

# CHINA

## Facts & Figures

### Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region

The Largest Part of Territory of China Xinjiang on the north-western border in the interior of Central Asia was set up as an autonomous region in October 1, 1955. It has an area of more than 1.6 million square kilometres, one-sixth the size of China and larger than any other province or autonomous region, and a population of more than 13 million, about one-eighth of China's total population.

Xinjiang is surrounded almost on all sides by high mountains and plateaus. The Kunlun Mountains tower in the south and over its boundary with Tibet and Qinghai. The Altay range runs in the northeast and along its border with the Mongolian People's Republic, extending from northwest to southeast. Lying in the west and on its border with the Soviet Union are also many high mountains and plateaus including the Pamirs which form the top of the terrain.

Across the middle part of the region lies the Tianshan Mountain Area which consists of several ranges running parallel from west to east. The Tianshan range divides Xinjiang into two vastly different natural geographical regions, northern and southern Xinjiang dotted with numerous intermontane basins and valleys. There

are found the Tarim Basin, Turpan Basin and Junggar Basin as the largest three of basins of China. The Turpan Basin, with its centre surface more than 150 metres below sea level, is the country's lowest spot.

Many of the mountains in Xinjiang, mostly with an elevation of 4,000 to 5,000 metres above sea level, are covered under ice and snow all year round. Tall and majestic, the snow-covered topography of these mountains crisscrossed by intermontane pastures and glaciers extending as far as 30 kilometres, creates a green and white scene of unearthly beauty.

Xinjiang is rich in natural resources though most of these remain to be tapped or exploited. It has a total of 3.2 million hectares of cultivated land to give a per capita ratio 1.5 times greater than the national average. In addition, 50 million hectares of grassland suitable for grazing are found there, about one-fourth of the national total of grassland. Agricultural products are in great abundance and a wide variety by Xinjiang for its fertile soil, known as a major long-staple cotton producer and the "land of fruit and melons" of China.

Xinjiang possesses a wealth of wildlife resources. So far 586 species of wild animals and 3,569 species of plants have been found here. Among those wild animals with high economic value are sables, wild deer, muskrats, marmots, brown bears, snow leopards, lynxes, wild donkeys,

wild camels, and snow pheasants. Xinjiang has a forest area of 2.84 million hectares in which dragon spruce, larch, birch, and poplar grow. In addition, it has 260,000 million hectares of water surface for aquatic production.

Xinjiang boasts 118 kinds of minerals, accounting for 80 per cent of the usable mineral deposits in China discovered so far. Mineral reserves include gold, silver, copper, nickel, manganese, lead, antimony, crystal, Iceland spar, and jade. The three largest basins of China in the region are all richly endowed with petroleum. Besides, Xinjiang leads the country in coal deposits.

Xinjiang was on the "Silk Road" leading to Central Asia and West Asia over 2,000 years ago. As an ancient trade route it has attracted historians and visitors from all corners of the world.

Since the Chinese Government's implementation of the open policy in 1979, Xinjiang has set up eight Chinese-foreign joint ventures including Tianshan Textile Company Ltd. Cooperative projects have also been undertaken by it with foreign co-operators for development of production and exploitation of the area.

Construction has now got underway in Xinjiang to turn it into a major base for building northwest China. Its role in national construction will undoubtedly become more and more important.

A Multinationality Region Xinjiang is a region of many nationalities. Indigenous to the region are the Uygurs, Kazaks, Hans, Huis, Mongolians, Kirgizs, Tajiks, Xibes, Manchus, Daur, Tatars, and Russians, among whom the Uygurs, numbering more than 5.9 million, form the largest ethnic group. Mostly concentrated in the fertile part of southern Xinjiang, the Uygurs engage in farming. Most Uygurs believe in Islam.

Second to the Uygur population come the Kazaks with a population of more than 900,000. Most of them inhabit northern Xinjiang, living off animal husbandry. Except for a small number engaged in agriculture who have settled down, the majority are herders who migrate in rhythm with

the seasons in search of water and grass.

Other nationalities have small populations and are scattered all over Xinjiang. Some of them are engaged in herding, some in farm production.

After the founding of New China in 1949, the Chinese Government, in accordance with the Constitution, practised national regional autonomy in areas where people of minority nationalities live in compact communities. In 1955, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region was established on the basis of autonomous prefectures and counties. From then on, the people of different nationalities within Xinjiang have become their own masters and are more united than ever.

The various minority nationalities in Xinjiang have not only been shown great concern by the Chinese Government in politics, they have also been helped in their development of economy and culture. Over the past 30 or so years, 13.4 billion yuan has been allotted by the state to Xinjiang, 12.6 billion of which has been used in capital construction. Previously, there was only one power plant with an old turbine generator of 300 kilowatts in the capital city, Urumqi, not to say railway construction, iron smelting and steel making, and machine building. In contrast to this are now more than 4,000 industrial enterprises that have been set up in

### Statistical Graph of Social and Economic Conditions in Xinjiang

	1949	1978	1983
Gross output value of industry (in 10,000 yuan)	9,097	332,752	534,937
Gross output value of agriculture (in 10,000 yuan)	62,832	264,852	404,972
Number of students at institutions of higher learning	379	10,002	26,438
Number of hospital beds	696	57,647	63,113
Number of cadres of minority nationalities	3,000	117,746	181,860

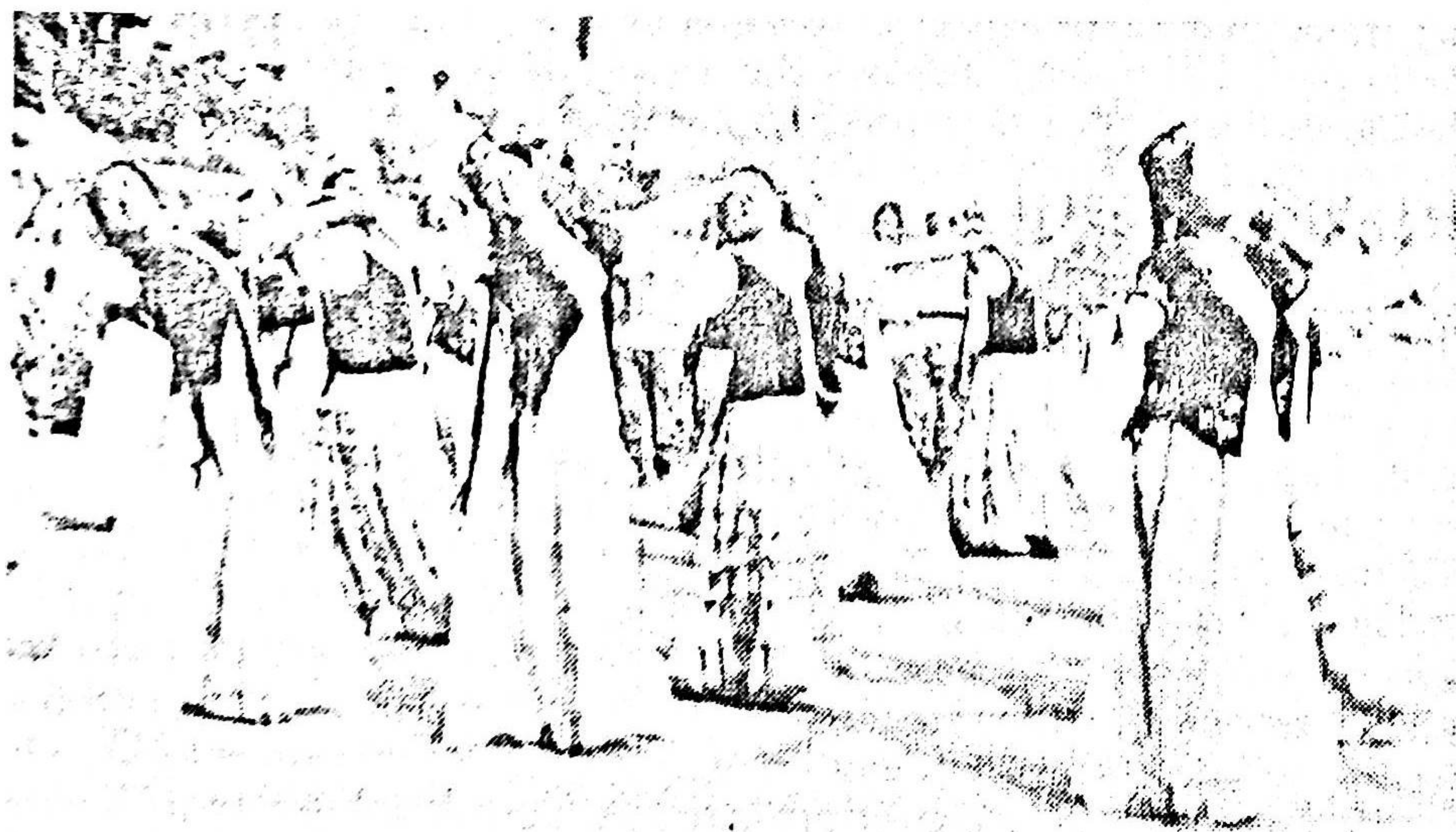
Xinjiang for developing various industrial lines including iron and steel, petroleum, coal, power, machinery, chemical, textile, sugar refining, paper, tannery and cigarette making industries. Great advances have been made in highway and railway construction, and development of civil aviation. Xinjiang has now made itself by its development an important air route of China to the Middle East and Western Europe.

Xinjiang used to have few primary and secondary schools, and only one college in the past. But by now it has come to have 160,000 college graduates trained and a student body of more than 30,000 at its educational institutions of higher learning.

**Animal Husbandry** Grassland forms nearly one-third of Xinjiang, making it the biggest livestock breeding centre of China. On the northern and southern sides of the Tianshan Mountains, there are both plains and mountain pastures, some suitable for winter and some for summer grazing. Abundant water and luxuriant grass are provided by such ideal grazing grounds as pastures halfway up the Tianshan and Altay mountains and those in river valleys. In Xinjiang, natural pastureland covers an area of 80 million hectares, of which 46 million are usable and 13 million are of high quality. The area is capable of feeding more than 60 million domestic animals. But only 55.6 per cent of the total area of pastureland has been employed; therefore, there is still much to be exploited.

Xinjiang boasts many superior breeds of livestock. More camels and horses are raised here than in the other four provinces and autonomous regions of northwest China. The famous Ili horses are often referred to as "heavenly steeds." In addition to fine-wool sheep, well-known breeds include the big-tail sheep of Fuhai and Kuche sheep. The lambskin produced in Kuche has found its way into the international market.

Xinjiang has a conspicuous continental climate, with highly changeable temperature, sharp difference in temperature between day and night, intense evaporation and little precipitation. A typical description of



A Kazak dance in festival costume.

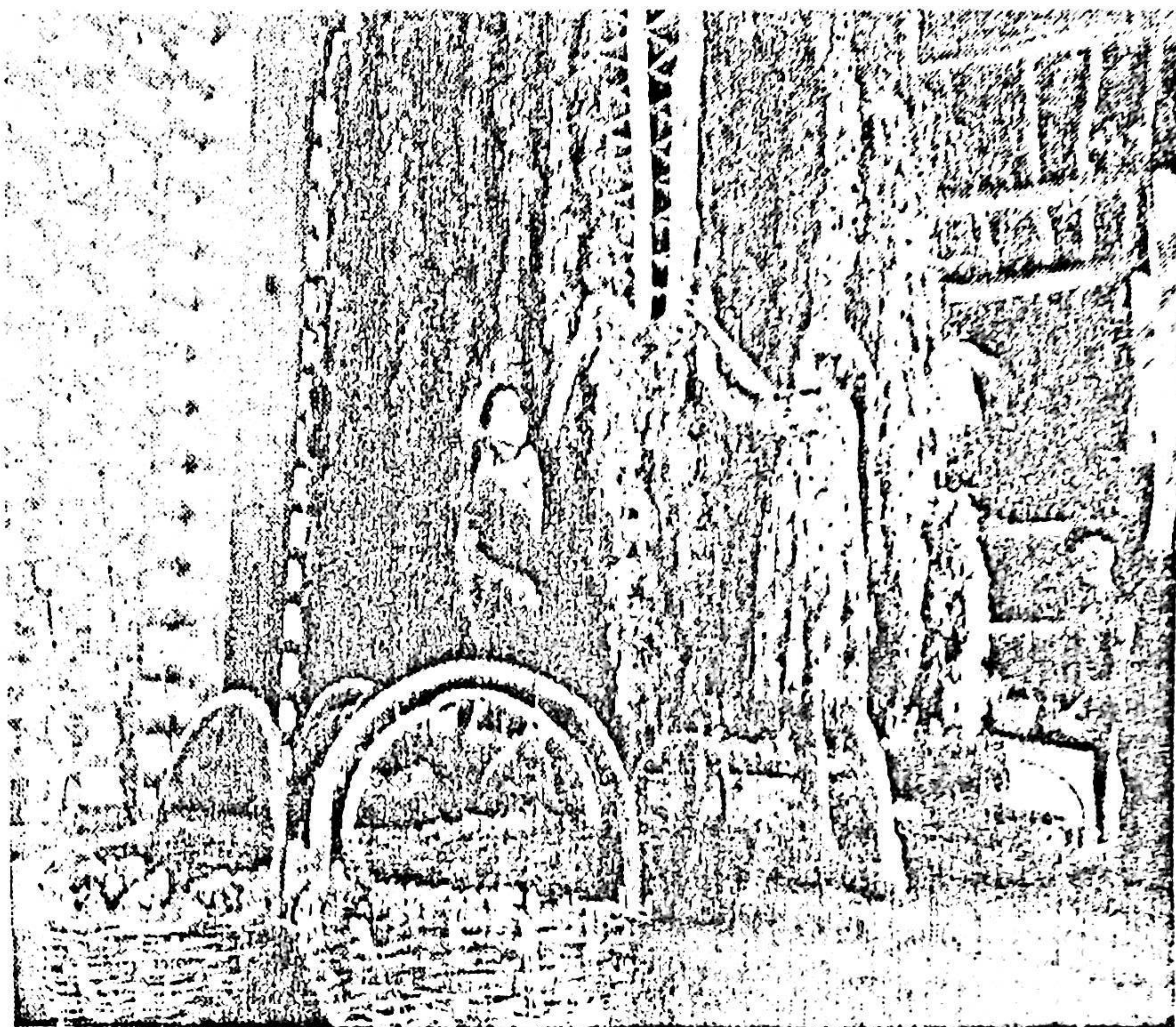
this is an old saying in Xinjiang: "Fur coats in the morning and gosamer at noon, eating juicy watermelons by the fire." Also an ideal place for developing agriculture, Xinjiang grows wheat, rice, and maize, and cash crops like cotton, oil-bearing plants, beets, tobacco, and hemp. Xinjiang's long-staple cotton, with fibres reaching a length of 38 to 40 millimetres, is of top quality. At present, cotton occupies only 50 per cent of the land devoted to cash crops, but the output has soared to more than 50 million kilograms.

Karamay, which in the Uygur language means "a place where black oil pours out," is located on the northwestern rim of the Junggar Basin. Before 1949, there wasn't even a mark on the map for this place. It was by chance that some passing herders noticed pits filled with a black liquid that could be used as fuel and lubricants. This crude oil was carried to nearby towns and traded for grain. Later on, the spot was identified as the "Black Oil Mountain" recorded in historical materials well over 1,000 years ago. At the end of the 19th century, the government of the Qing Dynasty inspected the spot and found nine openings producing about 200 kilograms of oil per day. Between 1897 and 1949, however, only 12,000 plus tons of crude oil was produced.

The Junggar Basin, including "Black Oil Mountain," has been explored scores of times since the spring of 1951. The first well, drilled in June 1955, proved this area to be productive and the oil easy to extract. The oil pressure is high, and the oil does not congeal even at 50° to 60°C



Children of the Uygur nationality.



Hanging the grapes to dry.

below zero, making it suitable for products used in very cold areas. Therefore, the Chinese Government decided to open up Karamay on a large scale. By 1958, the project had taken shape and official exploitation had begun. By the end of 1959, this oilfield's output of crude oil made up one-fourth of China's total.

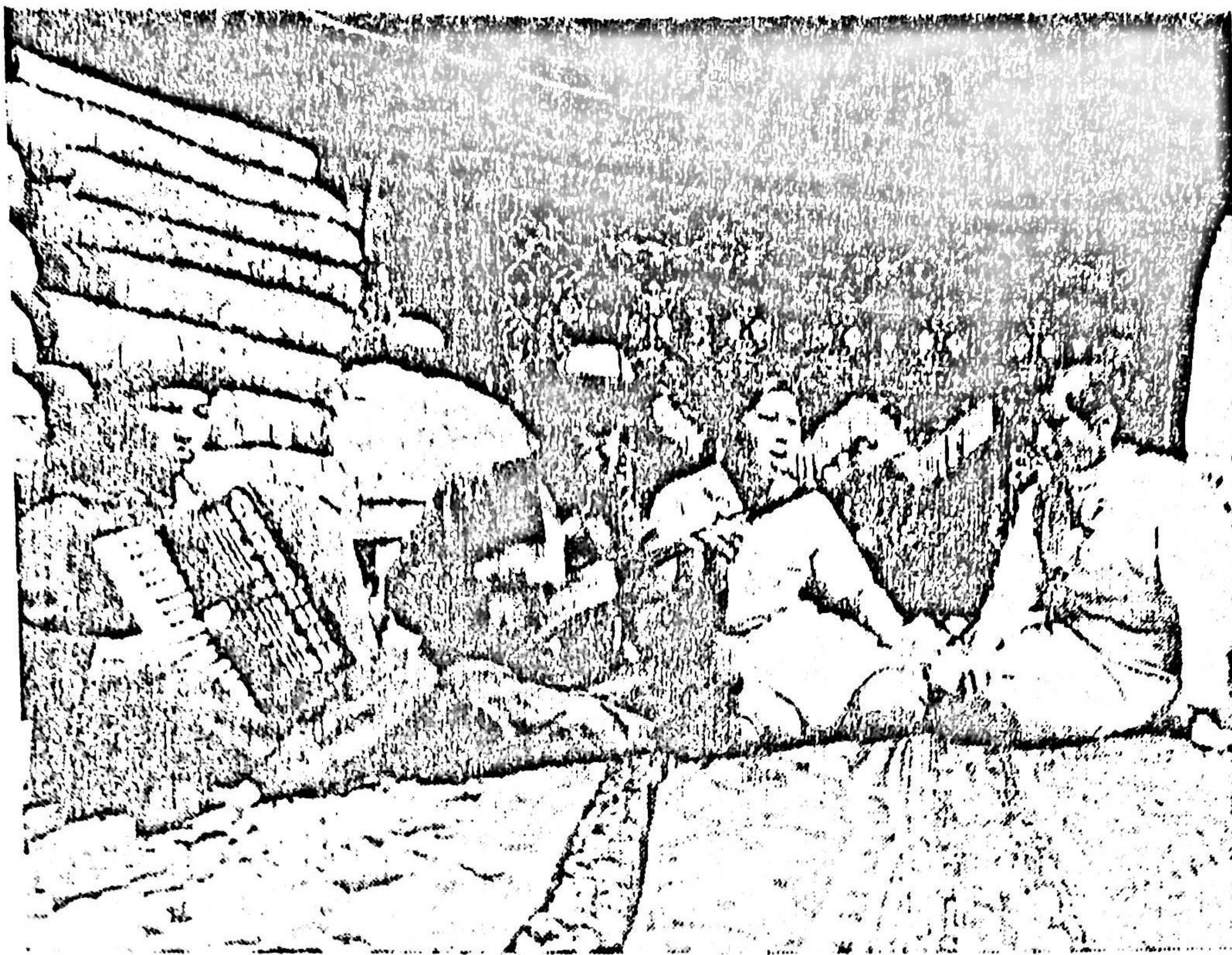
Along with the ongoing development of the oilfield, Karamay became a city in 1958. Most of the residents are oilfield workers and their families. Now Karamay has been built into a comprehensive petroleum complex consisting of well drilling, oil extracting, oil refining, and complete oil transportation facilities. Its current output is four times that of the 1960s. The crude oil produced here is piped to the nearby Dushanzi Oil Refinery and over a distance of several hundred kilometres to the Urumqi Petrochemical Works, or transported by train to the interior of China for refining. The facilities provided for the oilfield in the past few years have expanded its production capacity, resulting in a yearly crude oil extraction of 4 million tons.

In 1983, wells with a daily output of over 100 tons were drilled in the newly prospected oil quarter along with new ones drilled to give a daily output of 50 to 100 tons of oil in the old quarter. This convincingly proves that beneath the exploited oil layer a rich reserve of oil is available for further exploitation.

In the course of oil exploitation in the Junggar Basin, a new oil-bearing stratum with an enormous deposit has been discovered in the fault zone of Karamay. Thus the further development of Xinjiang's oil industry is virtually assured.

**A Land of Fruit and Melons**  
Among the wide variety and high output of fruit and melons in Xinjiang, the seedless grapes of Turpan, melons of Hami and Shanshan, fragrant pears of Kurle, apples of Ili, thin-shelled walnuts of Aksu, and Badan apricots from southern Xinjiang are the most popular both at home and abroad.

Most parts of Xinjiang are favourable for growing grapes and Hami melon. Almost all farmers and herders on the northern and southern sides of the Tianshan Mountains have grape

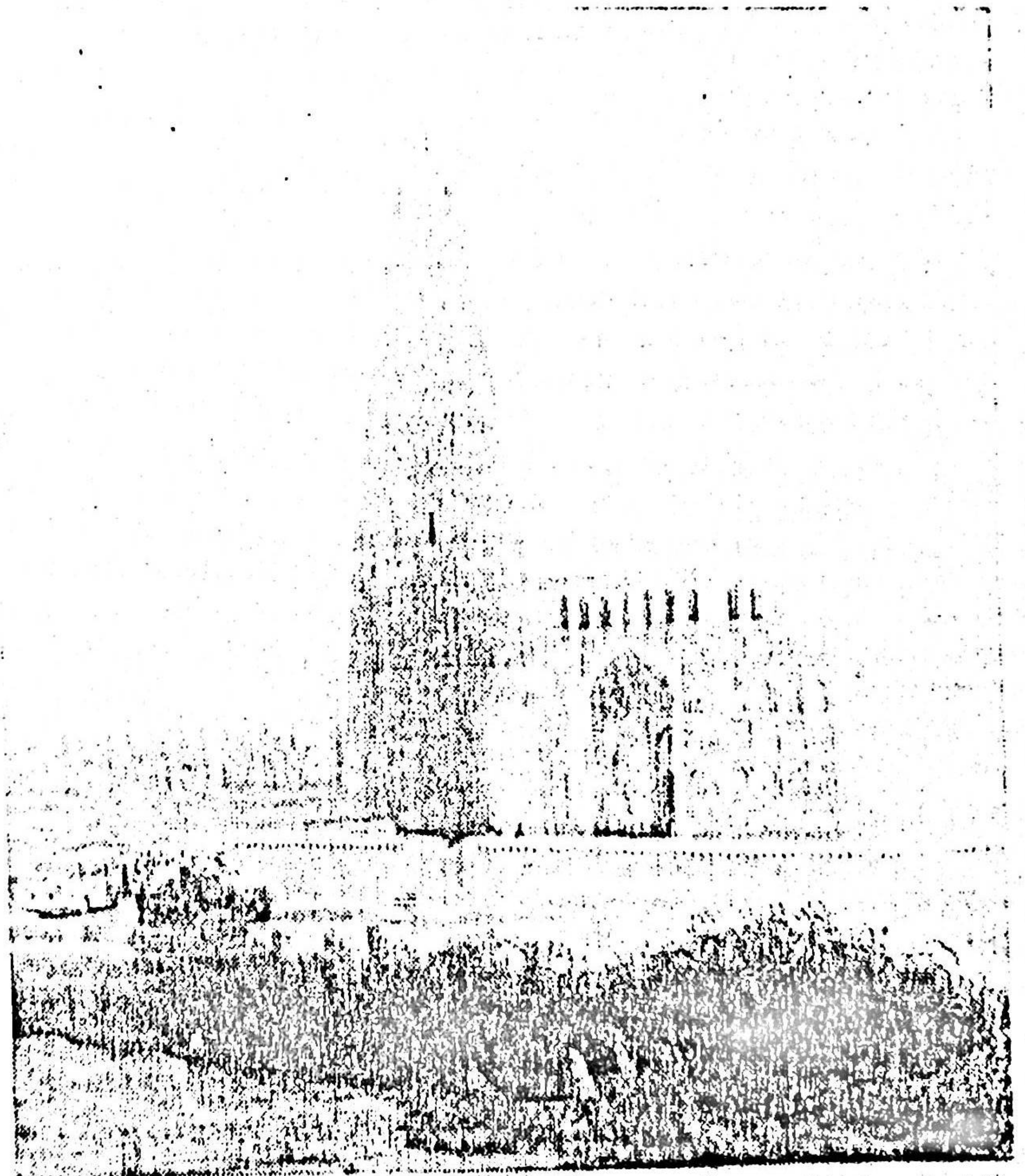


Young people of the Kirgiz nationality.

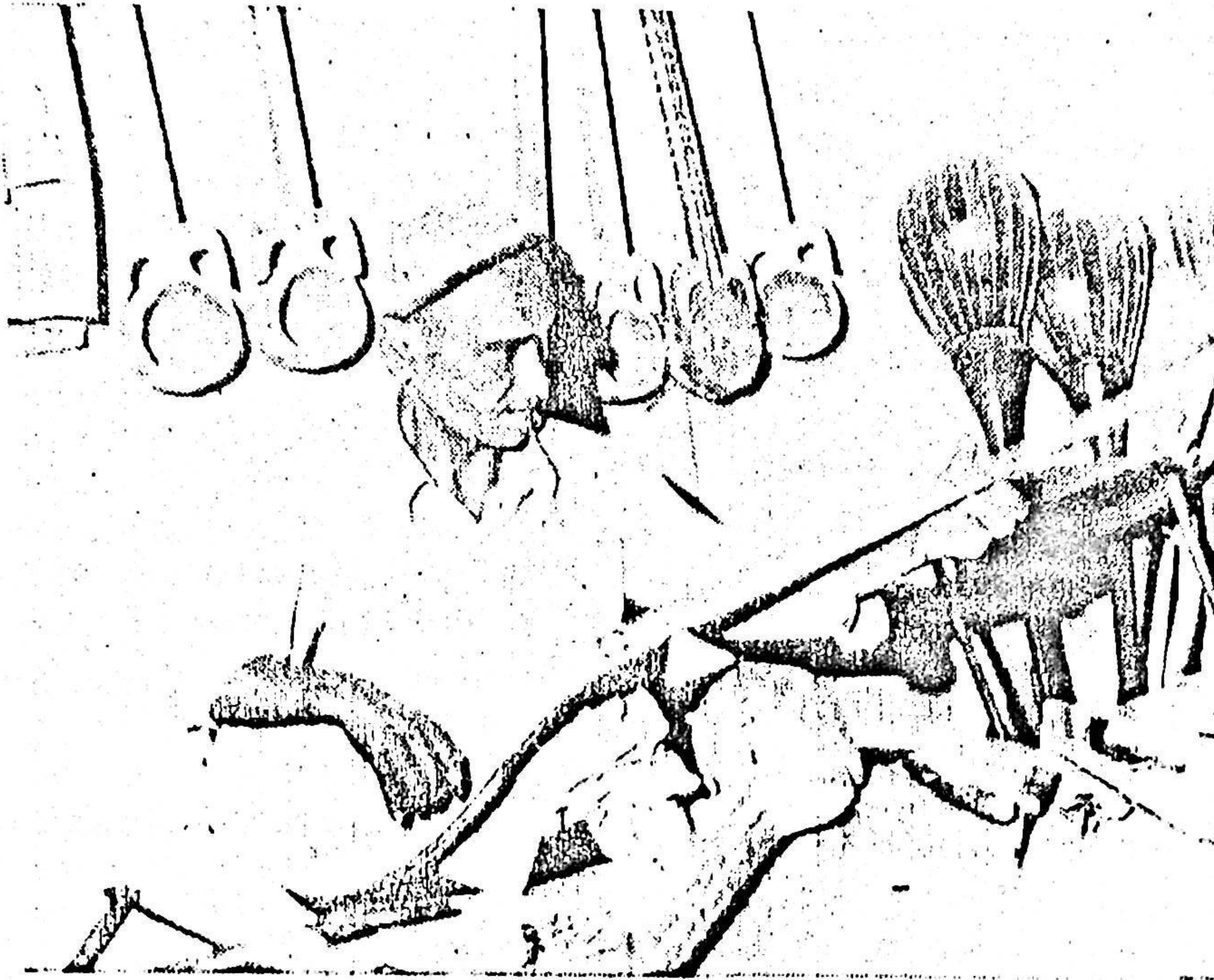
trellises or vineyards in front of their houses. The milky-white Turpan seedless grapes, due to their high sugar content, are especially good for being dried into raisins. An area of 26,000 hectares grown to Hami melon in Xinjiang with an annual output of 400,000 tons is more than enough to meet domestic needs. The product also makes a fine export item on the world market.

Along the rivers and valleys in the Ili area at the northern foot of the Tianshan Mountains there are several wild fruit forests, including a large primeval forest of wild walnut extending more than 180 kilometers, a wild apple forest covering an area of more than 400 hectares, and a wild Badan apricot forest covering more than 460 hectares. What needs special mention is that wild fruit reserves as these are by no means common either in China or elsewhere in the world.

Aitiga Mosque, the Kizil Ten-Thousand Buddha Grottoes and "Flaming Mountain" As Islam is a dominant religion in Xinjiang, mosques are seen everywhere. The Aitiga Mosque in the centre of Kashi city is the largest, with a capacity for 6,000 to 7,000 worshippers. No written record can



Sulaiman Minaret in Turpan.



The traditional way of crafting a lute.

tell us exactly when the Aitiga Mosque was constructed. Legend has it that in A.D. 1798 an Uygur woman by the name of Guilaina died of illness in Kashi on her way to Pakistan. She left a sum of money with which the people built Aitiga Mosque. Later on, another Uygur woman named Zuoliyahan was preparing for her pilgrimage to Mecca after having saved a large sum of money. Unfortunately her way was blocked by a civil war in Persia and she had to return home. Back in Kashi, she devoted all her money to the expansion of Aitiga Mosque, and she bought vast expanses of land in the suburbs for it. Having undergone several renovations in successive dynasties, the mosque came into its present shape in 1838.

On either side of the huge rectangular gate of the mosque stand two minarets, more than ten metres in height. The minarets are connected with the gate by low walls, which successfully make them appear as one piece. The surfaces of the cream-coloured walls are inlaid with white brick lines in decorative patterns. The crescent-moon-shaped top of the minarets and the white dome above the gate stand like three legs of a tripod. With groups of buildings erected over an area of more than 16,000 square kilometres, the whole

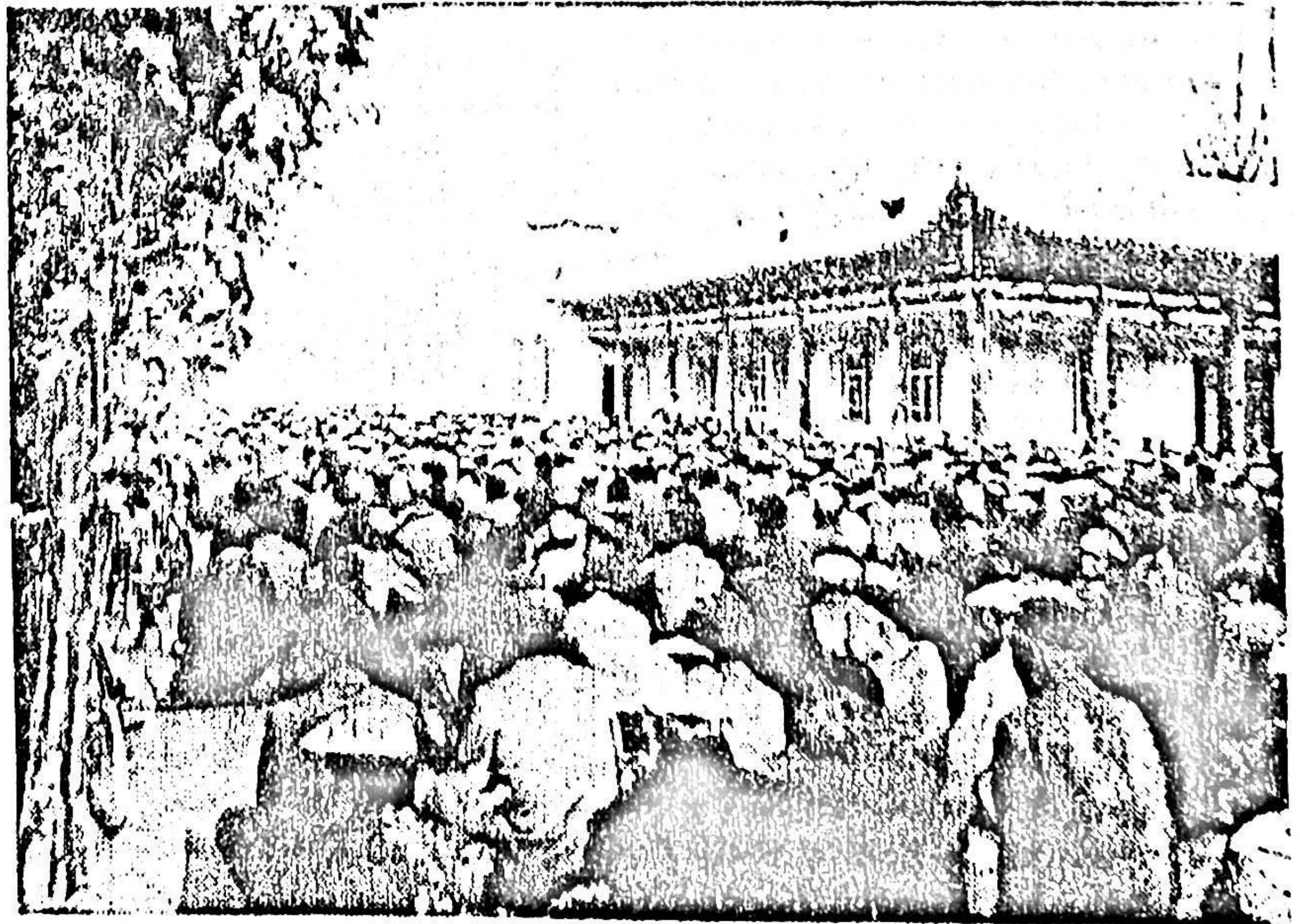
mosque covers a floor space of about 1 hectare.

The prayer hall in the mosque is 160 metres long and 16 metres wide. Supported by 140 green carved wooden pillars, the white ceilings of the hall are painted with different patterns of flowers and plants. Decorating the wall in the centre of the hall are pointed niches embellished with a variety of brightly coloured flower

patterns. Every year during the Corban and Roza festivals, the number of worshippers surpasses 50,000 while at other times there are no fewer than several thousand per day.

Xinjiang was one of the regions where Buddhism and Buddhist art prospered. According to historical records, Buddhism was introduced to Xinjiang as early as the 1st century via the "Silk Road." Buddhism flourished in Xinjiang for more than 1,000 years prior to the arrival of Islam, which more or less replaced Buddhism in the 13th century.

The Kizil Grottoes—the earliest of their kind—are considered the most famous grottoes in China. There are 236 grottoes here that have been renovated and numbered. These grottoes include one which contained statues of Buddha and was used for worshipping, a lecture or meditation hall for monks and nuns, and the Grotto of Arhats, a site for burying the ashes of the dead. Other caves were used as sitting rooms and storehouses for food and grain. An architectural complex as complete as this adds immeasurably to our understanding of Buddhism and Buddhist art—the murals preserved within these grottoes are second only to those of the famous Dunhuang Grottoes. These murals depict a variety of figures of the Buddha, Bodhisattva,



A service at the mosque in Ining.



On their way to the fair.

events in the life of Sakyamuni, and processional scenes. Pictures depicting folk life and scenes of farm work, mountains, rivers, flowers, herders, birds, and beasts present a panoramic view of the history and life of Xinjiang from the 3rd century to the 13th century — its politics, economy, culture, economic and cultural exchanges between China and the West.

Found in the Turpan Basin in the famous site of "Flaming Mountain" 100 kilometres long and 10 kilometres wide. Made up of red sandstone, Flaming Mountain is also called "Red Mountain" by the local people. The blazing sun makes the flamelike gullies and the reddish brown sandstone glisten as if on fire. On summer afternoons, the temperature of the sands can rise as high as 82°C. It is said that eggs can be "boiled" in the sand pits and cakes "baked" on the sandstone.

The mountain figures in an episode of the classic Chinese fantasy novel *Journey to the West*. In the story, the Tang priest Xuanzang and his three disciples are blocked by Flaming Mountain on their way to the West to seek the Buddhist scriptures. Thanks to Monkey, who subdues the Ox-Demon King and the Iron-Fan

Princess with his magic power, they obtain the iron fan — the only Means by which the flames can be extinguished — and are able to continue their journey. This legend has become a favorite tale in China.

Not far from Flaming Mountain are the well-preserved remains of two cities, Gaochang and Jiaohe, and some groups of ancient tombs dating from the 3rd to the 6th century. The singular landscapes of the region, together with its historic sites and the beautiful legends associated with them, have drawn ever larger groups of visitors.

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