food are flour and various kinds of cereals. Tea is made with salt and butter, and milk and cream when it can be obtained. Roasted wheaten flour is often mixed with tea. They also make a paste out of flour and water, which is rolled out and cut up into long strips and eaten in boiling water as soup. Rice is made into porridge. Meat is a rarity. A sheep is only killed on specially festive occasions, and these are not reputed to be very gay. They have no musical instruments, no dancing and very seldom any chorus singing. Now and again, you hear a monotonous song sung in the fields, but when I offered to have a sheep killed, and arrange a feast (*tomashá*) the lamas could not get the necessary people to sing. One of the lamas, who was supposed to have a good voice, sang at my request a monotonous melody, in which *oor* ("he or she has come") occured innumerable times. He assured me they had no songs, a tune being sung to any words which the occasion offered.

In general, the people gave an impression of being in straightened circumstances and readily complained of money difficulties. The grass on their pasture land was coarse, almost reedy, they had not much live stock, and their economic condition was undeniably low, but in comparison with the really terrible poverty so often seen in Central Asia, their condition cannot be considered very bad. The richest man among them had only six or seven horses, ten cows, and a hundred sheep, but as an appended table shows, out of the nineteen homesteads that I visited there was only one where no livestock at all was owned, and though another was in much the same condition, even they could make a living by herding the cattle belonging to the Chinese of the neighbouring village.

It seemed to me that there was a great lack of energy and one was surprised at the want of manliness, especially among the young men. There is no kind of sport, no races, no wrestling, even none of the games on horseback which are so usual in Central Asia. In many houses you see guns of the antediluvian type characteristic of the whole of Central Asia but you never hear of any shooting. Involuntarily one asks oneself if the laziness and lack of energy of the people has been caused by the difficult conditions, or if the contrary is not nearer the truth.

The majority of the Sarö Yögurs whom I met, did not appear shy, and my host particularly was very frank in his opinions and informations. Or perhaps they appeared relatively less shy and reserved, because I was on this occasion without my craniometer — which always had the effect of depriving even the boldest among them of all courage. The greater part of my equipment, among other things my instruments for anthropological measurements, had followed the main high road, by some mistake, passed me and was probably awaiting me in

high road, by some mistake, passed me and was probably awaiting me in Kanchow. This circumstance forces me to content myself with describing the appearance of these tribes without being able to give the far more reliable measurements.

The cheek bones are, in most cases, decidedly, if not excessively prominent, though I saw several with an oval shape of face, without any strikingly prominent cheek bones, but in general the type of face was short and somewhat broad. A true Finnish turned up nose, with an insignificant bridge was to be seen in many faces, and some of the women had thick potatow-noses, but in general they were straight. The mouth was normal, with neither very thin nor thick lips, the eyes small and the distance between also normal. The corners of the eyes were open, and not overgrown by the eyelid. Their hair and their thin beards were black. They were of average height and we saw no corpulent people. Their movements were slow and sluggish except when there was an opportunity of buying or selling. If a few *tshokh* can be earned, the Sarö Yögur becomes lively and the interest is general, nearly as great in the on-lookers as in the purchaser.

The short time at my disposal did not give me much opportunity for a thorough study of their customs. The little I was able to note, follows here:

In cases of death, a lama is called upon to read prayers. The body is burnt naked, in summer within three days, in winter within seven to ten days, on a bier made of faggots. No oil is used, but a kind of spirit as a means of ignition. The corpse is placed in a lying position, with its head towards the south. Nothing in the way of food, ornaments, etc. is burnt with it. The ashes are gathered together and covered with a small heap of earth. A young man or maiden dying after a short illnes is simply buried and the place marked by a mound of earth. Visitors and those present at the burial are entertained in the home of the deceased according to his means, and the lama is paid for his services by gifts, without having any right, as in certain other tribes, to a share in the household goods.

The property is inherited by the wife, who in case she marries again must yield it to the male heirs. Daughters inherit no rights. Cousins are forbidden to marry, neither is marriage allowed between a niece and uncle, or nephew and aunt; sisters and brothers-in-law may not marry, nor stepchildren with stepfather or mother.

The wife is bought, the decision being taken by the parents without consulting the young people. The final arrangements are usually made by some elderly

woman who has been sent for this purpose to the parents of the girl. No festivities take place during these proceedings. The price which has been agreed upon for the girl is either paid at once or by instalments. These agreements are often entered upon while the bride and bridegroom are still children. Men marry between the ages of fifteen and thirty, and women at about sixteen years of age. A younger brother steps into his elder brother's place, in case of the death of the latter, despite the difference of age, but if the marriage has already taken place he cannot afterwards marry his sister-in-law. The bride and bridegroom are not allowed to see each other before marriage. The bride is given a dowry, according to the wealth of her parents and the sum which has been paid for her. On the wedding day the lama is called upon to read prayers, in the homes of both bride and bridegroom. Relatives and friends gather in the home of the bride and, after the wedding feast, accompany her, as she rides away — with her dowry in her hand, and her hair plaited and decorated for the first time, — to her new home. The parents of the bridegroom take no part in the festivities at the bride's house, nor do the bride's parents accompany their daughter, when she leaves her home. On arrival, the bride is received by a number of women, who lead her to a tent raised for the occasion and all the company present are lavishly entertained by the parents of the bridegroom. When the lama finds a propitious moment, he leads the bridal pair to the house, where they first kneel before the altar and then to all the older people present. For the wedding feast, which does not last more than one day, a sheep is killed and Chinese gin is drunk. The men gladly take this opportunity of getting drunk, the women, on the contrarys, very seldom, chiefly, it was told me, because the modest supply of liquor seldom sufficed for all.

Next day a visit to the bride's parents is paid by the young married couple, taking with them some insignificant present, such as a piece of cloth, a bottle of *Chiu* (Chinese gin) or something of the kind. — Only monogamy exists — even if the marriage is childless. Divorce is sometimes permitted. They do not marry Chinese or Tangutans.

Weddings are almost the only festive occasions observed by the Sarö Yögurs. On New Year's Day there may be somewhat more food prepared, the richest peasants kill a sheep, but there is no visiting. They do not have any gatherings to celebrate Buddha ceremonies or sacrifices, and the lamas only read prayers on the 1st and the 15th of every month, as they say themselves that no one ever attends the services.

The lamas have no knowledge of medicine. In case of serious illness they are

only called upon to pray. Sometimes the lama walks round the bed burning paper as a kind of invocation.

In childbirth, the women kneel, and are assisted by women only, the husband not being present. The navel string is severed with a pair of scissors by an old woman, often the grandmother of the child. The child is washed in warm water and rubbed with butter, and this is repeated a week later. The hair is cut or shaved later. Before the birth of the child, the lama reads prayers over the mother, but he takes no notice of the newly born. There are no festivities, no christening, whether the child be boy or girl, — but the parents are visited by their nearest friends, who bring small presents of food. After a month's separation the joint bed is again resumed.

The words which I have noted and phonetically transcribed as heard among the Sarö Yögurs and Shera Yögurs, are to be found in a table at the end of this brochure. It is worthy of note, that a number of words, such as boot, bear, window, baskets, and others, are not to be found in the Sarö Yögur language, where they substitute the Chinese word — but they are to be found among the Shera Yögurs.

The number of births and deaths during the last ten years, in the nineteen homesteads we visited, and the number of live stock possessed by each family is shown in the following table:

births, deaths, cattle, horses, sheep, donkeys.

N:o 1 2 — 4 2 60 1
2 2 — 4 — 30 3
3 3 — — — 15 1
4 4 1 5 2 60 1
5 2 — — — 20 1
6 2 — 4 1 60 1
7 4 — 27 7 80 —
8 4 — 17 3 45 —
9 1 1 2 — 35 1
10 1 1 11 — 60 2
11 1 1 — — — 1
12 2 — 5 — 20 2
13 — — 1 — 10 2

14 1 — 3 2 42 2
15 2 — 6 4 100 1
16 1 1 — — 6 1
17 — 1 — — — —
18 1 — — — 15 1
19 4 1 2 — 50 1

It must be pointed out that these very primitive statistics stand in manifest opposition to the general information which they gave me, according to which the tribe on its arrival in those parts had been far more numerous, their constant struggle against unfavourable pecuniary and hygienic conditions having decimated them till there only remained the handful of Sarö Yögur families who inhabit the above mentioned villages. The number of deaths still outnumber the births. It is however possible that the statistical account which, especially in regard to their livestock, is always collected with difficulty, may have been intentionally falsified, but, on the other hand, vague statements are often liable to be unintentionally wrong.

On the morning of the 16th I said farewell to my hospitable host and with my men and two packhorses started in a ENE direction to the village Yench'i from where I intended to follow the great high road to Kanchow. From Kanchow I wished to make an excursion and visit the Shera Yögur Prince, whose home in the Nanshan mountains had been described to me by my friends, the lamas. My host, the lama *Kuá* was polite enough to wish to accompany me all the way to Yench'i. He rode a small pony which more resembled a rat than a horse. It was no bigger than the donkey on whose back my friend, the Chinese officer commanding Shuangt'ingtzu's mounted guard station, balanced himself. However it walked so quickly that my big horse, which during seventeen months of travel had every opportunity of developing its stride, could with difficulty keep pace with it.

A few cows were seen, in the early morning, standing about the farmsteads. They were thin and small. Our road led us over the same porous, salty ground and the lama complained of the poor soil and the coarse grass. It must be confessed that it resembled reeds more than grass and seemed better fit to be used as knitting needles than as food for cattle.

It was a beautiful clear morning, not a breath stirring and we thoroughly enjoyed the splendid day. I asked *Kuá* to sing us a song, as we rode along, but he was

only capable of rendering the same *oor* in an indescribably dull and dreary tone. Time after time, he asked for my matches, dismounted and making up a bundle of dry grass, lighted it and croached over it for a moment, warming himself, then remounting and hurriedly catching up with our party. I am sure any of the Yögur women would have shown more power of endurance than this young man of twenty-eight — and at the moment of parting with him, it appeared clearer than ever to me that this little, lost, Turkish tribe, living at the foot of the Nanshan mountains, with its stocking-knitting men, void of all energy and manliness, was on its way to certain annihilation.

II.

Among the Shera Yögurs.

In Kanchow I was obliged to remain a conple of days for the preparations necessary for my intended visit to the so-called "Yellow Tanguts" living to the south of the town. To secure myself a good reception, I applied to the highest military mandarin of the place for a letter of introduction to the Tangutan Prince. *Ma-t'idu*, the mandarin in question was one of that numerous class of Chinese Mussulmans who had betrayed their co-religionists and during the bloody Dungan revolt had made common cause with the Chinamen. He was kind enough not only to give me the letter I required but offered me a military escort. Not wishing to take so many people with me into the mountains I begged that the escort might not exceed one mounted soldier, and laughingly the mandarin agreed, promising to give the necessary orders that the man should meet me in the village *Kanchenp'u* near the town *Li-yen*, about 23-24 km WSW from *Kanchow*. Having very heartily thanked the mandarin, whose imposing soldierly figure and jovial face adorned by a fierce pair of moustaches, looked considerably more Turkish than Chinese, I left his spacious *yamen* (office) and early on the following morning, Dec. 24th 1907, made a start, with two packhorses and three followers, the interpreter, Cossack and cook. Our road led out of the western gate and westward through a prosperous densely populated low country, crossed by innumerable irrigation canals. After a rise of 8-9 km the stony bed of the river Heiho was reached and its seven-branched estuary forded. The largest of these forks was forty-four strides wide and 0,5 m in depth, and had a fairly strong current. The river bed here is about 2 km wide but it broadens to the south, where it spreads out into a perfect sea of stone and gravel, several miles in width, which at the rainy periods is completely covered by the water rushing from the mountains in the south, bringing with it ever more and more boulderstones. In Kanchenp'u we sought in vain for the promised escort with the letter of introduction, of the importance of which I had many opportunities of assuring myself during earlier visits paid to Kalmucks and Tangutans, Khirgis and other nomadic tribes. There was however nothing to be done but to await patiently his arrival from the thirty mile distant Li-yen. As he did not arrive by the following evening. I was forced to wait another whole day for the purpose of sending a messenger to the garrison there. My messenger returned with word that a soldier had been sent, not to Kanchenp'u, but to a small military post in a

ravine halfway between the village and the Tangutan monastery *K'ang-lung-ssu*.

On the morning of the 26th I was at last able to start, after having with great difficulty, almost by force, secured a guide for the first part of the day's march. It was a sunny though windy winter morning, and we soon passed the boundary of cultivated ground, and made our way towards a grassy slope stretching upwards to the mountains in the south. Following the dry bed of a river we reached a ravine opening to the east, along the bottom of which the river *Hrar-gol* or *Ta-ho*, now ice-bound, had worn itself a deep channel — about 200 fathoms wide — and along its high precipitous right bank we made our way. Above the steep strand plateau lie low hills of conglomerate which at a distance rise to some considerable height. The road leads very soon across the frozen strip of water to the opposite shore and then back again and this movement was repeated time after time during the day's march. The shore became more stony the farther one penetrated into the ravine, and the ice if possible more slippery. The few trees growing in the river-bed were being hewn down by Chinamen, who, binding them in pairs, lay them, with the loose ends dragging, over the backs of donkeys, and thus draw them out upon the plain. The further one rides, the more of these little donkey caravans one meets, and now it is one of our horses which slips and lies full length on the glassy ice, now it is one of the small donkeys which lies helpless. Fortunately the earth was bare: if it had been icy, it would have been impossible to get over such ground, stony and broken as the road was. Now the horses climbed a clift several fathoms high, now they crept like snakes between huge blocks of all dimensions. The hills around us were not very high and there were no grassy slopes, the naked walls of rock showing in many places a bright-red colour. The ravine soon narrowed and its sides rose steeply, often precipitously. About four km from the beginning of the pass, we rode past one of the small guardhouses which the Chinese government officers are so fond of building in any inaccessible place. They are spread over the whole width of the Empire and do good police service. In a little square tower built of granite, a guard consisting of three men from the Li-yen garrison was posted. A little further on, where the ravine broadened again, we saw a poverty-stricken little Chinese homestead, and a small temple. The ravine opened out now and again, soon to narrow once more, and the road grew worse and worse. About eleven km from the guardhouse, the hills around us rose to a considerable height and we crossed a sharply defined crest. Firtrees showed themselves on the slopes towards the north and west, which were less steep. About 17-18 km from the guard house we passed a fork of the ravine, which now broadened somewhat, and, turning sharply to the south, we rode towards the river *Kiito-gol* which we

approached on the left. Now the mountains were lower, the shores and slopes covered with grass, and in the distance was seen one of those decorated white conical towers so characteristic of Buddhist countries. Another turn of the road and we were suddenly arrived at our destination, K'anglungssu, the chief monastery of the *Shera Yögurs*, or *Rtangu rgonba* as it is called in their language.

Built on the lower slopes of some small hills, the monastery appeared to be a mass of buildings out of which rose a large, massive temple in red and brown and grey and white, with the usual gilded Buddha roof-decorations. Around the temple walls some dozens of houses, were grouped the majority of them low and of the most unpretentious description. Together with another smaller temple, your eye was caught at once by a temple-like building, which is used by the monastery, and a couple of rather more capacious houses, one of them belonging to the *t'umu* (a sort of hereditary governor) the other being kindly placed at my disposal.

Timber is chiefly used in building, only the crevices being filled with clay. Four-cornered beams are used as columns indoors as well as in the outer walls of the building. The rooms are almost completely dark, very small, and black with soot. A *k'ang* heated with coal and dry manure, which is lifted into the room by removing a board or two in the ceiling takes up nearly all the space. No Buddha altar or decorations were visible in the houses of the lamas I visited. Some blankets, a fur-coat, cups, basins, a jar for coal and a couple of chests, or cupboard-like boxes, is all that is to be seen in the way of household goods. By the door outside stands a wide deep bench, like a bed, without sides, the wall forming the back of it. It is used as a seat in winter, and in summer as a bed.

The temple, the chief religious shrine of the Shera Yögurs was large, and wealthy. In its size and architectural style it greatly resembled the monastery of *Kuré* belonging to the Zurgan sumun Kalmucks in the valley of the Tekés river, which I had visited some months previously, but the details showed signs of Tibetan influence. The front of the building faced east and opened upon a roomy courtyard. It was decorated with large, very rudely painted pictures of warriors, like those to be seen outside the houses and temples of the mandarins. A colonnade of narrow wooden columns led from the principal entrance to the altar, where the high and throne-like chair of state belonging to the *gegen* stood on the left. The four walls of the temple were formed by four narrow buildings with carved Chinese roofs, of which those at the entrance and at the altar wall

rose somewhat above the two side buildings. The central square connecting these four buildings, which lack their inner walls, was raised two stories and crowned by a four-cornered roof with carved roof-trees, embellished at the highest point with a gilded cone.

Round three sides of the second story ran small rooms under the same roof, which are used for storing various things. The fourth side, that towards the entrance door, was open allowing free passage for light but also for cold. The interior walls of this gallery were covered with Buddhist pictures, painted in bright colours and set into the walls like panels, and diverse banners with Buddhist ornamentation. In the lower, larger temple-court, the side walls were divided into open square cupboards and compartments, holding a great number of Buddhist books. The Tangut lettering was carefully inscribed on long narrow loose pages, often enclosed in an artistic frame, secured between two wooden boards bound together by a cord. Along the entrance side of the courts, on low benches, the lamas scarlet mantles, highcombed head dresses, staffs and other insignia were lying. The centre of the altar wall was occupied by Buddha figures with low tables placed before them, bearing small dishes of water, grain — a burning lamp and other ritualistic objects. On both sides of this, the wall was covered from floor to ceiling by hundreds of small compartments, in which, behind a hanging, the same image of Buddha was repeated.

The place of honour, that is, the centre of the wall behind the altar, was occupied by a bronze statue of *Tsunkoa* (the same in both Yögur and Tangut), half a metre high, wrapped in a piece of red cloth. Before him stood *Stonba*, also in bronze, but in miniature. On each side stand *Shagdur (Shagiur?)* in two different aspects and further away two highly-coloured banners representing *Shtshanrygzyc* on the left and *Stongsko* on the right. Lastly, on the far left was still another fine bronze Buddha, also some Buddhas of painted clay, and on the right, three bronze Buddhas forming three small separate groups round the wall. Along the cornice between the lower ceiling and the wall of the gallery numbers of banners were hanging, their century-old dim colouring and gilding being most effective.

A narrow corridor-like room behind the altar was filled with the most extraordinary collection of Buddha idols seated in a row round the four walls. Opposite the entrance a richly gilded *Stongsko*, of immense size, was enthroned.

The lamas living in this monastery do not number more than fifteen, all ages included. The younger men especially were extremely friendly and obliging,

owing probably to *Ma-t'idu's* sending me an escort. The *gegen* of the monastery, their *Shke* lama (Great Lama) Buddha's reincarnation, was still a child, growing up in the mountains, a three day's ride further south, under the care of elderly Yögur lamas. He had succeeded the last *Shke* lama, who died eight or nine years ago, but was only brought to K'anglungssu for the solemnizing of great ceremonies, occuring every sixth and twelfth Chinese moon. On the hill-side nearest the monastery some tombs were marked by high poles and heaps of stones, in memory of some respected lamas. When a Yögur rides by, he dismounts and mumbles some prayers half aloud, but you never hear, as among the Zurgan sumun Khalmucks and Tanguts, the lama's solemn singing, with its deep, long drawn-out notes which spread a veil of mysticism and religious feeling over the hidden valleys and chasms of their high impenetrable mountains. Still, if you walk along the winding paths between the wooden huts of the monastery, the tinkling of small bells, and a monotonous voice tells you that here too, in the depths of their dark huts, prayers are being chanted with the same zeal as among the Tibetan hills. The lamas are supported by voluntary contributions in payment for their services as prayer-readers. The generosity evinced is great, and is proved by the fact that in the case of a death, from one-third to one-half of the property left is given to the lamas. Only a small percentage of the lamas are able to read the Tangutan language, they have nothing to do with medicine, and in cases of serious illness a fortune-teller is called upon — usually a lama — to foretell the future, and also another lama, to pray for the sick. The fortune-teller uses three dice and a Tangutan book in which all answers to the various combinations are to be found.

Not even the presence of their *t'umu, Rentshen Nurbo,* who had been kind enough to come to meet me at K'anglungssu, conquered the terror which the lamas felt for my anthropological instruments. Many of those who had been most sociable disappeared, and not even the tempting knives, looking-glasses, snuff-boxes, etc, which I offered to the bravest, who dared face the danger of being measured, could persuade them to cross the threshold of their homes. Seeing that all efforts were vain and having no further hope of success, I determined to leave K'anglungssu on the 29th of December for the purpose of paying a return visit to the t'umu. He offered his services as guide and in the bright glory of the early morning, as we said farewell to the monastery, with its red-mantled, closely cropped lamas, the country round about appeared to me far pleasanter than on my arrival there. Kiito-gol winds southwards past the monastery between two mountain slopes. That to the left, is covered with grass, while a thick forest of fir-trees climbs to the crest of the other. Opposite the

monastery from the east a narrow valley winds its way between grassy hills. Its northerly slope facing SE carries you by several terrace-like plateaux to the higher mountain range which we had crossed a few days ago, — its granite crest could be seen, forming three long peaks bordered with a fringe of fir-trees growing along its northern slope. The sunburnt grass had in the sunshine a warm sandstone colour against which the grey mountain ridge with its dark border of fir-trees stood out effectively. The white and greyish-blue ribbon of the icebound Kiito-gol disappeared among the hills to the north. I said goodbye to a group of lamas, who, no longer terrified at my craniometer, had assembled to see me off. The red mantles and togas in which the lamas sometimes drape themselves wearing their right arm and shoulder bare — their closely cropped heads, their wonderfully expressive faces, with bronze and earth-coloured skin hanging in deep wrinkles and folds, their kindly insinuating smiles, white teeth and outstretched hands, all made an ineffaceable impression.

We rode south up the hilly ridge, rising between Kiito-gol and *Hrar-gol*, at the foot of which lies the monastery, and found a "*place of prayer*" on its crest, marked by a great clump of poles and young trees. Down a precipitous slope wre reached the bottom of the narrow valley of Hrar-gol. To the south forest-covered heights could be seen dominated by a great snow-topped giant, which the t'umu names *Hanshozu*. [A horse-path which is only open for part of the year leads south along the Hrar-gol valley. Hsining is reached after a 12-17 days' ride.] A narrow side ravine brought us to a slight pass; from which we turned westward. The upward climb was very steep and the road divided here, one path leading westward to Khungeitza-Hsuchow which was reached in four days. Still followed on the right by the same fir-bordered mountain crest, which we saw in K'anglungssu to the NW, we rode over a high, undulating plain, covered with snow. In the far distance to the left was seen a wide snowcovered mountain range, which the natives call *Longshur*. It is supposed to be a continuation of the above mentioned Hanshozu. Glittering in its white covering, *Galdjan* rose in the WNW high above the rest of the range, and here *Neimen-gol*, one of the great tributaries of the Hei-ho, has its source. After gathering all the waters from the rivers pouring down these mountains it flows past Li-yen. The ride down from the heights was if possible even steeper than our ride up, but we were soon at the bottom of a fork-like ravine, in the left branch of which lay the "residence" of the *t'umu*, on the shore of an insignificant little river called *Kluadjek-gol*.

A somewhat larger wooden house and a couple of huts built of slender timbers with the roofs prolonged to form a small, half-open outhouse, is the simple

dwelling during the winter months of the hereditary *t'umu* of the Shera Yögurs, and one which, I am sure, his very unpretentious people consider to be the height of modern comfort. The larger building consisted of two spacious, barn-like rooms, absolutely unfurnished, with simply a hole in the ceiling, above the kettle placed on eight bricks in the centre of the floor. In a small partition in one of the gables of the house, a *k'ang* was covered with carpets and rugs, to give the t'umu an opportunity of indulging in his dearest passion, the opium pipe. On each side of the larger building were two enclosures fenced in, the one for cattle, the other for sheep. Near by, stood a couple of typical Shera Yögur dwellings, low grey tents raised on a low foundation of slender timbers, caulked with manure and provided each with an enclosure for cattle. With the exception of the monastery of K'anglungssu and this house of the t'umu's, there are said to be no other wooden buildings owned by the Yögurs.

The Shera Yögurs inhabit the mountains round the following rivers, all of which are tributaries of *Hei-ho* or of its tributaries: *Neiman* or *Longsor* (flows past Li-yen), *Tshulung, Zdem, Sheirik, Hrar, Kiito, Tashtyng, Khsan, and Pazyng gol* (Hei-ho's upper course) or *Khara Murin*, as it is called lower down. The t'umu, whose knowledge of his country seemed rather limited, said that his people inhabited an area of two or three days' ride westward, as much to the East, and three to four days' ride southward, from K'anglungssu, and he considered that there were not more thau about *three hundred tents* spread over a distance of from five to six versts. They are governed by some ten t'umus (5 *t'umu's* and 5 *fu-fumu's*) all subordinate to my host, who is called *ta t'umu* (the great t'umu).

The dignity of t'umu which in Yögur is called *nujun* is hereditary and carries with it the right of wearing a Chinese mandarin button. A *t'umu* acts as judge, adjusts taxes, and manages the tents which belong to his district. Important questions are referred to the eldest *t'umu*. None of them have any pay, but they receive small gifts when a complaint is brought before them. There are no written laws, neither are any of the people able to read. Tradition and common-sense are the guiding principles. Crimes do not occur, and when there is any question of an execution the case is referred to the Chinese authorities.

Since the Dungan revolt, only twenty-three horses are levied yearly — formerly eighty-two were paid — and they are sent by the commander of the garrison in Li-yen to *t'idu* in Kanchow. Privately, the officer in question also receives fifty tiao copper coins, about fifty lan, 1 deer and from two to thirty hares in the year. The price of the horses is paid in money, at twenty-eight lan per horse, and the

sum levied on the different tents depends upon their means. The *t'umu* complained of the arbitrariness and extortion of the Chinese officials. He was very anxious at the moment about some coal-shafts in the *Liwenku* ravine, for the use of which the Chinese had hitherto paid the Yögurs a small yearly rental. Now the nearest local mandarin had admonished the Chinese to pay the rental to him and not to the Yögurs, which after all, only came to some three or four taels per shaft.

Neither the *t'umu* nor the lamas seemed to know much about the origin of the tribe. They had once lived in *K'ouwai* (outside the Great Wall), probably in the North, but possibly in the W or NW, which land in Chinese was called *Tangutá*, in their language Seche-Hache — some of them calling it *Shilagu*. [*Potanin* in his book of travels says that some of the Yögurs pronounced Shilagu as Sheragol.] They had left it very long ago and removed to their present surroundings. Where that land lay, whether it was mountainous or level they did not know; neither did they know if it had been governed by their own Princes, nor had they preserved the names of their more renowned ancestors, except that of a certain Khor Geser Rdjalu (Djavu, according to *Potanin*). [The foot prints of Gesers horse are said to be found on the walls of a cliff near the Tangut monastery Matissu, 120 li. S of Kanchow. There is also a hole with a stone in it where his dog was fed.] Documentary evidence in regard to their origin had existed, and had been left in the care of Li-yen's military mandarin, but it had probably been destroyed by fire when his government office was burnt during the Dungan revolt. According to one document they had removed hither during the reign of the Emperor *K'ang-hsi* and become Chinese subjects, but in another it was said they had come over and lived by robbery. The general impression was that they had come here during the Emperor *K'ang-hsi's* reign, though some of the lamas maintained that it had been during Shunchih's. The circumstances which speak for the former view are the following: The monastery of K'anglungssu, according to their statements, had been founded at the time of their settling here. Over the entrance to the temple its name is written in Chinese characters, which same characters occur in the name of the Emperor K'ang-hsi. The only document I was fortunate enough to secure is reproduced below. It was engrossed on white silk by the *t'idu* in Ganchow, during the thirty-fifth year of the reign of the Emperor *K'ang-hsi*. It gives official permission to graze on the pasture lands which the tribes use at present. There is reason to believe that the permission was given soon after their migration at the request of the Chinese officials. It is a strange fact that this little mountain tribe who not only consider themselves, but, without doubt, are, Mongolian, say that in spite of the

difference of language they belong to the same tribe as the Sarö Yögurs, whom they, at the same time, consider to be *Tshantu*, that is to say *Sarts*, and whose name they say ought to be *Kara (black) Yögur* not *Sarö Yogur*. [Potanin also calls them Kara Yögur in the statements he makes in his book regarding these people but I consider it altogether impossible that I should mistake K. for S. It is however possible that the Sarö Yögur themselves have replaced Kara with Sara — that is, the Chinese huang 'yellow' translated in to their own language.] They believe that in years gone by they had both lived in Tangutá, which they left simultaneously. [Where lay this mysterious Tangutá or Seche-Hache, and how have these so dissimilar tribes become one Yögur race?] — According to a statement made by the Chinese mandarin in Li-yen, the country now inhabited by the Yögurs had been earlier peopled by a tribe called *Hung maotzu* (the red-haired) or *Huang fan* (the red barbarians) who were in bad repute as robbers. [Ruins, which the Yögurs consider as belonging to the Khumouza people, are to be found west of Longsor's left mountain range, about ten versts SW from Li-yen, at a place called *Sar Oron* and about fifteen km to the south of ta t'umu's home. There are only traces of dwellings left, in both places; in the latter case these have been numerous.] By the command of the emperors they had been quite exterminated. To this desolate country, where wild beasts began to thrive in startling numbers, were sent at the request of the *t'idu* in Kanchow, by *Chiangch'un* (a kind ol Governor General) in Ili six *tshi Huang-fan* from the district of *Urumtchi*. The Chinese Government provided them with cattle. This movement is supposed to have taken place during Yungch'eng's reign. The Sarö and Shera Yögurs are the remnant of these six *tshi* and the Chinese military authorities consider them even yet a kind of irregular troop, which can be called upon in case of need.

They had been a numerous tribe and counted up to three thousand tents. They had driven out another race, whom the Chinese called *Khu maotzu-si fan* and the Tanguts *Sjamar*.

Death, and also the amalgamation with the Chinese element, has greatly diminished the tribe, and it goes on diminishing rapidly. Women are considerably more numerous than men. Many of them are sterile, and there are seldom more than three children in a family, never more than five or six. Marriage with the Chinese does not occur any longer, neither with the Tanguts, though it did occur earlier. The percentage of lamas is as great as among the Mongolians. It is said that there are at least a hundred of them. In a family where there is more than one son, it is the custom that one of them should be a lama and the smaller boys are educated to the office

and the weaker boys are educated to the office.

The Shera Yögurs consist of the following so-called "bones". *Tokshu* 5; *Orgé* 20; *Sultus* 8-9; *Turgush* 2; *Kargos* 10-15; *Arlat* 2; *Kong* 2-3; *Lantshak* 30-35; *Sockä* 1; *Khongrott* 3; *Temyrt* or *Temurtshin* 2; *Jaglakyr* 4; *Tshungsa* 6; *Tshangban* 20-25; *Rkomdjuk* 4; *Glan* 2; *Kyrgys* 7-8 families, and *Andjan*, out of which all the *t'umus* are chosen. *Tuman* and *Uirot* are bones which are common to both *Sarö* (Kara) and Shera Yögurs. There are however only two families of Shera Yögurs in Tuman. The Sarö Yögurs have, besides, the *Minack* and *Patan* "bones", as well as the *Pegeshi*, from which they take their t'umus. This classification has no importance except as a system of relationship between the respective "bones". The people belonging to the same "bone" are not allowed to intermarry.

The administrative division of the Shera Yögurs is as follows: (The Chinese names indicate the number of horses which are paid in yearly tax.)

Chinese Yögur Chinese Yögur

o cha, Päjat tavyn otóck with the temple of Tingyaossu, Smaktsho
v cha, Neiman otóck " " " of Hungwangssu, Neimankit
o cha, Kurke otöck " " " of Khaya kusu, Kurkin kit
o ma cha, Dörven kolma otóck
(Durben golma.)
wuko ma cha, Shkatok otöck
(Harban tabyn golma) " " " of Kanglungssu, Rtangú rgonba
iko ma cha, Janga otóck
(Harban niga golma)
i ma cha, Neiman golma otók
lai cha, Nanso otóck " " " of Pa baor t'a ssu
Edejeninkit or Kufussu

The division of the Sarö (Kara) Yögurs is as follows:

Jaglaky otók with the temple of Changkussu Yög. Pájran.
Khurungut " " " " Longtsha.

This however does not include the temples in Machuangtzu and Tungheitzu.

Ta t'umu is considered the head of the Sarö Yögurs as well as of the Shera Yögurs, but his authority must be very nominal, when even the settlement of

taxes is not in his hands. —

As to the uses and customs of the Shera Yögurs, this is what I have gathered:

From three to seven days after a death occurs, the body is carried out into the mountains some little distance from the tent and left there to be eaten by birds of prey. The eyes are closed but the limbs in no way straightened. No importance is attached to the position in which the body lies. After three days some of the relatives of the dead go to see if the body has been eaten up by vultures — which is a sign that the dead has been a good man. If such is not the case, a lama is called upon to read more prayers. The bodies of richer people are burnt on a bier of faggots. No food is placed upon it and the body is naked, with its head turned to the west. The ashes are kneaded into a *burkhan* (an image of Buddha), which placed inside a wooden box, is buried. The lama only reads prayers in the tent directly after the death, and the earlier custom of entertaining guests on the occasion has gradually disappeared under the influence of the lamas. — Only male descendants inherit. — The widow remains with her son or sons, who very often do not divide the property. Daughters only inherit in cases where there are no sons.

The marriages are arranged by the parents of both parties. A girl cannot get engaged before she is fifteen years old. Men marry between the ages of fifteen and thirty — women between seventeen and thirty — and the wives are often eight or ten years older than their husbands. A widow seldom remarries, unless her husband has left her destitute, while a widower usually marries again. The only daughter of a family does not marry. Marriages are not entered into among the members of the same "bone", as said above, neither can cousins marry, nor uncles or aunts with their nieces or nephews — neither is it allowed between step-parents and their children. The bride is bought, also in the Shera Yögur tribe, and the agreement is made by two men sent to her father, who, while praising the high qualities of the bridegroom, discusses with them the price of the girl and her dowry. When an agreement is come to, tea, meat and spirits are offered. Before the engagement the young people had no difficulty in meeting as often as they wished, but after it they do not see each other till the wedding day. After some time the two spokesmen appear again bringing the promised amount of cows, sheep and horses, — the price being always paid in live stock — and with them comes the bridegroom. All three are entertained in the best possible way and a belt is presented to the bridegroom by his future father-in-law. A month or so later the bride's dowry is ready and the wedding takes place. Lamas are invited to hold services both homes, and accompanied by her mother and all

are invited to hold services both homes, and accompanied by her mother and all the guests who have assembled at her home, the bride mounts her horse and starts upon the journey to her new home. Her hair has been combed and plaited and decorated with rings, clasps and buttons — the insignia of a married woman — and she is dressed in her finest array and takes all her dowry with her, which consists of clothes, hair decorations and cattle, according to the wealth of her parents, and, in some cases, a suit of clothes for the bridegroom. The wedding procession is met by all the guests, who have assembled at the bridegroom's home, both men and women. The bride is taken to a special tent, where she spends the night in company with one of the women, all the remaining guests being invited into the usual dwelling where (by special invitation) the father of the bride also later, makes his appearance. Here all sorts of food are offered; tea, with salt, milk, cream and butter, roasted flour, boiled meat, (beef or mutton), paste cut in narrow strips (eaten in soup) and gin, and the festivities are kept up all night. There is some singing, but no dancing, and on the following morning the bridegroom receives the dowry, in the bride's tent. The young people now proceed to the common tent where they kneel before the altar, after which the bridegroom alone kneels before his parents and the elder guests who give him small presents. On the third day the newly married couple visit the bride's parents when small gifts are again exchanged.

No proof of virility is required of the bridegroom before entering upon marriage, the men have usually known women before and it is by no means rare that the bride also is well initiated in these mysteries and that she brings one or more children together with her dowry to the new home. Sometimes the children remain with her parents. Infidelity sometimes occurs after marriage, but not openly, and the consequence is generally that the wife gets a good beating with which the pangs of jealousy are appeased. There is no divorce, but bigamy is usual where the first marriage proves childless, in which case both wives live in the same tent. The women are often childless, but do not attempt to cure sterility by eating herbs, only by having prayers read.

As with the Sarö Yögurs the women kneel in giving birth, and are assisted by women, one of whom acts as midwife. The navel-string is cut with a pair of scissors or a bit of pottery. In case of a laborious or delayed delivery a lama is called to lead prayers, and there seem to be no methods of hastening delivery.

For seven days the newborn child is daily washed and rubbed with butter, and for seven days the mother keeps her bed — and sleeps separately for twenty days or so. She nurses the child for two years, and often part of the third year. A quilt

is used as wrapper, though no board is used as among the Kalmucks. Twins are rare and there is no superstition connected with the birth of two children — and it is said that no deformed children are born. There are no festivities on the occasion of a birth. The child's hair is cut when it is two or three years old or at the birth of another child, and it is sometimes cut at once for the Chinese plait, sometimes the whole head is cropped close. The first teeth show themselves when the child is about eight months old, and milk-teeth are replaced at eleven years of age. At twelve years of age, the child is given a name which the lamas have chosen out of their books.

The Shera Yögurs are of medium height and not badly built. Those I had the opportunity of examining had, on the contrary, well-formed hands and feet and narrow wrists and ankles. There is nothing about them of the coarse and vulgar appearance which distinguishes the Kalmucks. Stout people are never seen — many of them are even remarkably thin. Their faces are neither exceptionally long and narrow nor short and broad, and though some have well developed cheekbones, wide cheekbones are rare, and in many individuals they are not at all protruding. The mouth is normal, with neither thin nor thick lips, the nose straight and of a good shape. Some however had wide turned-up noses, with very little bridge to them. The distance between the eyes was, among the majority, rather wide, though in some individuals normal. The corner of the eye is slightly overgrown by the eyelid in the case of children, but this peculiarity almost disappears as they grow older. The eyes are black or dark, with slight changes in them, but I saw no blue eyes. Their hair is black or quite dark, sometimes curly, the children often having brown hair. The men are never bald, but you often see them very grey, and judging by the women, the growth of hair is not particularly good. They have very scanty beards, and there is seldom any growth of hair on the body.

The Sarö Yögurs gave me the impression of being much sharper than the generality of Mongolians, Kalmucks and Tanguts. It is easier to make them understand you — they are livelier, imagine they understand you before you say more than a few words and interrupt you with an answer before you have explained what you want. They not only examine any new object with the greatest interest but very quickly understand its uses. The *Ta fumu* had an exceptionally good ear for foreign languages, and when I asked the names of numbers of things, through my interpreter, he amused himself repeating the Russian words he had heard me use. The strange thing was that he had often rightly caught the sound and preserved it in his memory, in spite of the usual

long Chinese phrases, which the interpreter used in speaking to him. He was greatly delighted with this and at my astonishment when he pronounced correctly some rather complicated words. Besides this, he attached the title, which the Chinese give Europeans, *ta jen* (your excellency or your greatness) before the Yögur verbs I wanted to hear, and obtained in this way very ridiculous phrases, such as "ta jen nurses your child", etc, which amused him and the other Yögurs immensely. In general they are very fond of jokes.

The Yögurs can multiply figures mentally, sometimes in more complicated cases finding help in the beads of their rosary. The practical way of multiplying with the help of their fingers as practised by the Mongolians is unknown. Weights, measures and money are Chinese.

The costume worn consists of a sheepskin coat, short in itself, and made shorter by being bound round by a scarf in such a way as to form a big bag hanging over the waist, which is used as a pocket. It is furnished with a low collar usually covered with a bit of red or blue cloth, which often continues as a border edging the coat. Wealthier men cover the whole coat with blue cloth. To the home-woven scarf, which is wound two or three times round the waist, with its ends tucked in so that they hang down the back, is fastened, by a copper clasp, a metal case with a knife, chop-sticks, often a tinderbox and some other small articles. No shirt is worn but sometimes a summer costume, of which the collar, cut and decorated in the same way as the coat, shows through the open fur-collar. A pair of half-wide trousers made of Chinese cotton or skin, over which a pair of so-called Chinese trousers (two three-cornered shaped trouser legs, fastened by a cord round the waist) made of the same material as the inner pair and high Chinese boots, the leggings of which are made of cotton material and bound round with a band, completes the costume which is common to both sexes. The head-dresses and style of head-covering distinguishes the women. The former which is made of a kind of stiff canvas covered on the outside with white and under the brim with red cotton, is in the form of a somewhat curved cylinder, with quite a low, narrow crown and wide straight brim. It is tied loosely under the chin and is worn coquettishly very much on the side. The hair is plaited into three plaits, without any *kutas* (oxen hair) being added. One plait hangs down the back, and bears a white bone button in the nape of the neck; the other two are worn hanging over the breast, and are threaded through numbers of silver and enamel rings and various stone ornaments of Chinese production. Below these are fastened upon two wide straps, flat copper rings, and clasps, gaudily ornamented, the whole being finished off with enamel button-like decorations

sewn upon wide pieces of leather, which nearly reach the ground. The men wear a Mongolian felt or fur cap of Chinese or Mongolian type. All domestic appliances and implements are Chinese with the exception of the loom, which was the same as that used by the Sarö Yögurs, Kalmucks and Khirgis. There is no home-industry except weaving and the making of coarse blankets of an inferior quality. I also saw in the monastery some good, if simple, joiner's work for which Chinese axes, planes and other implements had been used. The knitting of stockings and basketwork are unknown here. Weapons, knives and other metal articles are bought from Sinin.

The people were dirty, but it is questionable if one would not also become so if one was forced as they are to spend the cold and stormy winter in their uncomfortable tents. The household goods were however washed far more carefully than the Kalmucks wash theirs and you even saw some of the people washing themselves, which I have never seen among the latter, not even in summer. I never saw a Yögur spit, smoking is rare, but snuff was often used. Only some dozen of them were addicted to the opium passion.

The food they ate was much the same as that eaten by other nomadic people. Tea with salt, butter, milk and cream, when it can be had, and roasted flour are the chief articles of nourishment. On great occasions a cow or sheep is killed and soup made. The meat is then taken out and cut up in thin slices together with strips of paste and put back into the soup. Meat was served on small four-cornered wooden platters, the soup in wooden cups. Chinese chop-sticks were used; if they were not handy, a couple of chips were broken from a faggot. In general the people did eat tidily though the dishes were very carefully licked after a meal. The Mongolian milk brandy is not made, but *chün*, the Chinese preparation, is highly prized by both men and women. The chief meal of the day was eaten in the evening, after the day's work of caring for the cattle was over. After tea had been drunk, and the cups all well licked, all the family remained seated round the fire, in the centre of the tent, mumbling prayers in low voices for some half-hour. It was an indescribably strange sight, to see them sitting in the half-dark tents, the women in their coquettish, rakish hats, the men in fur caps and enormous fur coats, the lama's cropped heads and shaven faces, all very solemn, yet madly gabbling, as it seemed, the same word over and over again.

One day the *t'umu* had a sheep killed and arranged a feast in my honour, with Chinese brandy and singing. These songs were sung alternately by two women and two young men. The women sang best, and while singing they clung closely

to each other, staring into each other's eyes, as if trying to guess what the next note would be. They sang beautiful melodies, usually finishing upon a long drawn-out sad note. Ever now and again the singers offered to one of the guests a small cup of hot brandy with a polite and pretty bow and with the gesture so characteristic of Mongolian and other nomadic tribes, — the hands being outstretched with palms turned upward. There seem to be no real Yögur songs, but Mongolian songs, learned in their youth, are sung on these occasions. I was on the whole surprised to see how gracefully they moved about in their awkward furs and boots. The soup was served by three young men, relatives of the *t'umu*, and it was a pleasure to see how politely and gracefully they handed cups and dishes, and received them from the assembled guests.

The winter sun is late in penetrating the mountain valleys, which is perhaps the reason the Yögurs also are late in the mornings. As soon as they rise, tea is made in a big kettle, and is taken with roasted flour, and then the day's work begins. The cows are milked, snow is melted in a big kettle, cups and kettles are scrubbed with ashes, flour is ground, wood is chopped and the women busy themselves among the sheep. You see them, humming a scrap of song, making their way carefully through the tightly packed flock of sheep, carrying one or two lambs under their arms, kissing and caressing the bleating animals. The cattle are driven to the mountain slopes by the men, but all the small household duties go on unceasingly till the evening, when the sheep come home again and require attention. It is only when all the day's work is done, that dinner is first thought of. The Yögurs are quick at their work, talkative and amusing. You never hear quarrelling nor do you see dissatisfied faces. Their movements are not quick but this must be ascribed to their clumsy boots and heavy fur-coats, for you often see a man or woman running quickly and lightly down a steep mountain side. After dinner or rather supper, prayers are said, as I described, for quite half an hour, when the cups are scrubbed with ashes again, and talk and laughter goes on round the fire till late at night. They sleep, quite naked, each on his own blanket spread on the floor of the tent. Their furs are used as coverlets, though sometimes coverlets are made of wool covered with some of their homewoven cloth.

The tents they inhabit are considerably less comfortable than the Mongolian and Khirgis "yurts". They measure three to four strides in width but are so low that you cannot stand upright in them. Made of a coarse home-woven canvas-like material, of a greyish white colour with dark brown stripes, it is raised with the help of six poles, of which the two in the middle are joined by a crossbar. It is furnished on the outside with ropes, which fasten it to a low fence. During winter the tents are furnished with a low foundation of slender timbers, lying lengthwise and caulked with manure. This is not moved in their summer migrations. Along the top of the tent there is a long rectangular opening to allow the smoke to escape. In the centre of the tent stands the kettle on its bits of clay, opposite the door a couple of Buddhas, and some brass vessels on a low table and along the walls, the small collection of household utensils, blankets, saddles etc.

The live stock I saw, was good of its kind. The cattle were chiefly yak cows, grey and black, both with horns and hornless. The size varied very much, and you could see an undergrown little cow by the side of one well-worth being exhibited, as an exeptionally fine specimen. The milk had a good taste and a high percentage of fat. The sheep seemed larger than those of the other nomadic tribes in Tienshan and were not of the fat-tailed breed. — The horses were small, fairly well proportioned, and strong, but not handsome. Most of them were knock-kneed. — The dogs were chiefly Tangutan, large, dark-brown, long-haired, very fine animals. — The Yögurs complained of their many sufferings during the protracted Dungan revolt, especially of their loss of cattle, and that since that time they had never regained the same degree of prosperity.

We spent New Year's Day in rifle practice. The t'umu had never fired a shot and had not the very faintest idea of handling a gun. He screwed up both eyes in the funniest manner when I made him try to shoot from a rest with a Berdan gun which I had given him. There is no sport worth mentioning among the Yögurs. Their fire arms are brought from Sining and are of the usual type found in Central Asia, with a moveable fork-like rest and a fuse.

There did not seem to be much game either in the neigbourhood, nothing in the way to be seen but so called "kekliks" (mountain grouse) and big vultures — the Yögur grave diggers. Hares and wolves were said to exist, and bears, in summer, but you never heard of the ibex, the wild goat and other animals which are usual in the Tienshan heights. The wild yak is found further south. I saw no traps or snares, except wolf traps. They were round, with two strong springs attached at

shares, except wolf traps. They were round, with two strong springs attached at opposite sides of the circle, which by the aid of two running rings caused the two segments of the circle to close with force. They were placed over a piece of cloth drawn over a wand, also bent into a circle of the same size. A peg fastened to the outer circumference was threaded through a loop in the centre of the circle, and kept the trap open till something, trampling on the cloth, caused the peg to fly out of the loop. — You heard of no manly sports, and if games or races did take place, they were not of the same extent, nor were they considered of so much importance as among the Kalmucks and Khirgis.

Unfortunately I cannot add anything regarding the superstitious customs of these tribes to the very interesting statements which were published by Potanin in his book of travels. Either they would not initiate me into these things or they were really free from superstition. They pretended not to attach importance to dreams. They begged me not to bring indoors an enormous old vulture which I shot, and they carefully buried any scraps of meat found in the neighbourhood of the tent, but remembering that the vultures eat the bodies of their dead, this seems very natural.

During four months of the Chinese year, they gather together for the purpose of chanting prayers at the "praying places" — the heaps of stones and tall poles, raised in the mountains, which I have described before. At one of the heaps, raised in honour of the cattle god, prayers are offered for the health and welfare of the cattle.

It was with real feelings of regret that, on the 2nd of January, I left my hospitable hosts, the Shera Yögurs, and their little home imbedded among the grassy hills, where we had spent such a pleasant New Year's Day. All the men assembled round the saddled horses, to wish us farewell. One held my horse's bridle, another the stirrup, a third gave me a helping push into the saddle, while a fourth stood on the other side ready to prevent me from overbalancing myself. As we rode past the flocks of sheep where the women were busy with their usual work, I reined iu my horse and shouted them a loud *tshuavá* and *sujá* (thanks — and — goodbye), which evidently pleased them, judging by the smile I received from the bright eyes of the *t'umu's* adopted daughter — bright dark eyes, into the depths of which both Lukanin, my Cossack, and I, were tempted to gaze too long.

The valley of the *Kluadjek-gol* opened at a short distance from the *t'umu's* home, into another, *Mör-gol*, where there were only traces left of the river's course. We

followed this narrow valley with its steep grassy slopes in a NNW and N direction. A little higher the surface of the rock was often visible. For a short distance the hills were of a considerable height, but soon sank again, and after a ride of seven km our direction was NNE and our road followed a water course, with cakes of ice lying here and there. Four km further on the valley which now bears the name *Talipin-gol* began to widen and the hills on both sides rose imposingly. Another half hour's ride brought us to the great *Lansor's* or *Neiman-gol* valley in which the river forming a wide bend, open to the north, pours its waters over a broad stony bed, between one hundred and fifty and two hundred and fifty fathoms wide, through one principal channel and several smaller ones. Along both shores rose steep picturesque heights, of which those on the left shore were of a warm terra-cotta red colour. We rode down the river in a north-easterly direction following a road made along its right shore by doukey caravans carrying coal. The bright-coloured cliffs hung closely over the river-bed. High and steep on both shores, they precipitate themselves headlong down to the water along the left shore. Encircling a wide cultivated plain the hills retreat, again to encroach upon the river some kilometres further to the NE. Amid groups of trees and small fields the towers and embattled walls of a Chinese town delineate themselves against the red background of hills on the left shore of the river. We had arrived at the little town *Li-yen*, a name which in Chinese means "the garden of peartrees" — which name the place really deserves for its good fruit-trees — pear, apricot and nut. Twenty years ago it was visited by *Potanin's* expedition, when on his return to Russia he crossed the Yögur country, and nothing can have changed since then in the picturesque little place, where it lies encircled by tall willow trees, in the close embrace of the heights surrounding it. The yamen (the official building of the mandarin) destroyed in the Dungan revolt, still lies half in ruins, the small temples built high on the steep rocks are still there — yes, all is the same, even the reception accorded me was like that discribed by *Potanin*. The friendly old mandarin was evidently, like his predecessor twenty years ago, glad to see the face of a stranger, there were no bounds to his courteous attentions. He sent me a delicious dinner, cooked, as I heard later, by himself, when, in consequence of feeling ill and tired, I was obliged to refuse his kind invitation to dine with him. The shark fins tasted splendidly and when, next morning, during a farewell call, his beautiful fur cape excited my admiration the deaf old gentlemen's politeness went so far as to promise me on my next visit (!) five sable skins — one of those so characteristic civilities of the Chinese, "qui n'obligent à rien et qui font toujours plaisir". On the following day we rode to *Kanchenp'u*, and from there along the road we had followed earlier, to *Kanchow*.

END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A VISIT TO THE SARÖ AND SHERA YÖGURS

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