

THE ANTHROPOLOGIST AS A MUSHROOM

[Soledad Jiménez-Tovar]



NOTES FROM A PHD
RESEARCH PROJECT
IN CENTRAL ASIA

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MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY
DEPARTMENT 'INTEGRATION AND CONFLICT'
FIELD NOTES AND RESEARCH PROJECTS XIV

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Cover Photo: Dungan dishes to be served at a banquet, Sortobe,
Kazakhstan, 2011 © Soledad Jiménez-Tovar

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SERIES EDITOR'S PREFACE

(GÜNTHER SCHLEE)

ABOUT THE SERIES

This series of *Field Notes and Research Projects* does not aim to compete with high-impact, peer reviewed books and journal articles, which are the main ambition of scholars seeking to publish their research. Rather, contributions to this series complement such publications. They serve a number of different purposes.

In recent decades, anthropological publications have often been purely discursive – that is, they have consisted only of words. Often, pictures, tables, and maps have not found their way into them. In this series, we want to devote more space to visual aspects of our data.

Data are often referred to in publications without being presented systematically. Here, we want to make the paths we take in proceeding from data to conclusions more transparent by devoting sufficient space to the documentation of data.

In addition to facilitating critical evaluation of our work by members of the scholarly community, stimulating comparative research within the institute and beyond, and providing citable references for books and articles in which only a limited amount of data can be presented, these volumes serve an important function in retaining connections to field sites and in maintaining the involvement of the people living there in the research process. Those who have helped us to collect data and provided us with information can be given these books and booklets as small tokens of our gratitude and as tangible evidence of their cooperation with us. When the results of our research are sown in the field, new discussions and fresh perspectives might sprout.

Especially in their electronic form, these volumes can also be used in the production of power points for teaching; and, as they are open-access and free of charge, they can serve an important public outreach function by arousing interest in our research among members of a wider audience.

OVERTURE

(SOLEDAD JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR)

The anthropologist prepares herself for fieldwork. She learns languages, reads histories and ethnographies, participates in seminars, and meets with her professors. The anthropologist does her homework every day and learns that she has to take notes at the latest the morning after whatever happened in the field. She books everything bookable in advance: a flight, a house, a visa, and so on. She goes to the field, expecting to become a specialist on the people and in the themes that she thought she would find in the new milieu. In theory, everything sounds perfect! She knows what she is doing. At least, that is what she thinks.

Some days after arriving in the research country, the anthropologist takes a first bus, a taxi, a second bus, a second taxi and arrives in the villages where she is supposed to live during an entire year. She thinks that she speaks the language, but it is one thing to take lessons at the University and a radically different thing to survive speaking the language. No one wants to invite her home or even to talk to her.

The anthropologist asks herself what is wrong with her. In her frustration, she does not seem to realise that the people she wants to study are not obliged to help her. They do not have to like her. They are not obliged to cooperate or give the information she is looking for. In the end, she is a stranger. No one knows where this anthropologist comes from. Why should they trust her?

The anthropologist is, for the people she wants to study, a mushroom. No one is able to explain under which conditions this mushroom appeared. Slowly, people can get used to it, but it is rather difficult to trust a mushroom. What effects can this mushroom produce? How does it look? Is it poisonous? Is it useful at all?

The mushroom condition is, however, very difficult to identify for the anthropologists herself. Apparently, the mushroom seems to think that everybody around it and everything happening are very weird ...

INTRODUCTION

The present volume brings together some notes related to the PhD project I carried out at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology (MPI) between 2010 and 2014. For the project, whose main output was the dissertation *Centripetal Mirrors, Cultural Conservation among Shaanxi Dungans in Kazakhstan* (Jiménez-Tovar 2014), I did fifteen months of fieldwork in Kazakhstan between 2011 and 2013. I also spent about nine weeks in China between 2012 and 2015. While the aim of my thesis was to develop a scientific and specialised discussion, the objective of this volume is to offer some reflexions that can communicate to a broader spectrum of readers the kind of work I developed at MPI.

The subjects of my research project, Sinophone Muslims, better known in Central Asia as Dungans, are migrants who arrived in the former Russian Empire 140 years ago after Muslim rebellions against the Qing dynasty in the Chinese provinces of Gansu, Shaanxi and Xinjiang in the mid-nineteenth century¹. Dungan people have had to adapt to many cultural and political changes in the region since then, including being subjected to ethnic engineering in imperial, Soviet and post-Soviet times. Having been, since their arrival, an ethnic minority, Dungans have faced many difficulties in terms of integration to the local milieu and recognition from their neighbours. Surprisingly, when I started my project, this minority had been generally neglected by researchers.

The main topic I developed in my PhD thesis was how Dungans have adapted (or not) to the local setting and which kind of identity strategies Dungans perform in everyday life. More specifically, I was interested in the local idea that Dungans were particularly resistant to the introduction of change into their society. Understanding what cultural change would mean implied a deep analysis of broader topics. Thus, in my research I carried out a discussion of colonialism and ethnic engineering (or how the State administers the ethnic diversity inherent to its territory) in multiple cases, including the Qing Empire, the Russian Empire, and the Soviet Union. In addition, I also contributed to the discussion on the viability of the use of the term ‘post-colonial’ in the case of the People’s Republic of China and the former Soviet Republics in Central Asia; more specifically speaking, Kazakhstan. I did this discussion in dialogue with debates about post-colonialism in some Latin American cases. I contextualised Dungan case, not only at the macro-level I just described, but also in relation to the micro-politics of identity. In

¹ A general overview of the context and different Muslim rebellions against the Qing Empire during the second half of the nineteenth century can be found in Broomhall (1910); Chu (1966); Feng Zenglie (1990); Han Minzhu (2006); Israeli (1976, 1979a, 1989); Jones & Kuhn (1978); Kim (2004); Kuhn (1970); Lipman (1997); Thiersant (1878); Tsai (1997).

this second level of analysis, I discussed how ideas about the conservation of culture are influenced by and simultaneously have an influence on politics of language, gender and housing.

This volume, however, is not about my thesis itself, but about the research process for my PhD project. It is both ‘field diary’ and analysis of it. I do not deal exclusively with the fieldwork I conducted in Kazakhstan and China although this fieldwork constitutes the main point of reference. I want to give an overview of my research project, but I also am elaborating upon the image of the mushroom, as the opening text of this volume suggests.

The mushroom condition is something that accompanied me, not only in Kazakhstan and China, but also in Germany, since the very first day of my stay as researcher at MPI. As a Mexican who is also a Central Asianist, I have to explain this combination in almost every context. Nevertheless, I would say that my subjects of study, Dungan people, are themselves representatives of mushroom-ness. Dungans migrated from China to Central Asia one and a half centuries ago, they are the offspring of Muslim men who migrated, mainly from Central Asia to China during the Tang dynasty (618-907) and married Chinese women. Nowadays, both in China and in Central Asia, Dungans are perceived as being out of place. Since Dungans do belong to both systems, both academically and politically speaking, it is rather difficult to understand such a multiple and simultaneous belonging and non-belonging (Jiménez-Tovar 2016).

One commonality that Dungan people seemed to share with one another and with me is that we are all mushrooms. My PhD project was indeed a process of mutual discovering. In our ‘marginality’, Dungans and myself learned how to create a common mushroom-ness. In this volume, I want to explore primarily how this affects Dungans.



Photo 1: Pagoda-like mosque. Karakol, Kyrgyzstan.

(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2008)



Photo 2: The stone in the trunk. Karakol, Kyrgyzstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2008)

But before discussing the Dungan case I want to outline my own mushroom-ness and how I became interested in Dungan people. I remember that I felt as if I had found the field site for my PhD project when, in 2008, I went to Karakol, Kyrgyzstan. Karakol is one of the three places in the whole Central Asian region that has a pagoda-like mosque. The other villages are Yrdyk, very near Karakol, also in Kyrgyzstan, and Jarkent, in Kazakhstan (see map 2 on page xvi).

What initially claimed my attention in Karakol was not the mosque, but a severed tree trunk inside which there was a big stone. Exactly in the moment when I saw this on a street close the main bazaar, a gust of cold wind blew bringing the sound of howls, maybe from dogs. I like to think that the howls were from wolves. I never asked about the significance of this tree trunk. I decided to let it stay a mystery: this is perhaps less scientific, but more poetic.

As the reader can see, my decisions have more to do with aesthetic experience than with academic reasons. Probably the episode of the tree trunk in Karakol is not at all an ‘objective’ fact, but it is what brought me to Dungans in the first place.

As I said, I had no knowledge of Dungans before 2008². When I asked about the pagoda-like mosque, people mentioned that this was a Dungan mosque and that Dungans came from China. This answer given by locals was general enough to make me feel curious. However, this explanation did not fascinate me as much as the Muslim rebellions against the Qing empire in the provinces of Gansu, Shaanxi and Xinjiang that preceded Dungan migration to Central Asia in the mid-nineteenth century. I learned about these rebellions

² The research that I did in 2008 resulted in my Master’s thesis (Jiménez-Tovar 2009).

after I came back to Mexico, still as a Master's student in Chinese Studies, when I took a course on Qing history.

As in a jigsaw puzzle, the challenge of my research was to bring together the pieces I had at that moment. First, the fact that the Muslim rebellions against the Qing were fundamental to the political processes taking place in Northwest China in the nineteenth century. Second, one of the consequences of such uprisings was that some people migrated to Central Asia. Third, those migrants constituted later two ethnic minorities in the region: Dungans and Uyghurs. One piece of material 'evidence' of what I just summarised was the pagoda-like mosque I saw in Karakol in 2008.

What people told me in Karakol was, however, quite ambiguous, the mosque was built following such a style because it is Dungan, and Dungans came from China. What is it supposed to mean 'to be someone who came from China'? I have to admit that in 2008 I did not think that 'to come from China' was so problematic to define and understand as it resulted to be at the end, during my writing-up. In fact, the 'Chinese' variable is the backbone of my PhD dissertation. It took me almost six years to realise its complexity of what people had explained to me as being self-evident and even trivial.

The next curious fact is the idea of a backbone: I was told a couple of times during my fieldwork that the three Central Asian pagoda-like mosques were the tail of a dragon whose body was formed by other pagoda-like mosques and the Tian-Shan mountains. If the tail is in Central Asia, the head of the dragon is in Xi'an, the capital of Chinese empire during the Tang dynasty (618-907), during which the first Muslims arrived in the Chinese empire.

I like this image of a huge dragon. It serves as a good metaphor of what is supposed to be Dungan: a mixture of Chinese culture and Islamic faith. As I discussed in my thesis, Sinophone Muslims have been interpreted as being at the crossroad between 'Sinicisation' and 'Islamisation', as in the case of Raphael Israeli (1979b), whose approach to Muslims in China requires a purist definition of Muslim-ness and Chinese-ness, as if it were not possible to be 'Muslim' and 'Chinese' at the same time. The problem with this approach, at least in Israeli's case, is the discussion of what 'Muslim' and 'Chinese' is lacking.

In Israeli's view, a Chinese Muslim is not Chinese because he/she is a Muslim and vice versa, the closer you are to one category, the further you place yourself from the other. At the same time, there is nothing 'in between' in Israeli's perspective. We can identify Israeli as a representative of the 'Sinicisation' approach, where whatever and/or whoever comes into contact with China, becomes somehow 'Chinese'. In the most simplistic understanding of cultural diffusionism, this approach assumes the existence of a 'pure' culture that 'expands' its influence around itself. This kind of approach, however, is nowadays rare: authors such as Benite (2010 [2005]), and Gladney (1996

[1991]) have shown already how complex and fascinating are indeed the multiple Muslim identities in China. Nevertheless, this essentialist understanding is shared by non-academicians. I want to include another example of this kind of approach, not from the fieldwork in Kazakhstan, but from my first year as a PhD student in Germany.

I took a course of German language at a school where there were offered the so-called 'integration courses'. The main aim of these courses is to help foreigners coming to Germany as migrants to attain an intermediate level of German language, as well as gain knowledge of basic facts about German politics and history. Being in this multicultural complex microcosm, I had many opportunities to become aware of the difficulties related to mutual cultural (mis)understandings.

One of the students, a Chinese woman in her thirties married to a German, started to explain what kind of 'Western' holidays have been celebrated in China during the last decades. Christmas was among these holidays. This woman declared that, despite of not being Christian, she celebrated Christmas with her friends. She did it even before meeting her husband, so her marriage did not play a role in her decision to celebrate Christmas. In the group there was a Catholic Polish woman of the same age. The Catholic woman said she felt confused, since the religious meaning of Christmas seemed to be lost in the Chinese woman's understanding. There was some tension in this moment, but it was defused by the German teacher, who argued that everybody had the right to choose holidays to celebrate; even those that are not 'originally' part of his/her culture. Some days later, the Catholic woman invited everybody in the group to a course on *taijiquan*, a martial art widely practised in China. The Chinese woman asked that day:

"Do you understand the whole philosophy behind *taijiquan*?"

"Sorry?", replied the Catholic woman

"Nothing, it doesn't matter", concluded the Chinese woman.

My point with this example is that both Christmas and *taijiquan* were taken as something that 'the other' would not be able to fully understand. In the German context, though, a rhetoric of multiculturalism opened the door to borrowings. I do not want to start a discussion on the weak and strong points of politics of multiculturalism in Germany. In the first example, however, the conflict that mutual misunderstanding seemed to generate, rather than being solved, was instead only avoided. In the second example, we see a similar understanding, in this case, about assimilating 'alien' cultural traits. What makes these two women different? Is the cosmopolitanism represented by each of them similar? Indeed, the Catholic behaved quite aggressively during the discussion of Christmas in China, while when speaking about *taijiquan* she was more tolerant. The Chinese woman was never aggressive, neither during the Christmas incident nor during the *taijiquan* invitation.

Such a perception is also a question of unequal distribution of resources and power. In order to make clearer what I want to say, let us ask the following question. What if I am, for example, a European woman who wants to practice *taijiquan* and to celebrate Christmas together with my Chinese friend? Probably, in this case, I would not be seen as somebody who does not understand cultural practices or use them ignorantly, but would instead be seen as a cosmopolitan person.

Coming back to Sinophone Muslims, what does it mean, then, to be at the crossroad between ‘Sinicisation’ and ‘Islamisation’? This combination, worthy of the newest narratives on globalisation, is something that happened, not in more contemporary times of ‘post-modernism’, but ten centuries ago, after the first Muslims came to China and married local people, let us call these locals ‘Chinese’.

Despite what scholars such as Raphael Israeli (1979b) have said about the ostensible contradiction of being Muslim and Chinese at the same time, Dungs are living proof of the possibility of having a complex identity. While being ‘Muslim’ and, at the same time, ‘Chinese’, as the Dungan case seems to represent, has been interpreted as being somehow ‘pre-modern’ to the extent that both features are not part of being WEIRD³, our Catholic woman is avant-garde. Nevertheless, such ‘pure’ cultural labels are rather very difficult to interpret. In the example in Germany I gave above, is it that all Chinese know what *taijiquan* is, how to practice this martial art, and the philosophy behind it? Or, are absolutely all Europeans Christian and/or celebrate Christmas in its religious sense? Or, both *taijiquan* and Christmas have become commodities? Cosmopolitanism as such is not a new phenomenon. In turn, to be cosmopolitan is quite fashionable today.

My digression here has an aim: I seek to show the reader the degree of confusion I had towards the end of my first year as a PhD student. I took all my doubts, confusions and fears, put them in my baggage and went to the field. At the end I did not go to Karakol, but to southern Kazakhstan. In 2010, there were ethnic riots between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks and resulted in some hundreds of deaths in Osh, Kyrgyzstan. Since I have been told several times in Central Asia that I look like an Uzbek⁴, I preferred to change my field site for reasons of personal safety. The project was the same, only the field site changed.

³ WEIRD has been proposed as an acronym of ‘Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic’ by Henrich, Heine & Norenzayan (2010).

⁴ This is part of my mushroom-ness. In general, before I started to speak, people usually thought I was local. If not Uzbek, I was taken as Uyghur or Gipsy. However, once I started to speak, I immediately became foreign to local eyes. The behaviour that people had when they thought I was local differed significantly to the one they had when they realised I was not. Sometimes they were just indifferent or even very nasty when they thought I was local and then they became very nice and curious once they learned I am Mexican.

The change to Kazakhstan seemed to be the best option at the time. Dungans constitute a minority in both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The population has also a similar number: around 50000 in each country. The conditions, nevertheless, were rather different.

First of all, even though I would carry out my fieldwork in the same region, two decades after the disintegration of the Soviet Union the living conditions in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan differ significantly from each other. On the one hand, the Kazakhstani economy had been growing exponentially during the last decade, thanks mostly to the production of oil and Kazakhstan's position as a favourable transport hub between China and Europe. Such a situation, however, has already changed, since the devaluation of Kazakhstan's currency, the *tenge*, in 2014 and 2015. Kyrgyzstan recent history of economic and political hardships have resulted in a lower middle income.

Second, there are two main groups among Central Asian Dungans depending on the province of origin in China: Gansu or Shaanxi. Even though it is possible to find both groups in both countries, most Gansu Dungans live in Kyrgyzstan. In turn, Shaanxi Dungans constitute the majority in Kazakhstan⁵.

These two features combined constitute an important axis of analysis. In Soviet times, Gansu Dungans shaped the intellectual elite which were the result of political campaigns in the 1920's and 1930's. One such campaign was known as *korenizatsiya*. *Korenizatsiya* (indigenisation) was implemented to secure the loyalties of non-Russian inhabitants to the new regime. It included establishing bilingual education systems and inclusion of cadres of all nationalities in the governmental apparatus (Pavlenko 2008; Westren 2012). This campaign of indigenisation resulted in the main division between Dungans. While Gansu Dungans found no obstacle to obtaining education as cadres during *korenizatsiya*, Shaanxi Dungans did due to political reasons: Magaza Masanchi, a Shaanxi Dungan who was promoting the formation of the Shaanxi-speaking cadres, was repressed during the Stalinist purges. Magaza Masanchi's case is not unique in this period. During the 1930s campaigns of repression resulted in forced deportation and killing of many people as enemies of the Soviet people. Later deportations punished those seen as potential or actually collaborators with the Germans during World War II (Westren 2012).

Thus, the campaigns of *korenizatsiya* and Stalinist repressions meant that only Gansu Dungans took part in the commissions that produced the alphabets and textbooks for the Dungan language. As a result, the Gansu topolect⁶

⁵ For a more detailed description of the differentiation among Central Asian Dungans see Jiménez-Tovar (2016).

⁶ The term 'topolect' has been suggested by Victor Mair (1991) as an alternative translation of the Chinese word *fāngyán*, which usually is translated into English as 'dialect'. Given the huge diversity behind the idea of the 'Chinese language', the sense of topolect gives a better understanding of a language with regional variations without conferring a sense of linguistic hierarchy.

was the one chosen as the ‘literary’ language to be learnt at school by all Dungans, including the Shaanxi ones. The disintegration of the Soviet Union did not mean a change in this regard. Even though in Kazakhstan Gansu Dungans represent a minority, the language taught at Dungan schools in that country remains the Gansu topolect.

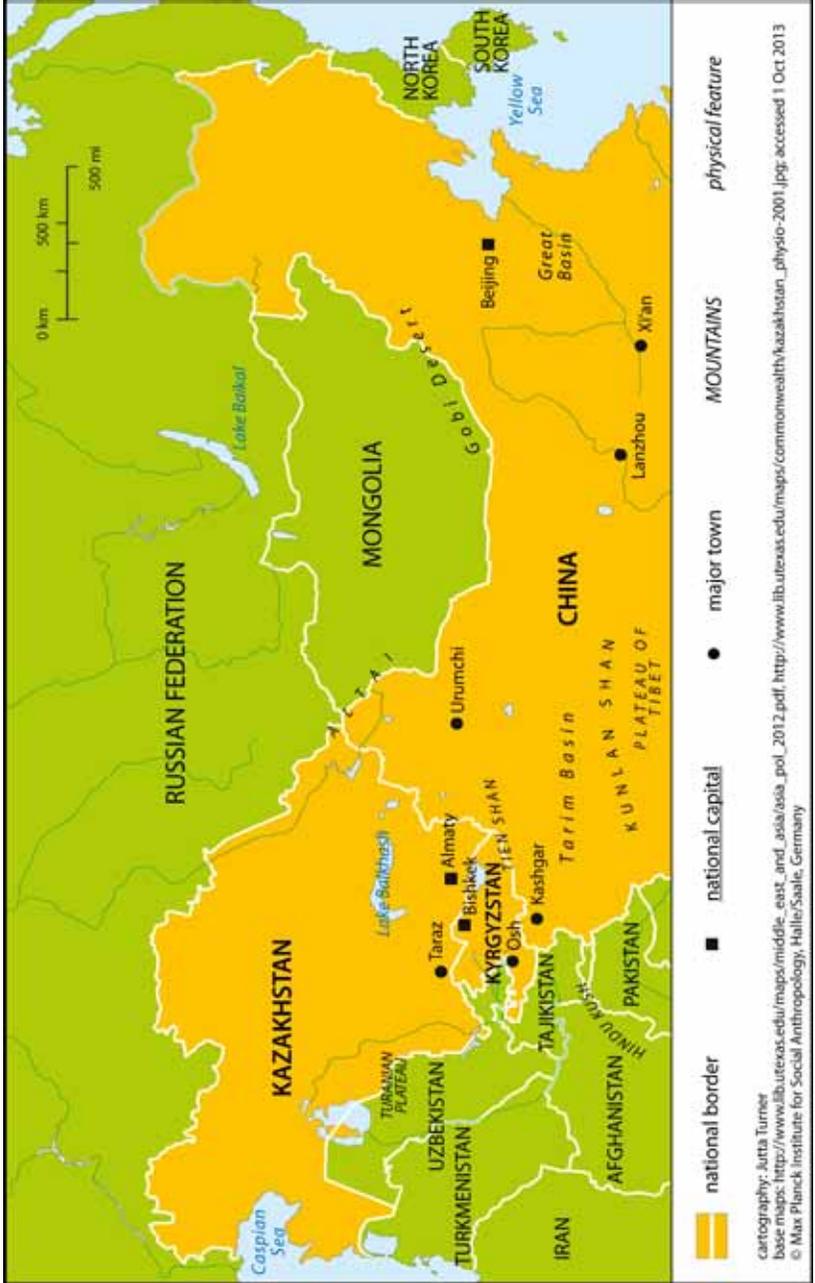
Nevertheless, Gansu Dungans becoming intellectual elites is one thing, while maintaining this status in the years following the disintegration of the Soviet Union is another. Indeed, in economic terms, Shaanxi Dungans are doing much better than Gansu Dungans. Trade with China has had a direct impact in the reconfiguration of the intellectual elite among Central Asian Dungans. While Gansu Dungan scholars are doing their utmost to preserve a given - Soviet - tradition of Dungan studies, Shaanxi Dungans, most of whom prefer to go to China than stay in Kazakhstan or go to Kyrgyzstan to study, are changing the point of view from which Dungan studies are carried out. Although Dungan studies in China were originally highly influenced by Soviet scholarship, I believe that the new generation of Dunganologists, nurtured by an emphasis on adopting ‘Western’ approaches to research, will take a new road in interpreting Dungan history and society.

In general terms, I have just summarised in the last paragraphs the main differences of the two possible places where I could have done my fieldwork. At the end, I think that the change from Kyrgyzstan to Kazakhstan was a good decision. Studies of Dungans, relatively few in number, concentrate on Gansu Dungans. Mine has been the first long-term field account of the Shaanxi Dungans. I hope that in the years to come new approaches appear, relying on more comparative perspectives.

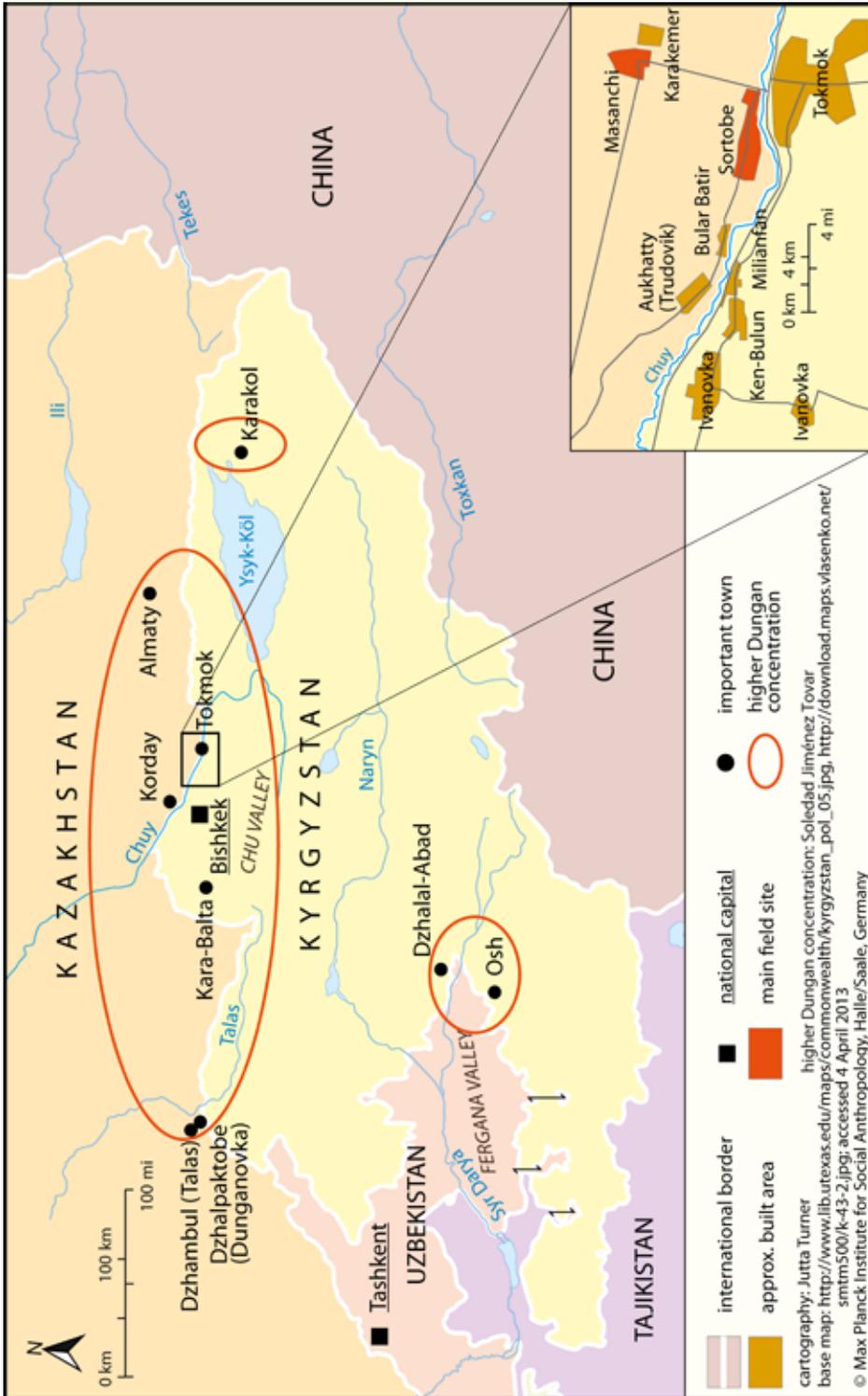
In the following pages, I offer an overview of my experience in the field. Instead of trying to cover every detail, I have opted for ‘drawing’ some sketches of important moments in my field research. These sketches are sometimes visual and sometimes textual. I emphasize features that contrast more profoundly with local practices by non-Dungans in the Central Asian context. This text thus emphasizes bodily experience and out-of-place-ness (or the mushroom condition) and shows how preservation of culture is a way of educating and regulating the body.

Before I start this task, I want to thank some people that accompanied me during the writing-up of this volume. First of all, I want to thank Dungan people, who have been always open to any questions and enquiries I have had. I also want to thank Günther Schlee for all his support across the years. Martine Guichard supported the writing-up of this present reflection: we spent several hours discussing every page of this text, and I am very thankful to her. Viktoria Zeng and Robert Dobsław gave me all the technical support I needed. Jutta Turner has drawn the maps that appear in this volume. The vast majority of the pictures included in this volume were taken by me. For those which were not, I mention the name of the author, Eduardo Perera

Lezama, who authorised me to reproduce his pictures here. Aida Aaly Alymbaeva, Maarten Bedert, Nathan Light, Anaïs Menard and Zhang Fan read the first draft of this text and their comments were very useful for making some points clearer. Thanks to them, I know that I am not alone in the project of decolonizing academia.



Map 1: General map of the research area



Map 2: The villages where the author did field work

KAZAKHSTAN 2011: FIRST IMPRESSIONS



Photo 3: Master of ceremonies wearing Kazakh ethnic clothes during a school-festival. Taraz, Kazakhstan. (E. PERERA LEZAMA, 2011)

Taraz, Talas, Zhambyl, or Zhambul are the names of a city with a population of about four hundred thousand people. It is the capital of the Zhambyl *oblast'* (province). In general, the vast majority of Kazakhstani Dungan live in this *oblast'*. In the metropolitan area of Taraz there is a Dungan village, officially called Dzhalpaktobe. Local people in Taraz call it 'Dunganovka'. In March 2011, I was invited to Taraz by Rashid Bakirov, the director of the House of Dungan Culture in Dunganovka.

In one school in Taraz there was a festival during which children studying there were supposed to give a presentation about the ethnic group they belonged to. Besides that, they should perform dances, give food to taste and represent a wedding. Such folkloric representation is quite common in Kazakhstan. I have been told that the practice started in Soviet times and was maintained after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Aida Aaly Alymbaeva (personal communication, 2015) has told me that these kind of festivals were also performed in Soviet Kyrgyzstan, the ethnicities represented being the ones corresponding to the titular nationalities in every one of the fifteen Soviet Republics. However, in contemporary Kyrgyzstan, such festivals at schools are not performed anymore.

In Kazakhstan, nevertheless, although these festivals continue, they are not the same as those of Soviet times. First of all, the scale of the diversity represented has changed. In Soviet times, the groups to be shown were from all around the multi-ethnic federation of socialist republics, while, nowadays, the ethnicities included in this festival are restricted to those that inhabit the *oblast'*. This change is closely related to the fact that Kazakhstan is now a capitalist state seeking a place as a vibrant emergent economy in



Photo 4: Rashid Bakirov and the author taking breakfast. Taraz, Kazakhstan.

(E. PERERA LEZAMA, 2011)



Photo 5: Performance of Uzbek wedding at the school festival. Taraz, Kazakhstan.
(E. PERERA LEZAMA, 2011)

a global neoliberal market. Thus, ethnic diversity is represented as a heritage that should be incorporated into the new Kazakhstan, while at the same time, Kazakhs are the agents of nation-state building. I was told that there should be at least one Kazakh among the masters of ceremony. This is not an official requirement, but rather a requisite self-imposed in order to show loyalty to the new national situation in Kazakhstan. Having Kazakhs among the presenters would signify the willingness of non-Kazakhs to be integrated. I observed this in festivals in Taraz, Sortobe and Almaty.



Photo 6: Performance of Turkish dances at the school festival. Taraz, Kazakhstan.
(E. PERERA LEZAMA, 2011)



Photo 7: The public enjoying the festival. Taraz, Kazakhstan. (E. PERERA LEZAMA, 2011)



Photo 8: Staff of the Association of Dungans of Kazakhstan. Almaty, Kazakhstan. (E. PERERA LEZAMA, 2011)

Besides Taraz, in March 2011 I also visited Almaty, the former capital city of Kazakhstan (since 1998, the capital is Astana). There I met the staff working at the Association of Dungans of Kazakhstan.

After having established my first contacts in Taraz and Almaty, I finally went to the villages where I intended to carry out my fieldwork: Sortobe and Masanchi (see map 2 on page xvi). I was lucky enough to find a Dungan in the *marshrutka* (mini-bus public transport following a fixed route) going from Almaty to Bishkek. This Dungan man showed me where to take the taxi in Kordai so I could reach the villages. Moreover, he talked to a Dungan taxi driver who helped me to look for accommodation (see Photo 119 at the end of this volume).

I think this was the first time that I felt like a mushroom. The Dungan man who helped me, indeed, trusted me without knowing who I was. In turn, I also decided to trust him. I suppose I had no option. Although in the *marshrutka* we spoke Russian, once we had negotiated the price of the taxi, Dungan was the language of choice. Before going to Kazakhstan, I took lessons in Russian and Mandarin Chinese, but once listening Dungan language, I realised that it would be quite a different language awaiting me in Dungan villages. I was told that the Dungan spoken in that region was *shaanxihua* (topolect of Shaanxi) and since *shaanxihua* is a northern topolect, my knowledge of *putonghua* (Mandarin Chinese) would be enough. Nevertheless, this particular *shaanxihua* is spoken only in these two villages and is full of loanwords from Russian and local Turkic languages. Some Dungans even rely upon Russian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz or Uzbek as their primary language and while they can understand the Dungan language they might speak it very little. So, despite being a Chinese language, Dungan language is distinctive. In this sense, this first language contact I had was the first context in which I recognized the mushroom condition of Dungans and myself. Of course, Dungans are mushrooms in Central Asia or in China, in a Dungan village they are not out of place. In my case, though, I was a new species of mushroom trying to find my place at a new setting.

The first day no one wanted to talk to me or give me accommodation. At the end, Salima Vansinvin, director of the House of Culture in Sortobe, let me stay at her house. Salima and her family were fundamental during the whole period of my fieldwork. They not only introduced me to the community, but also explained many aspects of Dungan culture that were otherwise difficult to understand.

Another family that helped me constantly was the Aydirov family. In Almaty I met Roza (photo 8, at the extreme left), whose parents live and work in Sortobe. Roza's opinions on Dungan culture were particularly interesting, given her position as a *metis* (Russian for *mestizo*): her father is Dungan and her mother is Korean. I have learned a lot from this mixed family about the construction of we-identification among Kazakhstani Dungans.

I want to discuss the nature of this such Dungan *mestizo* identity, in order to show how a mixed origin poses problems to being included. I will describe the person anonymously in order to be sure he cannot be recognised.

Xiaoya is the youngest son in his family. His parents worked in Bishkek and commuted every day from a small village close Tokmok when he was growing up. Xiaoya and his siblings were born in this village. Xiaoya's father is a Shaanxi Dungan who was born in Sortobe, Kazakhstan, but left the village in order to study in Bishkek, where he met Xiaoya's mother: a non-Dungan woman. It is very common that Dungan men marry non-Dungan women. In contrast, the other way around, Dungan women marrying non-Dungan men, is very rare. Xiaoya's family moved to Sortobe in mid-1990s. Unlike his siblings, Xiaoya was a little child when this happened, so he grew up in Sortobe. Xiaoya speaks Shaanxi Dungan fluently. Like some other young Dungans in Sortobe, Xiaoya went to China in order to learn *putonghua* (Mandarin Chinese).

When I interviewed Dungan students in Xi'an, China, Xiaoya was not able to come. Some other students advised me to talk to him. According to these students, Xiaoya would be the best person to explain Dungan culture to me because 'even though he is not hundred percent Dungan, when he came to Sortobe he was young enough to learn Dungan language and traditions, so he can understand them both as a Dungan and as an outsider' (from an interview with a 23-year-old male Dungan student, Xi'an, China, 2012).

The perception of Xiaoya as being simultaneously a Dungan and an outsider is clear in this quotation and should be contextualised. Xiaoya is not exceptional as a Dungan with a mixed background. Indeed, having non-Dungan relatives is more the rule than the exception among Central Asian Dungans. In addition, language choices are not determined by parental language. During my fieldwork I came across many cases of people with two Dungan parents whose mother tongue was nonetheless Russian rather than Dungan. Moreover, Dungan language is already a pidgin that includes, besides the Sinitic ones, many Russian and Turkic terms. What makes Xiaoya so different? The answer to that question is a very complex task.

Xiaoya's father is also a mestizo Dungan: his mother was Ukrainian. However, Xiaoya's father is always referred to as Dungan and not seen as an outsider. The fact that Xiaoya's father married a non-Dungan, instead of a Dungan woman is relevant. His birth in a Dungan village also plays a role in Xiaoya's identity. In addition, the fact that some other members of Xiaoya's family, both males and females, married non-Dungans, is seen as a lack of willingness to integrate into the community of Sortobe Dungans. Nonetheless, Xiaoya is perceived as 'the most Dungan' in his household. The key seems to be his skills in speaking Dungan and carrying out traditional rituals. I interviewed several members of Xiaoya's family, and while they are not ignorant of Dungan culture, people nevertheless do not perceive them as having the same degree of 'Dungan-ness' as Xiaoya.

Sortobe Dungans' perception of cultural identity in the case of Xiaoya's family members seems to involve a debate about nature *versus* nurture. In

Xiaoya's case, even though nurture has played a key role in his Dungan-ness, there is also a perception of his descent as a 'natural' distinction that makes him an outsider. However, this is not the case of Xiaoya's father, whose Dungan-ness is not called into question. Though subtle, ideas about 'blood' conveying cultural characteristics and mentality are important, not only among Dungans, but in general in the whole Central Asian region.

Gradually, I realised that people defined Dungan-ness negatively, i. e. by defining what was not 'Dungan', but never positively identified specific traits that were seen as 'Dungan'. In my thesis, I described as 'centripetal mirroring' the constant evaluation of proper performances of Dungan-ness. It is centripetal because the point of reference for proper Dungan-ness is the individual. It is mirroring because it implies a constant evaluation and comparison among individuals and households.

In such a fragmented community, it was rather difficult to get accepted and integrated. I had to become a multi-edged mushroom, whose colours and taste changed in every social situation. In the kaleidoscope of my performance, I had to forget for a while who I was thought to be, and I had to learn how I was supposed to behave and appear.

The requirement that I perform my identities somewhat flexibly was also related to gender. Being female, I was expected to have a more passive attitude. One of the strategies that helped me a lot in this was to serve as a 'translator' for male collaborators and visitors that came to the villages where I was conducting my fieldwork. Thus, I 'translated' from Russian into Spanish, English or German and vice versa. Since these men were my colleagues, I had more freedom to ask a variety of questions without having to explain why I asked them. People would assume that these questions came from the men and not myself, and thus avoided being identified as inappropriate, as they would if a woman asked them directly. I realised later that a similar strategy was followed by Dungan women. As an example, I want to quote an interaction I had once during a party in Sortobe in 2011. Everybody in the room was female. I indicate in brackets whether the sentence was said in Russian (Ru.) or Dungan (Du.):

I: Hello, my name is Soledad, I am doing research on Dungan people (Ru.)

Woman 1: [Talking to woman 2] Is she from Kazakhstan? (Du.)

Woman 2: [to me] Where are you from? (Ru.)

I: Mexico (Ru.)

Woman 1: [to woman 2] Is she Dungan? (Du.)

Woman 2: [to me] She wants to know your religion (Ru.)

I: [to woman 2] That was not the question (Ru.) [to woman 1] I am not Dungan (Du.)

Traduttore traditore, to be a translator was a resource also used by other Dungan women, who, indeed, represented one of the richest sources while I was doing fieldwork in this society where the sexes are strongly separated. To be a translator was one of the ways of ‘suppressing’ my identity in interactions. As a communicative intermediary, I was able to build trust with Dungan people. I made myself both invisible to a certain extent and, at the same time, an accomplice. Several times, for example, I was asked not to translate some comments made either by informants or colleagues. Thus, what was ‘lost in translation’ remained between one of the interlocutors and myself, and contributed to creating a space of intimacy. It was like being one mushroom with a subtle flavour that can be included in several dishes.

I became, thus, a mushroom in the middle of the steppe.

LANDSCAPES



Photo 9: Going from Almaty to Sortobe. Stop: Hotel *Avraziya*. The *marshrutka* (mini-bus) in which the author travelled. Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2013)



Photo 10: Going from Almaty to Sortobe. Stop: Hotel *Avraziya*, gas station. Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2013)

Photo 11: Going from Almaty to Sortobe.
Stop: Hotel *Avraz'ya*, Kazakhstan.
(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2013)





Photo 12: Sunset in Sortobe, Kazakhstan.

(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2013)



Photo 13: Memorial of World War II in Sortobe, Kazakhstan. It is worth mentioning that this memorial was built not in Soviet times, but in mid-2000's, on the initiative of some local intellectuals. Nostalgia for the Soviet Union is a very common topic of discussion in Sortobe and Masanchi. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2013)



Photo 14: Placard of Nauryz (Persian New Year) in Sortobe, Kazakhstan. The text in Kazakh language ‘*Nauryz meıramy kütty bolsyn!*’ means ‘Happy Nauryz!’ (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2013)



Photo 15: Cleaning the front yard in Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2013)



Photo 16: Fields in Sortobe, Kazakhstan.

(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2013)



Photo 17: Working on the fields in Sortobe, Kazakhstan.

(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2013)



Photo 18: Store in downtown. Sortobe, Kazakhstan.

(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2013)



Photo 19: *Akimat* (town hall) in downtown. Sortobe, Kazakhstan.

(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2013)



Photo 20: Gas station in downtown. ‘Kazakhstan 2030’ is a development plan guided by President Nursultan Nazarbaev, with the main goal of making Kazakhstan one of the most developed countries in the world. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2013)



Photo 21: Store in downtown on Lenin avenue. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2013)

Photo 22: Street at the village of
Bular Batir, Kazakhstan.
(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2012)





Photo 23: Downtown: having a rest. Masanchi, Kazakhstan.

(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2012)



Photo 24: Downtown: stores. Masanchi, Kazakhstan.

(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2012)



Photo 25: Going home in Sortobe, Kazakhstan.
(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2013)



Photo 26: House of Culture in downtown. Masanchi, Kazakhstan.

(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 27: Schools in downtown. Masanchi, Kazakhstan.

(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 28: A black hen looking at the author on the street in Sortobe, Kazakhstan.
(S. JMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)

Photo 29: Going from Masanehi to Sortobe, Kazakhstan.
(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



THE CORNER WHERE TIME IS CONTAINED

When Dungans came to Central Asia, they were fleeing China and the Qing army was pursuing them. Even now, Shaanxi Dungans still describe the difficult conditions they faced upon arrival. Bi Yankhu, their leader, looked for a place that would be difficult to find. Thus, in the middle of the steppe, hidden between mountains, the village known nowadays as ‘Masanchi’ was founded in 1878.

On the following page appears a picture of a corner in the Museum of Dungan History and Culture in Masanchi. On the wall there are images giving the different names that this village has had across the time. Right after Bi Yankhu’s arrival, from 1878 until 1903, the village was called ‘Karakunuz’, meaning ‘black beetle’ in local Turkic languages. Dyer (1992) believes that this was a nickname given by local Turkic-speakers to Dungans, due to the fact that Dungan women liked to wear black at that time. In 1903 the name changed to ‘Nikolaevka’ (after the Russian Tsar) and it changed again in 1918, when the name ‘Karakunuz’ was again adopted, and did not change until 1964, when, as part of the rehabilitation of Magaza Masanchi, the village was renamed after him: ‘Masanchi’. Besides these official names, Masanchi also has a Dungan name, Yinpan, which appears in the left image on the wall⁷.

Among the images of the names of the village there are also images representing political changes that have happened since the Dungans arrived in Central Asia. Thus, for the period 1878-1903 a portrait of Bi Yankhu and some pictures of the first newcomers are shown. For the period 1903-1917 pictures of some buildings are included. The last two are particularly interesting. The picture for the period 1918-1963 is framed by the Soviet flag, which is shown together with a portrait of Masanchi talking to Lenin, as well as some pictures of houses built during that period. For the period starting in 1964, the political transition from de-Stalinisation to the independence of Kazakhstan is indicated by the inclusion of one picture with a house on a red

7 It is worth mentioning that Dungan is the only Sinitic topolect in the world that is officially written using an alphabet instead of characters. Before the 1920s, Dungans wrote their language using the Arabic alphabet, though it is unknown whether this is something that started in the Russian Empire or already in China. If it was already in China, this was probably *xiao'erjing*, a writing system used by Muslims in imperial China (Benite 2010[2005]; Forke 1907; Murata 2000). In 1928, a Dungan alphabet based on Latin letters was proposed by Dungans studying in Tashkent. In 1932 the same group made a second proposal. This Dungan Latin alphabet is different from *latinxua*, a system proposed by A. A. Dragunov, Qu Qiubai and V. S. Kolokolov as an alternative transcription for Chinese. In 1955 the Dungan Cyrillic alphabet appeared and this has been used until today for writing Dungan (Kalimov 2001; Rimsky-Korsakoff 1967).



Photo 31: A corner in the Museum of Dungan History and Culture. Masanchi, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2013)



background in the first third of the picture, and the Kazakhstani flag in the background of two thirds of the whole picture. The image of the new House of Culture (built a decade ago) within this picture represents the present.

Different visions of time are in dialogue in this corner of the Museum. On the one hand, the history of the village called Yinpan suggests that Dungan time is a continuum. The image with this village name has no date and so constitutes a timeless label with no photograph related to it. In opposite corners, the same title, first in Kazakh, *auyl tarikhy*, and then in Russian, *istoriya sela*, is written: ‘history of the village’. The only word in Dungan is the very name of the village, Yinpan, word that means ‘barrack’.

What is a ‘barrack’ in this case? How can it be related to a particular understanding of history? *Yinpan* can mean ‘building a shelter, a camp or barrack’ whose main attribute is its temporary-ness, while on the move. This sense is understandable given the original context of refugees in flight. They had the idea of returning to China. However, this temporary barrack became a more permanent home for the Dungans living in Masanchi.

What is interesting in the picture is that ‘temporary shelter’ is the more constant name, while the official names of the village change depending on political context. This is the second dimension of time, the world around the barrack changing time and again and dislocating the Dungan sense of belonging. Yinpan, *vis-à-vis* Karakunuz/Nikolaevka/Karakunuz/Masanchi, is a different space not only in terms of its name, but also in terms of what it represents to Dungans. Karakunuz/Nikolaevka/Karakunuz/Masanchi suggests the flexible identity performed by Dungan people across the time, while Yinpan reflects the greater stability of their own sense of themselves.

The sense of being a barrack is also a way of naming and understanding the kind of temporary settlement that Yinpan has been since its foundation. The lack of infrastructure and limited access to utilities such as electricity and running water have continued until today. At the same time, the relative isolation of Yinpan made it easier to develop activities that otherwise would not be possible. For example, after they arrived, the main economic activity for Dungans was the production of opium, and this did not change until the Soviets came and forbade the opium trade (Dyer 1992).

Finally, below the poster with the name of the village, there is a photograph with all the participants of the ‘First International Conference of Dungan Studies’, held in Yinchuan, China, in 1998. Yinchuan is the capital of the Hui Autonomous Province of Ningxia. The Hui are also Sinophone Muslims. The relationship existing between Dungans and Hui is a topic of contestation. Some people say that Dungans and Hui share the same ethnic identity, and they are thus taken as different branches of the same transnational people, the Hui being the branch in China and the Dungan being the branch in Central Asia. Some other people, however, think that, despite the fact that Dungan and Hui share origins in China they are now two different ethnic groups. This

discussion is relevant because it reflects essentialist understandings of ethnic identity. Such an essentialism is both multiscalar and fractal. It is multiscalar because we can find it at a very local scale, such as those statements claiming that Dungans exist only in Central Asia as a separated ethnicity, but also at a transnational level, such as the interpretation that sees Dungans and Hui as being part of the same ethnic group. It is fractal because it needs to depart from the same structure to be reproduced time and again across the multiple scales that essentialism takes shape. The debate on the differences or points in common between Hui and Dungan does not seem to get solved soon, as the picture I am describing shows. While the text in Russian specifies ‘Dungan studies’, the text in Chinese characters specifies ‘Hui studies’. To the left of that picture there are photos, probably taken in the Soviet period, showing Dungan females from Masanchi.

The history of Central Asian Shaanxi Dungans, group that is not so sharp edged either, cannot be reduced, though, to the history of the village of Masanchi. There are other villages that should be mentioned, with Sortobe as one important example. As I mentioned already, Dungans who live in this region came from the Chinese province of Shaanxi under the leadership of Bi Yankhu. However, there was a strong division among Shaanxi Dungans in Yinpan. Bi Yankhu had a second house in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Some Dungans thought that he acquired this house with money that he stole from Yinpan people. There was an assembly in order to decide what to do. Those Dungans who thought that Bi Yankhu was guilty of the accusations, i.e., ‘bad’ (Turkic *yaman*), stayed in Yinpan. Those who believed that Bi Yankhu was innocent, or ‘good’ (Turkic *yakhshi*), left Yinpan and founded a second village, about five kilometres to the south of Yinpan, on the banks of the Chu River, in the north of the city of Tokmok. The new village has had only one official name since its foundation, in 1902: Sortobe. The name in Dungan is ‘Shchinchu’⁸, ‘new canal’. This name seems to be related to the fact that, indeed, a new canal had to be built. At the same time, this new watercourse among Dungans meant also the forging of a new identity among Shaanxi Dungans: the Sortobe one. This division has also a religious dimension that will be discussed later. The foundation of Shchinchu has nothing to do with the temporary character of the word Yinpan. If Yinpan represents the desire to return back to China, Shchinchu represents the decision to stay.

Other Shaanxi Dungan villages that exist in this region in Kazakhstan, such as Trudovik and Bular Batir (see map 2 on page xvi), were villages inhabited by Germans who in turn were deported to Kazakhstan during World

⁸ /Shch/ is the transliteration of the Cyrillic letter ш. In the system *hanyu pinyin*, this sound is represented as /x/. I used this transliteration because, even though it is from Cyrillic, the original word is not Russian, but Dungan. As I explained before, Dungan language is written using an alphabet based on the Cyrillic letters. This transliteration is of the Cyrillic Dungan alphabet.

War II and many of whom ‘returned’ to Germany after the disintegration of the Soviet Union⁹. When the Germans left, Dungans bought their houses and land¹⁰. These ‘new’ villages became ‘Dungan’ more recently (during the last two decades), and were not part of the division among Shaanxi Dungans. Rather, Dungans told me that people moved there because it was easier buying an existing house than building a new one. Moving to new housing also reflects the fact that many Dungans now have a higher income than before. More land to farm, and more choices about business activities, as well as trading goods between China and Central Asia seem to be the main reason.

These multiple visions of history can be seen not only in the name of the places. In the following sections I want to show some of the devices through which Dungan culture is supposedly preserved. While in the former sections I wanted to give an idea of the setting where I did fieldwork and some generalities of Dungan people, in the following sections I want to focus in the idea of preservation of culture as a way of fragmenting the Dungan female body.

⁹ These Germans migrated originally in the eighteenth century to the Volga region. They were deported in the 1930s, together with other peoples from the Caucasus, to Kazakhstan. In the 1990s a huge number of Germans took advantage of a campaign of ‘repatriation’ and moved to Germany. On the deportation of Germans to Kazakhstan see Westren (2012) and Diener (2008). On Germans, who have remained in Kazakhstan see Sanders (2016).

¹⁰ I was told that the Germans who grew up in this region used to speak Shaanxi Dungan pretty well. Though I tried to corroborate this fact in Germany, I have yet to find anyone who can confirm this.

The main aim of the two sections following this one – a discussion on shoes and socks and the full description of a wedding – is to show how the Dungan female body is fragmented in order to correspond to particular ideas of preservation of culture. What happens with female feet and hair has consequences that transcend the reputation of a woman as an individual: it says a lot about the morality and the respectfulness to the traditions of the whole household.

I had the chance, however, of meeting the whole body and not only a fragment of it. I made clear to the reader that I felt as a mushroom while conducting my fieldwork. Nevertheless, there were some moments when I could feel again as a human being, more specifically, as a woman. Those moments started when I was called to the kitchen. Entering the kitchen implied that I was admitted in the female world. The kitchen is a place where males would be the ones becoming mushrooms. The kitchen was indeed a space of freedom, where I really learned how Dungan society is, and not only how it was supposed to be. Outside the kitchen, I had the answers to questions such as ‘what?’, ‘when?’, and ‘how?’ Inside the kitchen, I found many answers to the ‘whys?’

Following up the metaphor: it is from the kitchen that the spores are spread. Being a mushroom is something that started again while leaving the kitchen. Getting into the kitchen, though, is something that took me some time and a lot of efforts, but it was worth to do it, and I am very thankful to all women who opened the doors of their kitchens to me.

Dyer (1979) reported that Dungan women did not want her to take pictures of them. This is something that did not happen to me during my field research except on rare occasions. Women refused to let me take pictures when they felt that they did not look good. Nevertheless, when socializing, some women even asked me to take pictures of them. In this section, I include pictures of women in different situations in Sortobe. Showing those pictures of Dungan women is a small tribute that I make to them. At the same time, when I met Svetlana Dyer in April, 2014, she still remembered that Dungan women did not allow her to take pictures of them. So I also want to show these pictures to Svetlana Dyer, who was kind enough to invite me to her place in Canberra, Australia, and share her materials with me. This is a tribute to Dyer, and her inspiring work on Dungan people that accompanied me during all of my PhD studies.



Photo 31: At a graduation. Sortobe, Kazakhstan.

(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 32: At a graduation. Sortobe, Kazakhstan.

(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 33: At home. Ken Bulun, Kyrgyzstan.

(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 34: Coming back home. Sortobe, Kazakhstan.

(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 35: Doing homework. Sortobe, Kazakhstan.

(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 36: Resting at home. Sortobe, Kazakhstan.

(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 37: Ramadan. Sortobe, Kazakhstan.

(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 38: Cooking *lagman* (noodles). Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (E. PERERA LEZAMA, 2011)

IN SEARCH OF THE LOTUS

The Dungans have a patriarchal society in which women are assigned the task of preserving folklore. I offered a deeper analysis of this topic in my PhD thesis (Jiménez-Tovar 2014). In this section and the following one I show how the female body is fragmented in order to represent Dungan ethnic identity. I follow Lesley Sharp (2000), according to whom body is a device through which personhood can be constructed. In the fragmentation of the body, for example, some parts of the body representing values — Sharp gives the example of hands representing labour — can be separated from the self, implying a depersonalisation. In the Dungan case, it is difficult to speak of a depersonalisation. However, such a fragmentation of the body does exist. The way that these fragments of the body are displayed says a lot of ethnic and gender appropriateness. More specifically, there are two fragments of the Dungan female body that best represent how preservation of culture and religious appropriateness are performed: feet and hair. While in the next section I concentrate on hair, in the following paragraphs I develop the importance of feet.

Footbinding was practised in imperial China. Even though the origin of this tradition is unknown, by the Song dynasty (970-1279) it was extensively practised throughout the empire. In early twentieth century, it was forbidden in China (Levy 1992 [1966]; Wang 2002). When Dungans migrated, they also practised footbinding. According to Dyer (1979, 1991), towards the end of the 1940s, there were still Dungan women with bound feet. I did not come across such women during my fieldwork, although some people told me that their grandmothers had ‘lotus flowers’, as bound feet were also called. No one seemed to have nostalgia for this practice after it was forbidden in Soviet times. As one Dungan woman in her sixties told me:

My grandmother’s sister was born in China, my grandmother was born already in Kazakhstan, after the migration [1880’s]. When the time came, her sister got her lotus [bound feet]. My grandmother told me that she could see the suffering of her sister, and, since she liked very much to climb trees, my grandmother decided that she did not want the lotus. So, when the preparations started, she just cut off the bandages. My great-grandmother always reproved such behaviour, arguing that no one would want to marry my grandmother later. But my grandmother had a strong character, so she managed to avoid getting her lotus. I only once saw the lotus of my grandaunt. It was very scary. I think that having traditions is important, but not if somebody is hurt. So, I am happy that the lotus was forbidden.

Something important about footbinding in imperial China is that there was a fetishisation of female feet and shoes became a very important commodity (Ko 2001, 2005). In Central Asia, despite the fact that there are no bound feet anymore, shoes continue to be an important part of the wedding trousseau.

The Museum of Dungan Culture and History, in Masanchi, has a rich collection of shoes that were used mainly for weddings. I reproduce here some of the pictures I took there. I want to thank Musa Loch, director of the Museum, for giving me the access to the collection as well as for the extensive support I received from him during my whole field research.



Photo 39: Musa Loch (left) and Salima Vansinvin (right) discussing cultural activity at the Museum of Dungan Culture and History. Masanchi, Kazakhstan.

(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 40: Dungan women's wedding shoes. Masanchi, Kazakhstan.
(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 41: Dungan men's wedding shoes. Masanchi, Kazakhstan.

(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)

In former times, these shoes were made by locals themselves. Dyer (1991) reported that, towards the end of the 1970s, she saw such shoes worn for everyday use. When I did my fieldwork I did not see them. Nowadays, no shoes are made locally anymore and wedding shoes brought from China are used instead (see, for example, photo 45).

Today, one can still find these shoes in every household. They are kept as a way of remembering the relatives who wore them. Usually, the shoes were used only on the day of the wedding. In the past, every woman started already during her childhood to embroider the pieces of their trousseau. Both the dress and the shoes need to be completely new, and even now no one else wears them afterwards.



Photo 42: Butterfly, detail from a Dungan women's wedding shoe. Masanchi, Kazakhstan.

(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 43: Everyday women's shoes. Masanchi, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 44: Everyday women's shoes. Masanchi, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)

Photo 45: Contemporary Dungan bride the day after the wedding. Sortobe, Kazakhstan.
(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011).



The fact that women do not produce their own trousseau anymore reflects a deep change that took shape during the Soviet period. Now, women expect more than only to stay at home as a housewife. The age at which women marry has been raised from 12–13 years old in the 1930's (Westren 2012) to 17–18. At the beginning of the twentieth century, women did not attend school at all. Now, the majority finish at least the compulsory twelve years at school before getting married. Some women even go to university. Thus, girls do not have enough time for embroidering, since they usually have to prepare exams and homework for school, keep the house clean, and help the family earn an income. The main economic activity among Dungans is agriculture, which is also combined with trade. Nowadays, wedding dresses are made by seamstresses. Given the fact that seamstresses tailor several dresses simultaneously, the details cannot be so meticulous as in former times. Also, the materials used are cheaper. However, Dungan wedding dresses are still considered to be the best example of Dungan cultural preservation.

Handmade wedding shoes started to disappear. As I mentioned, shoes brought from China are replacing them. As a consequence, the shoes are losing their importance in the fragmentation of the female body. However, feet keep being an element of contestation. I saw many cases of 'scandals' provoked by some young women who wore sandals with naked feet instead of using socks. Indeed, how females wear socks (which kind, the size, the colour and so on) is a topic of constant discussion. A woman's socks say a lot about her morality in Dungan society. I call this phenomenon the 'sock performance'. It was very complex for me to learn the sock code. This concern about the socks seems to have replaced what Dyer (1991) mentioned regarding everyday shoes. There was a very complex code of colours that could be used by women according to age and marital status. Nowadays, handmade everyday shoes are not used anymore, sandals being used instead during the hot season and boots during the cold season. Those sandals cannot be used without socks. The shape and colour of the socks are as important as the shape and colour of the shoes used in former times. Photo No. 120 (at the end of this volume) shows the socks that a Dungan woman gave me as a gift. They are appropriate for a woman in her thirties, as the author is. The socks issue is also a performance. I have seen several cases of women who have henna tattoos or use tights below the socks. As long as they wear the right socks, women can do whatever they want with their feet. It is not the same in the case of hair, as will become clear in the next section, where I offer an ethnographic description of a Dungan wedding day by day. It is worth mentioning that the whole wedding ceremony revolves around the bride's hair.

WEDDING

The wedding is one of the most widely mentioned folkloric customs when one asks about Dungan culture. Many scholars working on Central Asian Dungans speak of the wedding as a space of reproduction of the Chinese past (Hao Sumin 1992; Wang Guojie 1994; Yu Zhengui & Ding Hong 1997a, 1997b; Zhao Changli 2001). In this section, I offer the description of a ‘traditional’ Dungan wedding. I said in the introduction that there are two main groups among Dungans: the Gansu and the Shaanxi. The one I describe here is a Shaanxi wedding. With some variations, it is similar to the Gansu one. The Shaanxi Dungan case is a bit more diversified. How a wedding is performed depends on the school of interpretation of Islam the family belongs to. Despite the fact that all of them are Sunni Muslims, there is an internal division among contemporary Dungans that is related to ways of practising Islam, namely, between *lojio* and *xinjio*¹¹. *Lojio* (Dungan for ‘old teaching’) believers attempt to preserve the practices that were passed from generation to generation since arrival to what is now Kazakhstan. In turn, *xinjio* (Dungan for ‘new teaching’) corresponds to a ‘rigidification’ of Islam and, consequently, the ‘purification’ of religious practices (Schlee 2003). Thus, from the *xinjio* perspective, folk traditions that contradict Islam should be forgotten.

One central point of discussion between Shaanxi Dungans is the hair of the bride. As the reader will see, hair is one of the protagonists in the Dungan wedding. At the same time, it is also the focus of contestation. While in the traditional wedding the bride shows her hair all the time and does not cover it finally until forty days after the wedding, some people believe that this is a tradition that should be suppressed because in Islam the hair of a married woman should not be shown in public. There is a big discussion among Dungans related to this tradition. In general terms, *lojio* believers advocate preserving it as a heritage from Dungan ancestors. In turn, *xinjio* believers prefer weddings that look less ‘Chinese’, but are more ‘pure’ in ritual terms. I prefer to use the words *lojio/xinjio*, even though there are also nicknames for these two schools of interpretation of Islam. *Lojio* are called *yakhshi*, a

¹¹ The origin of these schools of interpretation of Islam can be traced back to the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). In Mandarin Chinese, they are called *xinjiao* and *laojiao*. I transcribe here the Shaanxi Dungan pronunciation: *xinjio* and *lojio* respectively. I use here an adaptation of the system *Hanyu Pinyin* because Shaanxi Dungan has no official writing system. As I explained before, the ‘official’ Dungan taught in schools is the Gansu topolect. Also, I prefer to use the terms in Dungan because the meanings differ. While *xinjiao* in China had influence of Sufism and Buddhism, *xinjio* is a more orthodox, Mecca-oriented tendency. In turn, while *laojiao* in China is a matter of keeping Islam free of Sufi and Buddhist influences, *lojio* is concerned about keeping a ‘Chinese’ tradition.

Turkic word meaning ‘good’, while *xinjio* are called *yaman*, a Turkic word for ‘bad’.

The differentiation between *xinjio* and *lojio* started in China during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) but in Central Asia the opposition has particularities that extend beyond religion. In a former section of this text I explained that there was a division among Dungans that ended up in the foundation of Sortobe. The division between *xinjio* and *lojio* has also an influence in this schism. I mentioned the episode of Bi Yankhu, who was accused of getting rich at the expense of Yinpan people. The majority of those who were against Bi Yankhu and believed that he was ‘bad’ (Turkic *yaman*), belonged to the *xinjio* school. In turn, most of those who believed that Bi Yankhu was ‘good’ (Turkic *yakhshi*), meaning that he was innocent of the accusations, were mainly *lojio*. Thus, Masanchi stayed as a *xinjio* village where some *lojio* also live, and Sortobe is the opposite, a *lojio* place with a minority of *xinjio*. Dungans do not use the Sinitic terms, but the Turkic words: *yakhshi* and *yaman*. Despite their original meanings, however, in this context the terms *yakhshi* and *yaman* are not meant to imply evaluation.

It is worth to mention that such a division is not found among Gansu Dungans, neither in political nor religious aspects of society. In the following pages I present the ethnography of the ‘traditional’ (*lojio* Shaanxi; Gansu) Dungan wedding. In total, a wedding can take up to forty days, although the main rites take place during three days. In the following pages, I describe a five-day *lojio* wedding.

I have to make clear that I have portrayed a lot of children because, together with the bride, they are the most important characters of the Dungan wedding. Children accompany the bride during the whole process, and they have to be pleased by adults, because that makes the wedding more auspicious. While adults’ mobility is limited according to gender (the separation of sexes among Dungans is very strict), both male and female children have access to the whole house.

FIRST DAY

The whole ritual starts with the slaughter of a cow according to *halal* rules. Once butchered, the cow will be cooked in different ways during the following days. On the first day, it was fried with onion and spices (this dish is considered ‘Dungan’). Besides that, there was also *besbarmak*, a ‘Kazakh-Kyrgyz’ dish consisting of boiled meat combined with noodles, raw onion, and *manti*, dumplings filled with meat or pumpkin. All this food was cooked in order to be offered in the *pominka*¹².

The *pominka* is a call to the ancestors, who will be present during the whole ritual. The ancestors come when the *mullah* reads the Quran and some songs are performed. The food offered to the guests is also ‘eaten’ by the ancestors, who ‘cannot’ refuse to come: the food is so attractive to them that they just arrive.

After having eaten, the living guests leave the house but the ancestors stay. If nothing bad happens during this first day it means that the ancestors have given their blessing to the new couple. In the house of the bride, a similar *pominka* is carried out. Indeed, *pominki* (pl. of *pominka*) are the main excuse for Dungan sociability. Almost everything requires the support of the ancestors. I was told on multiple occasions a joke about Dungan social life being even more intense after death.

¹² *Pominka* comes from the Russian verb *pominat* ‘(to remember)’. It is worth noting that Dungans use the word in Russian and not in Dungan language. I thank Aida Aaly Alymbaeva for noticing this, because for me it was ‘normal’.

Photo 46: Dungan *lojio* wedding. First day. The groom's house. The mother (Dungan, on the right) and the step-grandmother (Kyrgyz, on the left) of the groom wait until the men in the family slaughter a cow. This cow will be eaten over the course of the following days. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011).





Photo 47: Dungan *lojio* wedding. First day. The groom's house. The cow is slaughtered following *halal* requirements. The blood is taken out the animal and put into a hole in the earth so the dogs can drink it later. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 48: Dungan *lojio* wedding. First day. The groom's house. The hole with the blood. Later that day, the hole will be opened, so animals that pass by can eat the blood. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 49: Dungan *lojio* wedding. First day.
The groom's house. Butchering the cow.
Sortobe, Kazakhstan.
(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 50: Dungan *lojio* wedding. First day. The groom's house. Preparing *manti* (dumplings filled with pumpkin or meat). Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 51: Dungan *lojio* wedding. First day. The groom's house. Wood in the fire of the outdoor kitchen. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 52: Dungan *lojio* wedding. First day. The groom's house. Children watching the whole process. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 53: Dungan *lojio* wedding. First day. The groom's house. The food. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 54: Dungan *lojio* wedding. First day. The groom's house. Before serving the food. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 55: Dungan *lojio* wedding. First day. The groom's house. Eating. In the background, we can see the text of the plan *Kazakhstan 2030*, a plan of development of the country created by President Nursultan Nazarbaev, with the goal of making Kazakhstan one of the best developed countries in the world. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)

SECOND DAY

In order to have an even more auspicious ceremony, this wedding also included a circumcision. The *pominka* (call to the ancestors) celebrated the first day was for gaining the ancestors' blessing, not only for the new couple, but also for the youngest grandson in the household. The circumcision specialist was not in the village that day. However, the reading of the Quran was already done and there would be no further ceremonies besides the procedure itself that was done some days later.



Photo 56: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Second day. The groom's house. The boy to be circumcised with his maternal grandmother. Sortobe, Kazakhstan.

(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 57: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Second day. The groom's house.
A friend of the boy to be circumcised and his own mother.
Sortobe, Kazakhstan.
(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 58: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Second day. The groom's house.
The circumcision candidate's maternal grandmother. Sortobe, Kazakhstan.
(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 59: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Second day. The groom's house. The circumcision candidate's aunt serving food after the reading of the Quran. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)

THIRD DAY

The third day was the start of the wedding properly speaking. The bride spent her last day at her parents' house. She waits in her house until a female relative of the groom comes with a veil full of candies. This woman gives the candies to the children sitting around the bride and, afterwards, she covers the face of the bride with the veil, tying it around the bride's head. After having done this, she takes the flower that lies on the bride's hair and leaves the place. The coiffure of the bride has to have the form of a bird. Her hair was arranged in the early morning. Because of the fact that she has to take care of her hair, she would sleep sitting and not lying the night of this day (in this particular wedding, it was the third day; in general, it is the day before the marriage ceremony).

Besides that, the male relatives and friends of the groom come to the bride's house and take away the dowry given by the bride's relatives to the new couple. Once in the groom's house, the father has to 'negotiate' for these presents to be delivered and pays some money. After this, all the males in the family proceed to put the presents into the room where the new couple will live. Afterwards, all these men were given food.

Usually on the third day the male friends of the groom have to 'play the fool' for a while. That includes putting makeup on their faces, dressing in a pinafore and singing and dancing. Two of them will perform 'horses' the following day, and will need to be 'tamed' by the other friends of the groom.

The big day is coming.



Photo 60: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Third day. The bride's house. The bride sitting in a corner, surrounded by children, waiting for the groom's female relatives. Bular Batir, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 61: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Third day. The bride's house. The bride's grandmothers and aunt looking after the bride. Bular Batir, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 62: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Third day. The groom's house. Preparing everything before the dowry given by the bride's relatives to the new couple arrives. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 63: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Third day. The groom's house. Preparing everything before the dowry given by the bride's relatives to the new couple arrives. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 64: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Third day. The groom's house. The dowry given by the bride's relatives to the new couple arriving. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)

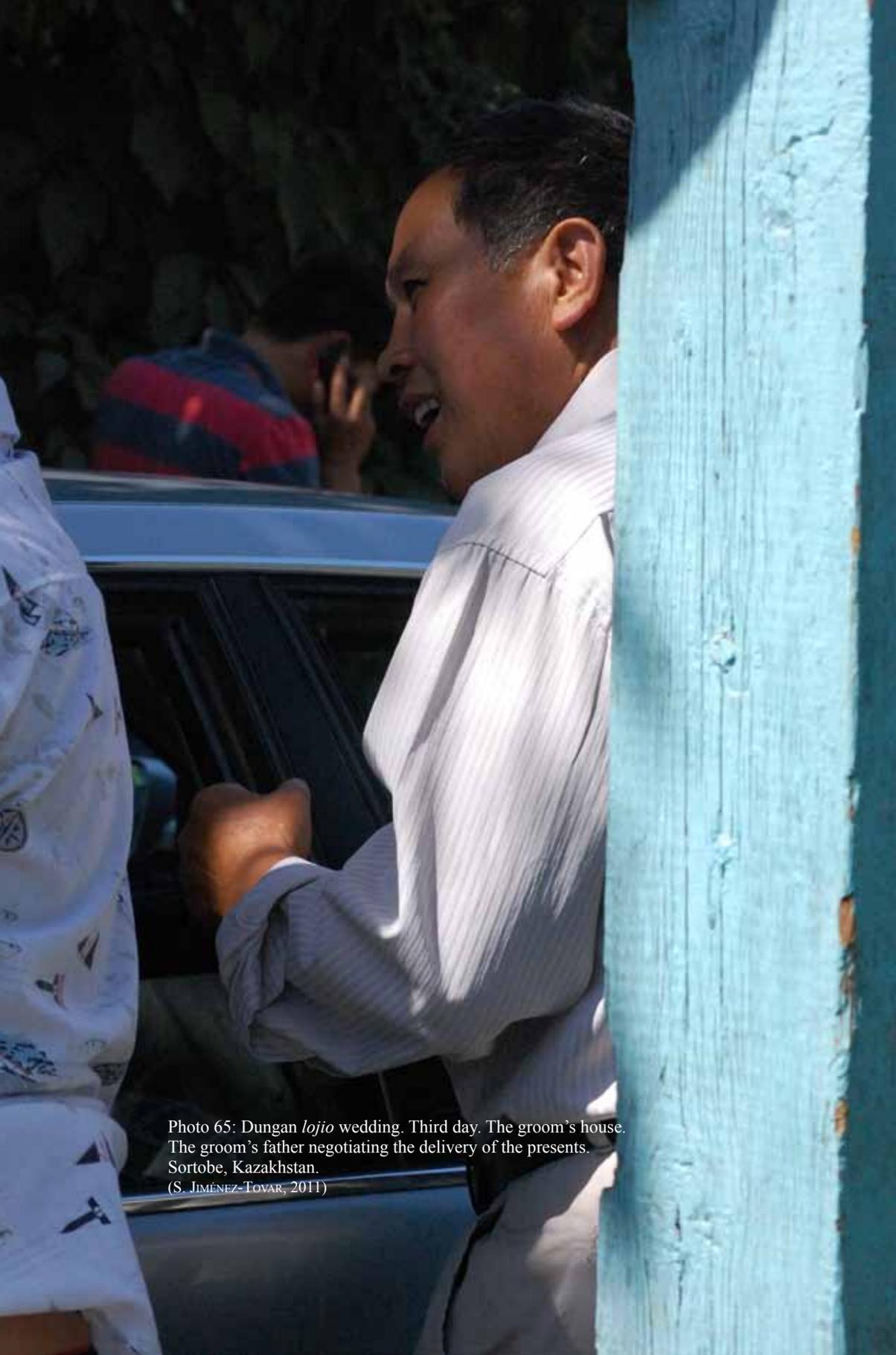


Photo 65: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Third day. The groom's house.
The groom's father negotiating the delivery of the presents.
Sortobe, Kazakhstan.
(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 66: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Third day. The groom's house. All the males in the groom's house help with the delivery of the presents. The boy to be circumcised also helps. Sortobe, Kazakhstan.
(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 67: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Third day. The groom's house. Some women 'spying' on the delivery of the presents. Sortobe, Kazakhstan.
(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 68: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Third day. The groom's house. Bringing the dowry inside. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 69: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Third day. The groom's house. Inside: relatives of the groom watch how the presents are delivered. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 70: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Third day. The groom's house. The males eat fruits after the delivery. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 71: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Third day. The groom's house. Resting a bit after the delivery of the presents and taking care of the child. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 72: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Third day. The groom's house. Eating watermelon and playing peekaboo. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 73: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Third day. The groom's house. Eating watermelon. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 74: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Third day. The groom's house. The groom watching what is happening. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 75: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Third day. The groom's house. Resting after delivery of the presents. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 76: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Third day. The groom's house. Women preparing *momo*, the bread for the following day. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 77: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Third day. The groom's house. The groom's aunt and her granddaughters. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 78: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Third day. The groom's house.
Preparation of 'playing the fool': the 'tamer of the horses'. Sortobe, Kazakhstan.
(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 79: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Third day. The groom's house. Preparation of 'playing the fool': Horse No. 1. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 80: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Third day. The groom's house. Preparation of 'playing the fool': Horse No. 2. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)

Photo 81: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Third day. The groom's house.
'Taming the horses'. Sortobe, Kazakhstan.
(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



FOURTH DAY

The fourth day was devoted to the second part of the wedding itself. If on the first day of the wedding the protagonists were the males in the family, on this second day the females are the most important. All females in the family meet in a big room and wait for the bride. In turn, males wait outside and interact among themselves.

In the meantime, in the bride's house all the guests meet and socialise outside, waiting for the groom, while the bride is inside with only her closest female friends and relatives. Once the groom arrives, he meets the *mullah*, who proceeds with the *nikah* (marriage contract). The groom and his male friends are offered some tea and food. After staying a while in a separate room the groom leaves and goes back home.

In the meantime, the bride and her female relatives must wait in other section of the house. Once the groom is gone, the bride's face is covered with a veil. The bride's brother carries her in his arms and puts her into the car. The bride leaves her home.

Once the car arrives at the house of the groom, the groom demands that his bride be brought into the house. At the end, a friend of the groom pays some money and the car is 'pulled' by the 'horses' who are the groom's friends who 'played the fool' the previous day. With the car inside, the bride is helped to come into the room where females and children have been waiting for her. Only inside her face can be uncovered and the groom's female relatives put flowers and jewellery on her. The bride's closest female relatives wait outside. Once the bride is ready, her relatives come in, check that everything is okay and leave the house.

The bride will sit the whole day in a place where everybody can see her. Every time someone leaves, she has to come to the door and bow thrice. She stays in silence because she is not allowed to talk to or look directly at anyone. There is a female of the groom's household who is the only one allowed to talk to the bride and to assist her in case she wants to drink water and/or to go to the toilet.

In the evening, the groom's friends will come and have dinner. They have to be served by the bride. They will make jokes and play tricks, such as spreading cooked noodles on the floor, to check if the bride cleans everything properly and shows that she is ready to be a good wife.

In this way, the wedding ends this night. The new couple will sleep together in the room that has been designated to be their house from that day onwards. I was not allowed to know what goes on that night, either inside or outside the room. The morning after it, however, a woman in the household told me, smiling: 'She is already ours!' [Ru. *Ona uzhe nasha!*]. Talking to women in other contexts, I have heard that the trauma provoked by the loss of their virginity is the main reason why the brides spend some days at their parent's house after this first night with their husbands, as I describe in the next section.



Photo 82: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day. The groom's house. The bride's future sisters-in-law (they are the wives of the groom's brothers). There is a strong solidarity among them. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 83: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day. The groom's house. Waiting for the bride at the groom's place. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 84: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day. Waiting for the bride at the groom's place. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 85: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day. Waiting for the bride at the groom's place. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 86: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day. Waiting for the bride at the groom's place. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 87: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day. Waiting for the bride at the groom's place. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 88: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day. Waiting for the bride at the groom's place. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 89: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day. Waiting for the bride at the groom's place. The mother and the sister of the groom. Sortobe, Kazakhstan.

(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)

Photo 90: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day.
Waiting for the bride at the groom's place.
Preparing the car for the bride. Sortobe, Kazakhstan.
(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)





Photo 91: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day. Waiting for the groom at the bride's place. Bular Batir, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 92: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day. Waiting for the groom at the bride's place. Bular Batir, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)

Photo 93: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day.
The *mullah* waiting for the groom at the bride's place.
Bular Batir, Kazakhstan.
(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 94: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day.
The groom comes into the bride's place.
Bular Batir, Kazakhstan.
(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)





Photo 95: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day. Waiting for the groom at the bride's place. Bular Batir, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 96: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day. Waiting for the groom at the bride's place. Bular Batir, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)

Photo 97: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day. The last picture of the bride as a single woman. Bular Batir, Kazakhstan.
(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)





Photo 98: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day. Waiting for the bride at the grooms's place. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 99: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day. The car with the bride arriving at the groom's house. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 100: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day. The groom demands that his bride be brought into the house. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 101: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day. The bride comes into the house of the groom. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)

Photo 102: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day.
The groom's house. All females in the groom's family see
how the bride's hair is arranged. Sortobe, Kazakhstan.
(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)





Photo 103: Dungan *lojio* wedding.
Fourth day. The groom's house.
Groom's female relatives finishing
the bride's hair arrangement.
Sortobe, Kazakhstan.
(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 104: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day. The groom's house. A child looks at the bride's hairdo. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 105: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day. The groom's house. The new couple with the groom's friends. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 106: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fourth day. The groom's house. The new couple with the whole family. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)

FIFTH DAY

The day after the wedding, the relatives of the bride come and eat breakfast with her. Afterwards, the bride leaves with her relatives to her parents' house and stays there for three days. During the following forty days, she will live in both houses, spending two to three days in each alternately. In turn, the groom will be invited by the bride's relatives to a *shi*, a banquet at which is served eighteen, twenty-four or thirty-six different dishes. The *shi* will take place once at every bride's relative's place during the next forty days. The ancestors, who came with the first *pominka* (call to the ancestors), also leave the house on the fifth day, unless they are called again for other rituals.

During the following forty days, the bride will keep her hair braided, as shown in the pictures, and would not fully cover her hair. The bride's liminality, thus, can be read in her hair. However, as I mentioned already, this is a topic of discussion and contestation among Dungans. The brides who belong to the *xinjio* school of interpretation of Islam (seeking a more rigid form of Islam), cover their hair since the day of their wedding. After the forty-day period, the new couple are formally married and the life at the household comes back to normality.



Photo 107: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fifth day.
The groom's house. The bride waiting for her relatives.
Sortobe, Kazakhstan.
(S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photos 108, 109, 110: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fifth day. The groom's house. The bride bowing. A female relative of the groom takes care of the bride, who is not yet allowed to talk to anyone in the household. The sparkly effect in the picture is because I took the picture from outside the house. I was looking through the window, on which the light of the sun was reflected. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 111: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fifth day. The groom's house. The bride and her relatives eating breakfast. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 112: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fifth day. The groom's house. The bride and her relatives eating breakfast. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 113: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fifth day. The groom's house. The couple with the groom's family before the bride leaves to her parents' home. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 114: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fifth day. The groom's house. The couple with the mother and sister of the bride. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 115: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fifth day. The groom's house. The breakfast that the household shared with the author. Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 116: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fifth day. The groom coming to the bride's house. Bular Batir, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 117: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fifth day. The bride's house. The bride's grandmothers. Bular Batir, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)



Photo 118: Dungan *lojio* wedding. Fifth day. The bride's house. The groom and his friends eating a *shi* (banquet) at the bride's house. Bular Batir, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2011)

A mushroom is not a plant. A plant has roots that grow into the earth, so the plant can take nutrients from the soil. The plant is also able to take energy from the sun via photosynthesis. In turn, even though mushrooms have rather complex roots, they are not able to carry out the photosynthesis. Such roots allow the mushroom to have a connexion with the plant under the ground, the mushroom thus sucking nutrients from plants or rotting material, until the mushroom booms and pops out of the ground one nice warm day to spread out its spores to the world. In that sense, mushrooms tend to be mostly parasitic. There are some mushrooms, however, that are able to be connected to the roots of the plant developing a symbiotic relation that is mutually beneficial.

I want to insist on the metaphor in the title to this field report: the anthropologist is a mushroom. Even though the anthropologist has a place of origin, once in the field, it is rather difficult for the people under study to figure out what kind of origin it is. The anthropologist appears in the field site as if she were a spore, carried by the air and growing thanks to favourable conditions in the new place. There is a luxury that the anthropologist, is lacking: the ability to mushroom on her own; she needs the help of the people she studies.

I remember myself asking about the sorts of chili in Central Asia. I was told that there were three types: the spicy one, the sweet one, and the one that was intermediate in spiciness and sweetness. I also remember my childhood as a complex training of chili-tasting. I remember being in Mexico and having at least ten different sorts of dried chilis in my kitchen, besides the two or three kinds of fresh chili I bought every week. Such training, though, made no sense in my new situation as a PhD student in Social Anthropology, neither in Germany nor in Central Asia. My roots, if one accepts that they exist, were cut off.

In the same mysterious way that a mushroom appears, one day, it can just disappear. So it was. One day I just disappeared, came back to Germany, after living among Dungans for one year. I came back to the Dungans twice, each time for about one month. Was the relationship between Dungans and the anthropologist symbiotic or parasitic? I do not know yet. I keep in touch with some people, and I have also helped with some books and translations. Besides that, there is little else so far. Is that symbiotic? Do mushrooms believe in abstract ideals and help all plants in the world? People are neither plants nor mushrooms, I know. Nevertheless, I feel that sometimes we do forget that we study individuals that are supposed to form together a community. Is it that we work for the community or for individuals? Maybe it is just that the anthropologist has also a complex identity and is, simultaneously, symbiotic and parasitic.



Photo 119: Yusup and the author in Kordai, Kazakhstan. (E. PERERA LEZAMA 2011)



Photo 120: The socks that were given to the author in 2013 in Sortobe, Kazakhstan. (S. JIMÉNEZ-TOVAR, 2016)

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