Exploring the dynamics of China’s ‘carrot and stick’ approach to its two most problematic nationalities
Since 1949, Tibetans and Uyghurs generally have been perceived as the two most problematic members of the PRC’s great family of peoples and been the targets of ‘carrot and stick’ measures designed to facilitate their integration into the PRC. In recent years, a solution to the problems of Xinjiang and Tibet has been sought in accelerated economic development, yet this is perceived by both groups with great suspicion. Addressing this situation, the volume explores the arenas of socio-economic development and market liberalization, popular culture, urban planning and relocation, environment and ecological migration, civil society, education and language, ethno-nationalism, as well as religious policies and practices. It is especially topical at a time when fieldwork in the regions where these two minorities live remains extremely difficult and politically sensitive.
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ON THE FRINGES
of the
HARMONIOUS SOCIETY
Tibetans and Uyghurs in Socialist China

Edited by
Trine Brox and Ildikó Bellér-Hann

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Preface

China’s rise from a poor developing country to a major global player both in economic and in political terms over the last decades has been spectacular, but inevitably it has also created new tensions and problems. The overall growth and accompanying policies have resulted in increasing social inequalities, serious challenges to the environment, demographic problems with a rapidly aging population, and tensions between the demands of the market and the absence of democratic structures and institutions. The complexities involved in the implementation of the Open Up the West campaign launched in 2000 have been aptly illustrated by Nicolas Becquelin’s elaboration of what he has dubbed a ‘staged development’ in terms of both ‘a temporally phased development strategy (by stages)’ and a theatrical stage which mobilizes an array of symbols in order to legitimize CCP rule (Becquelin 2004: 361). Formulated specifically for the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), we believe that Becquelin’s ‘staged development’ is equally applicable to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), and raises the question of the extent to which the recent change in leadership also indicates that China is about to enter a new stage of policy making. China watchers predict that the current development model as well as the conservative one-party system will need to be reformed in order to keep up with the new and pressing challenges. However, there are indications that the leadership’s twin priorities are likely to remain economic growth and the maintenance of overall stability; this is aptly exemplified by Beijing’s policies in its two large autonomous regions situated in the country’s far west.

Discussing the ongoing implementation of economic, political, and cultural policies serving the twin targets of stability and development and ensuing local strategies in these two regions is an urgent desideratum for all those wishing to understand the complex web of challenges faced by China’s leadership. Our volume aims to do exactly this. The
chapters give insights into current transformations in specific localities and social milieus, seeking to explore the role of Xinjiang and the regions inhabited by Tibetans within contemporary China from a comparative perspective.

Our gratitude is first and foremost due to the Danish Council for Independent Research | Humanities for its generous funding of the workshop *Challenging the Harmonious Society* and for the preparation of this volume for publication. For their continuous support we wish to thank the NIAS Press, the Nordic Institute for Asian Studies, the Department of Cross-cultural and Regional Studies, as well as the Asian Dynamic Initiative, all based at the University of Copenhagen. For their useful comments we thank the two anonymous reviewers. We are also grateful to Brian Donahoe for his careful language and copy-editing, and extreme tolerance and flexibility throughout the preparation of the manuscript.

Trine Brox and Ildikó Bellér-Hann
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and official documents related to the last 60 years of Amdo–Qinghai history.

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Chris Hann is a social anthropologist who has done fieldwork in Eastern Europe and Turkey in addition to Xinjiang. He has particular interests in economic anthropology, as well as ethnicity and nationalism. After teaching anthropology in Britain for many years, in 1999 he moved to Germany as co-founder of the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology. Recent publications include Economic Anthropology. History, Ethnography, Critique (Polity Press 2011, with Keith Hart).

Rachel Harris is Senior Lecturer in Ethnomusicology at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. She is the author of Singing the Village: Music, Memory and Ritual among the Sibe of Xinjiang (Oxford University Press 2004) and The Making of a Musical Canon in Chinese Central Asia (Ashgate 2008), and co-editor of Situating the Uyghurs between China and Central Asia (Ashgate 2007) and Gender in Chinese Music (University of Rochester Press 2013). Her research interests include global flows, identity politics, and Islamic soundscapes, and she leads the AHRC research network Sounding Islam in China. She is actively engaged in outreach projects relating to Central Asian and Chinese music, including recordings, musical performance, and consultancy.
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Françoise Robin is Professor of Tibetan Language and Literature at the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO), Paris (France). Her research focuses on the contents, dynamics, and social implications of contemporary Tibetan culture in China, including poetry and fiction, women’s writings, and the young Tibetan cinema. She has also published translations of proverbs, folktales, and contemporary Tibetan literature, including Neige by Pema Tseden (Picquier 2013), as well as Clichés tibétains, an collection of essays analysing the current situation in Tibet (Le Cavalier Bleu 2011).

Eric T. Schluessel is a Ph.D. candidate in History and East Asian Languages at Harvard University. He holds an M.A. in Central Eurasian Studies from Indiana University and an M.A. in Linguistics from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. His research concerns the local and transnational histories of society, culture, and thought in modern Xinjiang. Among other projects, his dissertation (in progress) explores transculturation and the everyday in Xinjiang’s nineteenth-to-twentieth-century transition.

Joanne Smith Finley obtained her Ph.D. from the University of Leeds in 1999, and took up her current post at Newcastle University in 2000. Her research interests include the formation, transformation, hybridization, and globalization of identities among the Uyghurs of Xinjiang (north-western China), and particularly Uyghur strategies of symbolic resistance. Her monograph on this topic, titled The Art of Symbolic Resistance: Uyghur Identities and Uyghur–Han Relations in Contemporary
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Xinjiang, was published by Brill in 2013. She has previously worked on Uyghurs’ self-representations in popular song and other cultural media, and is currently exploring the gendering of ethnopolitics in Xinjiang (male honour, female shame), as well as continuities and change in gender roles and behaviours in Uyghur society over time (this through focus-group discussions of a corpus of gendered Uyghur proverbs).

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Tracy Zhang is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Geography, Planning and Environment at Concordia University, Montreal. She holds a Ph.D. in Communications Studies from Simon Fraser University, Vancouver. Her research is situated in the fields of cultural development and feminist political economy, focusing specifically on the cultural industries in diverse socio-cultural contexts. Her dissertation, Carpet
worlds: the cultural representation and production of Tibetan carpets, investigates how representations of Tibetan culture in international media could shape people’s lives and working conditions in the Tibetan regions of China. Results have appeared in Feminist Media Studies, the Journal of Material Culture, and Gender, Place, and Culture. Her future research aims to explore the relationship between Buddhism and cultural businesses in a transnational context.
Glossary

Chinese terms

bingtuan  Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps
hexie shehui  harmonious society
hukou  household registration system
minkaohan  Uyghurs educated in Chinese schools
minkaomin  Uyghurs educated in Uyghur schools
ningjuhua  homogeneity
putonghua  Mandarin
shengtai yimin  ecological migrations
shuangyu jiaoyu  bilingual education
suzhi  quality
tuimu huancao  Pastures to Grasslands
xibu da kaifa  Open Up the West campaign
weiwen  stability preservation

Tibetan Terms

‘brog ’dor rtswa ’debs  converting pastures to grasslands
‘cham mthun spyi tshogs  harmonious society
dbyar rtswa dgun ’bu  caterpillar fungus
kha gdan  seating carpet
Lhag dkar  ‘White Wednesday’ (movement enhancing Tibetan identity through ‘all-Tibetan’ events)
nub rgyud gsar spel chen mo  Open Up the West campaign
pha skad  mother tongue
pha skad gtsang ma  pure mother tongue
skye khams gnas spor  ecological migrations
tshan rig ‘phel rgyas  scientific outlook
# Glossary

## Uyghur terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ärkinlik</td>
<td>freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bikar</td>
<td>unoccupied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>büwi</td>
<td>female religious specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hikmät</td>
<td>lyrics attributed to the twelfth-century Central Asian poet and mystic Ahmed Yasawi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inaqli jâm'iyyät</td>
<td>harmonious society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ijadiyät</td>
<td>creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khätmä</td>
<td>Qur’anic recitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mijäz</td>
<td>temperament</td>
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<tr>
<td>millät</td>
<td>nation</td>
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<tr>
<td>millätchiliq</td>
<td>local nationalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minkaohan</td>
<td>Uyghurs educated in Chinese schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minkaomin</td>
<td>Uyghurs educated in Uyghur schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qushnach</td>
<td>female religious specialist</td>
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## Arabic Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>adhan</td>
<td>Islamic call for prayer</td>
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<tr>
<td>dhikr</td>
<td>a form of devotion associated with Sufism which entails the rhythmic repetition of the name of God or his attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hadith</td>
<td>Prophetic traditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tajwid</td>
<td>the correct pronunciation and style in recitation</td>
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Figure 0.1: Western China (relief details from Mountain High Maps *)
Introduction

Ildikó Bellér-Hann and Trine Brox

This volume has emerged from the recognition that a more inclusive perspective on the western frontiers of China could greatly enrich our understanding of the relationship between the Chinese centre and its peripheries. Co-teaching a course on Tibet and Xinjiang (State policies and local responses in China’s west) further confirmed our conviction that treating these two regions together holds the potential to make better sense of the complex interconnectedness between cultural, ethnic, and development policies in China. Our background in regional studies has proven an advantage in so far as our familiarity with various disciplinary approaches is reflected in the recruitment of contributors, who represent a variety of academic disciplines. We both approach our respective regions primarily through the major local languages (Tibetan and Uyghur) rather than Mandarin, which can be both an advantage and a limitation that are not necessarily shared by all authors in the volume. In the wake of the co-teaching, we organized a conference panel bearing the same title as the course within the framework of a major Asia conference held at the University of Copenhagen in 2010. This was followed by a jointly convened international workshop called Challenging the Harmonious Society in 2011, sponsored by the Danish Council for Independent Research | Humanities, also at the University of Copenhagen. The present volume has emerged from the papers delivered at these two academic events and the ensuing discussions. All papers selected for publication have been revised, and some new contributions have been invited in order to produce a cohesive volume.

One major departure from these previous events leading up to the publication of this volume is the change of title. While our panel title, State policies and local responses in China’s west, aptly circumscribed the topics we wished to deal with, we changed it for the workshop because
we felt that it could misleadingly imply both a rigid dichotomy of minority society versus an authoritarian state and a dialogue-like relationship between them. We have also realized that the workshop title, *Challenging the Harmonious Society*, may easily be misunderstood. First, it might imply that the focus of our interest is exclusively on confrontation and conflict, an approach that is often found in Western media but does not reflect our own intentions. Second, it could be misinterpreted to mean that when conflict occurs, it is local actors, that is, Tibetans and Uyghurs, who are to blame. In other words, it could give the impression that trouble emanates from China’s western peripheries, frustrating the centre’s benevolent efforts to impose good governance on its geographical margins. Such a reading would then echo official Chinese representations of Beijing’s relations to both the Uyghurs and the Tibetans, which we do not intend to reproduce. In light of the workshop discussions, we have come to the conclusion that the workshop title does not do full justice either to the broad spectrum of topics addressed by the authors of the present volume or to the complexities which come to light as a result of their analyses. In other words, Tibetans and Uyghurs come across in these contributions not so much as restive corporate groups who unanimously challenge an existing social harmony, but as social actors who in their everyday lives themselves face challenges posed by the intermingling of transnational, national, and local forces that comprise the state and its agents, local traditions, historical experience, and the twists and turns of the global economy and politics. From this it follows that, in spite of having been edited out of our title, the concept of ‘challenge’ can be profitably retained, but only if applied to all actors involved at all levels. Such an approach can help us get away from the understanding of the position of Uyghurs and Tibetans within the PRC in terms of a reductionist confrontation between the Chinese state and its ‘disobedient’ minorities situated on China’s western frontiers.

The choice of title is also based on the observation that one of the challenges posed by Tibetans and Uyghurs to the centre arises from their being situated, in at least two senses, on the fringes of the ‘harmonious society’ that China ostensibly aspires to become: geographically they inhabit peripheral frontier regions and, due to their respective histories and structural position within the PRC, they remain politically marginalized. In emphasizing their geographical and social position, it seems that
among China’s ‘peripheral peoples’, Tibetans and Uyghurs stand out as the two groups which have been most resistant to the centre’s civilizing efforts (Harrell 1995). It is our contention that this resistance needs to be understood as emphatically different from the ethnic revival currently observable among some of China’s other recognized minorities, which is a response to preferential policies, as the well-known case of the Chinese Muslims demonstrates. These minorities, together with some others such as the Mongols (who have by now achieved a greater level of integration), have been left out of the present discussion on the grounds that, at present, their position within the PRC is considerably different from that of the Uyghurs and the Tibetans. Clearly, both the Tibetans and the Uyghurs are sources of particular concern to the Chinese leadership, but should the mere fact that they both pose a serious challenge to Beijing lead us to consider them as similar cases, despite their very different histories and cultural legacies? Or do their similar geographical and structural positions vis-à-vis the centre offer a sufficiently compelling rationale to consider them comparable?

**Conceptualizations of the ‘harmonious society’**

*On the Fringes of the Harmonious Society* seeks to explore precisely these questions, taking as its point of departure the value orientation summed up under the concept of ‘harmonious society’ (Chi.: hexie shehui),1 which in recent years has been promoted all over China as an encompassing ideology to counter or at least mitigate the social costs and differentiating impact associated with the rapid economic transformation of the country.2 The concept has enjoyed general acceptance ever since its inception under CCP General Secretary and President of the PRC Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao in 2005. The emphasis on social harmony has been interpreted in at least two different ways: as a reflection of the centre’s need to identify new sources of political legitimacy rooted in tradition, humanism, and morality; and as an expression of the centre’s self-reflexive

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1. For Chinese language terms, we adopt the pinyin transliteration system. Tibetan proper nouns have been simplified for readability, while Tibetan terms in brackets are transliterated according to the system outlined by Wylie (1959). For Uyghur language transliteration throughout this volume, we use the Romanization system of Komatsu et al. (2005). The transliteration of well-known place names in Xinjiang follows conventional English usage. Pinyin terms are pluralized as appropriate using the English plural marker.

2. On China’s commitment to social harmony, see Khan (2006).
ON THE FRINGES OF THE HARMONIOUS SOCIETY

awareness that it needs to live up to the new challenges brought about by the unleashing of market forces. Analysts of the ‘harmonious society’ (and its international counterpart, the ‘harmonious world’3) have focused on its historical roots and its relationship to Confucianism, as well as on its connections to the related concept of ‘scientific development’. It has been scrutinized as a social vision and political objective manifested in a broad set of policy orientations, as well as in terms of the Chinese leadership’s open recognition of the disharmony arising from the growing gap between rich and poor and between those invested with political authority and rank-and-file citizens.4 The active promotion of positive societal values connected to the concept of social harmony clearly points to the leadership’s anxieties about the increased potential for conflict and disharmony. This has been recently argued by Qian (2012), whose content analysis of the People’s Daily5 since 2003 demonstrates how, since 2007, the number of official references to the ‘harmonious society’ has declined and been replaced by the slogan ‘stability preservation’ (Chi.: weiwen). At the same time, the ‘harmonious society’ has started enjoying popularity among Chinese Internet users, albeit in a satirical manner. The subversive pun of the river crab,6 built on the back of the concept of the ‘harmonious society’, has become widespread among Chinese Netizens, who use it in reference to censorship, while ‘harmonizing’ has been used as a euphemism for forms of repression (Wines 2009). These developments indicate that the pragmatic considerations motivating social harmony should primarily be understood as an attempt to reduce social conflict or at least to keep it at bay in order to uphold overall stability. Therefore, the interest in the harmonious society, which at first sight may appear to be a new blueprint for development, ‘stems less from what it holds aloft than from what it hides’ (Choukroune 2012: 499).

3. For Hu Jintao’s elaboration of the harmonious world, see People’s Daily (2009).
4. See, for example, Guo and Guo (2008) and Guo and Blanchard (2008). For an approach from the legal point of view see Choukroune and Garapon (2007). For the internal contestations of the concept, see Zheng and Tok (2007). A recent publication comprising case studies from all over China documents increasing discontent which contradicts the ideal of the ‘harmonious society’ (Tse-Hei Lee et al. 2012), with one article specifically focusing on Xinjiang (Caprioni 2012).
5. Published by the Chinese Communist Party in Chinese and numerous other languages, this daily newspaper provides an authoritative interpretation of Party policies.
6. The pun is based on the similarity in the words for ‘harmony’ and ‘river crab’, which are homophonous in spoken Chinese.
INTRODUCTION

At the same time, understood as a metaphor, the ‘harmonious society’ allows for a wide range of interpretations, including social justice, the reduction of existing inequalities by directing more investment to the inland provinces and, as some Chinese social scientists have argued, the promotion of ‘the idea of tolerance when addressing diversity in modern society’ (Chan 2009: 821). Even though ethnic conflict is rarely mentioned directly in such discourses, all of the above interpretations of the slogan and the policy it represents could have direct policy relevance for the Uyghurs and Tibetans, especially in view of the fact that, since the launching and popularizing of the concept, little has been achieved in reducing the conflict potential between these groups and political power holders.

The structural position of Tibetans and Uyghurs in China: Arguing for comparability

The history of the emergence of modern ethnic (minority) groups in socialist China subsumed under the umbrella term minzu has been told elsewhere (Leibold 2007; Mullaney 2011); it has also been problematized from the perspective of minorities on the periphery (Bulag 2002). Although recognized in pre-socialist Chinese political classifications as distinct groups,7 Uyghurs and Tibetans gained systematically defined recognition through the granting of autonomous area status to the territories they occupy and certain privileges following their respective incorporation into socialist China. Major administrative restructuring and multi-faceted social engineering programmes have been accompanied by vacillating minority policies implemented by the centre, all of which has persistently aimed at furthering these groups’ integration into the Chinese polity. It is no exaggeration to state that Tibetans and Uyghurs have been the two most problematic members of China’s extended family of peoples throughout the socialist period. These two large, officially recognized ethnic groups (minzus) inhabit strategically important, resource-rich border areas in China’s west that constitute a substantial part of the total area of the People’s Republic. Although the regions where they are concentrated have low population density and their demographic significance is considerably less than the majority

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7. The Turkic speaking Muslims (Uyghurs) used to be subsumed under the larger category of Muslims.
Han, the intensity of policies directed at them is indicative of the way they are perceived by Chinese politicians and external observers: as the key to both the stability and the security of the entire country. At present China is facing increasing waves of protests countrywide, and discontent among Tibetans and Uyghurs should be situated against the backdrop of this very broad spectrum of social movements that go beyond ethnic boundaries. However, the case of these two large minzus deserves special attention. It is no accident that accusations of the ‘three evils’ – terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism – have been mainly directed against Uyghurs and Tibetans (Chung 2006). Tibetans and Uyghurs have been the objects of special policies and discourses designed to facilitate their integration into the multicultural ‘socialist market economy’. Policies targeting these large western minority groups lacked consistency throughout the collectivized period, and a certain wavering continues to characterize them in the reform period. Perhaps one major departure from earlier patterns is that post-reform policies are not so much driven by ideology as by pragmatism, the ultimate aim of which is to ensure stability. For their part, local actors’ strategies are also motivated by pragmatism – the imperative of individual and group survival. Broadly speaking, the policies employed in the regions inhabited by Uyghurs and Tibetans can be characterized as a ‘stick and carrot’ approach in the sense that varying degrees of repression have been mixed with privileges and positive discrimination. Solutions to the Tibet and Xinjiang problems have in recent years been sought in accelerated economic development, which is regarded by both groups with great suspicion. While their regions have benefited from economic investment over the past decade, they have also been subjected to a series of increasingly repressive policies, which are typically experienced by some locals in terms of ethnic discrimination. Moreover, of the 55 recognized minority minzus, the Uyghurs and Tibetans are among those groups whose respective languages, religious, literary, and cultural traditions, historical legacies, and social practices set them apart as strikingly different from the dominant Han majority; they have also shown remarkable resistance to all sinicizing efforts thus far, and are likely to continue to do so in the future.

The contributors to this volume do not adopt the concept of the ‘harmonious society’ at face value, that is, as an attractive promise to
the Tibetans and Uyghurs living in China; nor do they wholly subscribe to the opposite view, which interprets discourses on social harmony as a license to step up restrictions in order to contain growing discontent. Rather, they critically question to what extent the concept is perceived by local actors either as signifying meaningful change towards long-term beneficial social policies, or as a deceptive slogan that should be cynically dismissed. The chapters do not take post-2005 policies as genuine manifestations of a ‘harmonious society’ development philosophy, nor do they consider grassroots movements to be mere reactions (rejection or acceptance) to the state’s expressed attempts to create such a society. Instead, in spite of all the political restrictions imposed upon them, most contributors to this volume perceive Tibetans and Uyghurs as active participants in contemporary China who, in the course of their everyday lives, variously accommodate, negotiate, call into question, or ignore the ideology of the ‘harmonious society’ and the policies connected to it.

Tibetan and Xinjiang history intersected directly in the seventh century, when much of the territory of modern Xinjiang was conquered by Tibetans. This is rarely mentioned in modern discourse which, if at all, takes the respective relationships of these regions to the Chinese polity as its main point of reference. Nevertheless, high-ranking Chinese politicians with experience in one of the two autonomous regions are frequently sent to serve in the other. For its part, the Western media have occasionally drawn parallels between the plights of Tibetans and Uyghurs, as well as between their reactions to unpopular policies, and members of these groups themselves occasionally draw such comparisons. Yet apart from a few exceptions (e.g. Mackerras 2010; Potter 2011; Rossabi 2004; Sautman 2010), scholarly publications tend to treat the Uyghur and the Tibetan problems by and large separately, in isolation from one another (e.g. Barnett and Schwartz 2008; Bovingdon 2010; Clarke 2011; Fischer 2005; Kolás and Thowsen 2005; Millward 2007; Norbu 2001; Starr 2004).

But does this trend in scholarship indicate that Tibetans and Uyghurs each retain a considerable measure of unique exceptionalism that renders them incommensurable? There is no quick and easy answer to this question. Let it suffice here to point to a few pertinent differences and commonalities which are often interconnected through the structural position of these groups within the Chinese polity. Among these, their
geographical distribution and historical relationship to the Chinese political centre are pivotal. Although both groups display considerable geographical concentration, ever since its inclusion into the Chinese polity by the Manchus in the mid-eighteenth century, the administrative boundaries of Xinjiang have been drawn so as to include all major settlements of Turkic-speaking Muslim farmers who in the second half of the twentieth century came to be classified as Uyghur. Thus, modern Uyghurs’ territorial concentration today corresponds quite closely to the administrative unit created by the Qing and inherited by the PRC. In contrast, the majority of Tibetans in China live beyond the administrative borders of the TAR, and in the PRC it is necessary to distinguish between an ethnographic and a political Tibet. This volume takes ethnographic Tibet as its unit of enquiry.

The historical relationships of both groups (and the respective regions they occupy) to the Chinese polity have been heavily contested. While international scholarship today acknowledges sporadic Chinese presence in and control over the territory of what is Xinjiang today, and dates its definitive incorporation into the Chinese polity from the Qing conquest in the mid-eighteenth century, Chinese scholarship emphasizes the primordial belonging of the region to China from time immemorial. Uyghur nationalist perspectives, subject to immediate censorship and silencing, have also made exaggerated Uyghur claims to this region (Bovingdon and Tursun 2004; Bovingdon 2010). In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, repeated attempts of the Turkic-speaking Muslims of Xinjiang to break away from China have been stymied, but live on in collective memory. Some scholars consider Xinjiang implicitly or explicitly an internal colony of China (Gladney 1998) while others question this stance, cautiously pointing out that military control and exploitation of resources have been accompanied by major subsidies (Sautman 2000). Still others point out that these two perspectives are not necessarily mutually exclusive (Millward 2000, 2007).

The Tibetans’ historical relationship to China and political status are also disputed (Powers 2004). From a contemporary Tibetan perspective, their relationship both to the Mongols and the Manchus has been perceived as one between the spiritual teacher and the secular patron

8. An alternative and perhaps just as apt designation might be ‘continental colony’, as has been recently used by Dittmar Schorkowitz (2012).
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(Tib.: mchod yon), while the incorporation of Tibetan territories into the People’s Republic is represented as an illegal occupation. In contrast, the state-sponsored master narrative considers it to be a return to the motherland. When the Thirteenth Dalai Lama declared Tibet’s independence in 1913 (retained until 1950), he drew its borders far beyond the eastern boundaries of the present TAR (roughly corresponding to the central Tibetan provinces U and Tsang) to include the culturally Tibetan areas of Kham and Amdo, which were split up in 1965 and incorporated into the Chinese provinces of Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan, and Yunnan (Goldstein 1989; Shakya 1999).

Both Tibetans and Uyghurs are associated with adherence to a world religion, and in both cases religion – Buddhism among Tibetans and Islam among the Uyghurs – is perceived by Beijing as a source of social unrest and therefore a potential force for political mobilization. The stark differences in institutions, doctrine, and popular manifestations (both ritual and everyday) of religious sentiment associated with Buddhism and Islam respectively fade away in the light of indiscriminate accusations of religious extremism and repeated waves of religious repression launched by the state, often accompanied by tolerance of selected religious practices. Of course, there are countless examples of the secular state keeping religious activities in check throughout the PRC, and they are by no means limited to minorities. However, in China’s west, measures of repression and tolerance inevitably become part and parcel of minority policies, which have important implications for Chinese nationalism, national security, and international relations. In Tibet, extreme political control and surveillance are exerted over monasteries, where monks and nuns are monitored, investigated, politically educated, and regulated in terms of their numbers. Religion and local nationalism are further conflated when, for example, Tibetan expressions of religion are viewed as defiance of the state and, conversely, Tibetans’ political protests are interpreted as religious rituals (Schwartz 1999). In fact, the state itself contributes to this process when it mimics religious practice by selecting and appointing religious figures to political positions (Barnett 2012). In Xinjiang the state has increasingly linked Islam to Uyghur separatism since the 1990s, which is clearly shown by China’s enthusiastic embrace of the global ‘war on terror’ declared in the wake of 9/11, which in official discourse transformed the Xinjiang problem.
from China’s internal affair into an international concern. State control over religious institutions and religious expression have consequently become tighter, ranging from limitations on religious education to controlling a number of fundamental religious practices including mosque attendance, fasting during the month of Ramadan, consumption of religious literature, and wearing Islamic clothing for state employees (Fuller and Lipman 2004; Potter 2003). Nevertheless, the vague formulation of policies allows local authorities to stretch the notion of ‘illegal religious activities’ at their own discretion, allowing for the selective and arbitrary application of the law, which creates an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear as reformist currents slowly make their way into Xinjiang (Waite 2007). In consequence, non-institutional practices such as the rituals of mourning performed by büwi (as discussed by Rachel Harris in ch. 11) must be hidden in order to evade criminal prosecution. As Harris shows, however, state-condemned religious practices such as this do important work in the local community – and, somewhat paradoxically, also contribute to maintaining social harmony. In spite of ongoing state violence directed towards religious practices and institutions, Buddhism and Islam have continued to remain the central organizing principles of Tibetan and Uyghur society and culture respectively.

As several of the other chapters attest, the protection of culture and ethnic identity is crucial both for Uyghurs and Tibetans – whether expressed in religion, language, or other realms (see especially chapters 7 and 8). The Tibetans have a well-organized and active exile community concentrated in South Asia, while several independent Central Asian states bordering Xinjiang have a significant Uyghur diasporic presence. It is of particular significance that the Dalai Lama, the foremost spiritual authority of Tibetans, is also identified as the leader of the Tibetan freedom movement; his personal charisma contributes to the successful

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9. This is aptly illustrated by a curious publication which comprises the results of three major conferences held in three different locations (Gansu, Shaanxi, Xinjiang) in 2008–9 on the topic of Muslims and a harmonious society. The events and the ensuing publication came about as a result of the joint efforts of a Chinese government think-tank and an American faith-based think-tank. A close reading of the various papers reveals not only the ongoing significance attached to the concept of the harmonious society, but also the substantial differences in the current position of the Chinese Muslims (Hui) and the Uyghurs of Xinjiang. The papers on Xinjiang tend to emphasize the perceived links between political separatism and Islam, while papers on the Chinese Muslims reveal greater religious tolerance and an array of religious activities absent in Xinjiang (Liu 2011; Ma 2011).
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promotion of the Tibetan case in the international arena by a relatively unified exile community (Brox 2012). In contrast, the Uyghur diaspora, with important organizational centres in Germany and the United States, appears to be more fragmented, and Rebiya Kadeer, widely perceived by many if not all Uyghurs and by the Chinese political centre as the leader of Uyghur separatists, is typically not associated with Islam and has gained limited international visibility and recognition (Gladney 2004b). The relative fragmentation of the Uyghur exile community and the generally more hostile attitude towards Islam of people in the West (who tend to be much more positively disposed to Buddhism) no doubt also contribute to this difference.

Less known, but just as significant, are Han Chinese attitudes to the two regions. These range from almost complete ignorance to stereotypical representations which, more often than not, are informed by cultural misunderstandings. While several post-reform authors have singled out Tibet as the destination where they can find the natural and spiritual Other that they have subjected to the exoticizing gaze of the ‘imperial eyes’ (Damgaard 2012; see also Yeh, ch. 9 in this volume), to the best of our knowledge no such sentiments have been expressed by Chinese artists concerning Xinjiang, although a misrepresentation of Muslims in the spirit of ‘orientalism’ in the visual arts has been noted (Gladney 1994, 2004a). More typically, Xinjiang for many Han has remained the land of exile and labour camps, yet another continuity with the imperial legacy. Nevertheless, similar to other minority regions in China, in Tibet and Xinjiang ethnic and heritage tourism are increasingly promoted (see Dawut 2007; Kolås 2008). Capitalizing upon these minorities’ exotic allure derived from the cultural difference between them and the Han majority, ethnic tourism serves both development (by bringing money to minority areas) and the ideological purpose of promoting interethnic friendship. Not surprisingly, it also has a considerable impact on how these groups are perceived by the Han. Finally, the promotion of ethnic tourism also has important political ramifications because it clearly draws the parameters along which ethnic identity can be publicly dis-

10. Such misunderstandings are often mutual.
11. In contrast, pre-1950 Tibet is portrayed in China as a ‘hell on earth’, a backwards, theocratic, feudal serfdom ruled by ferocious priests and aristocrats who bind the people to slavery (see e.g. Heberer 2001).
played and asserted. Essentialized and distorted representations of the Other emerging from everyday encounters may be endorsed by the state and may even inadvertently influence policies, but they may also equally well become a trigger for grassroots social initiatives. In this volume Emily Yeh (ch. 9) provides a rare example of the latter in her analysis of the origins of China’s environmental movement, which has its roots in the same romanticized vision of Tibet as the post-reform literary works mentioned above. Yeh’s study is a rare piece of academic research that presents an example of positive convergence of Sino-Tibetan interests realized in genuine cooperation, and evokes the image of a naturally emerging harmonious society which does not need the forceful imposition of harmony from above.

One of the common misrepresentations of the minorities includes ‘backwardness’, equated with a certain cultural conservatism, which itself has been used as a shorthand reference to many different things, ranging from cultural traditions and gender relations to lower levels of urbanization and the materiality of living conditions. Economic underdevelopment of the inland provinces was programmatically ignored in the early reform period, but started being strategically addressed in 2000 with the launching of the Open Up the West campaign (Chi.: xibu da kaifa – see Cencetti, Fischer, Hann, Nyima, Szadziewski, and Zhang in this volume). In his assessment of development policies in Xinjiang, Henryk Szadziewski (ch. 3) examines how this campaign has failed to live up to its twin promises of stability and social equity. He also stresses that central development planning privileges materiality over the human dimensions of development, and points to the conspicuous lack of input by marginalized people in policy formation. Most of his conclusions are based on data from Xinjiang, but they could equally well be applied to development among Tibetans, a point substantiated by several other chapters in this volume (Cencetti, Fischer, Nyima). One of the common denominators shared by Xinjiang and the Tibetan regions is resentment of the accelerated migration of the Han into these regions that has accompanied this unprecedented investment in China’s western provinces, as is explored in detail by Andrew Fischer in the only contribution to this volume which explicitly adopts a comparative framework.12

12. The demolition and reconstruction of Old Lhasa in the TAR and the Old Town of Kashgar in the XUAR in the name of modernization, though not explicitly addressed by the chapters,
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Development and modernization are also used to legitimate the forced resettlement and sedentarization of Tibetan nomads, the topicality of which is reflected in two chapters in this volume (Cencetti and Nyima). While such measures among Tibetans are comparable to oppressive agricultural policies habitually imposed upon Uyghur farmers especially in southern Xinjiang, as Chris Hann demonstrates in ch. 7, land reclamation and the opening of new rural settlements in the late 1980s and early 1990s actually opened up new possibilities for Uyghur farmers in eastern Xinjiang. Given the increasing water shortages in Xinjiang, such projects are no longer ecologically possible, although they would most likely be welcomed by the rural population of Qumul. Reasons for the very different reception of seemingly similar policy directives concerning resettlement are likely to be found in the substantial differences in context: in the Tibetan case, resettlement entails drastic changes in lifestyle, including in patterns of production, consumption, and sociability, therefore local reactions are generally negative and the policies can only be implemented through cajoling, deceit, or force. In the Uyghur case, the new settlements allowed the perpetuation of traditional lifestyles amid improved conditions; resettlement could, therefore, be implemented on a voluntary basis.

Radical changes in educational policies targeting both groups appear to follow the same blueprint: closely connected to development policies, both groups are now being subjected to the national policy directives on ‘bilingual education’ (Chi.: shuangyu jiaoyu). From Chris Hann (ch. 7) and Françoise Robin (ch. 8), we learn about similarities of policy implementation and reception across the two regions. These language policies, which elsewhere in China typically mean bilingual education in Mandarin and English and are realized very differently among other minorities (Feng 2007), have been reinterpreted for Tibetans and Uyghurs as monolingual Chinese-language education at the expense of the respective mother tongues. This in fact represents an almost complete reversal of earlier, more liberal education policies among these groups. The aim of increasing proficiency in Mandarin is further pursued through the institutionalization of the so-called Tibet classes and Xinjiang classes elsewhere in China (Grose 2010; Postiglione 2008; Schluessel 2007). But an exclusive focus on identity politics may leave us with a simplified vision of minority-majority or...
state–society confrontation. Tracy Zhang’s chapter (ch. 4) serves as an important corrective to this by convincingly linking cultural hierarchy to commodity hierarchy, which reveals the complex entanglement of multiple inequalities.

As the above demonstrates, among the Uyghurs and the Tibetans economic development is inseparable from culture and identity, a point amply demonstrated by the individual chapters.

The chapters
In an ideal situation we would have had several chapters which make direct comparison between Tibetans and Uyghurs. However, single-authored comparative chapters are difficult to elicit, given the specialized linguistic skills and local knowledge needed and the vast literature emerging about both regions respectively: we know of no scholar who has the necessary, intimate familiarity with both languages and regions. It is no accident that the only comparative chapter has been written by an author who works predominantly with quantitative methods and takes a macro perspective. In view of this, the collection is intended to inspire readers to notice similarities and differences and prepare the ground for direct comparisons in the future, carried out within the framework of collaborative research between Tibet and Xinjiang specialists, and with greater participation of local scholars.

While putting together this collection of articles, we have consciously pursued an interdisciplinary approach, inviting regional specialists, political scientists, anthropologists, geographers, demographers, development economists, and philologists, as well as experts on human rights, gender studies, and ethnomusicology. They all share an interest in the complex entanglement of politics, development, culture, and identity, and demonstrate a readiness to communicate across disciplinary boundaries. Although every effort has been made to render the volume as cohesive as possible, we decided against commissioning parallel chapters that would have ensured a neat symmetry, for example, a chapter each on education in Tibet and Xinjiang respectively, on development and other pertinent issues, etc. Instead, we have invited authors to present their ongoing research on topics of their own choice, as tendencies in current scholarship, both in terms of choice of topic and manner of analysis in themselves, deserve attention.
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The common denominators that hold the 11 contributions together include a shared focus on the complex interplay of culture and economic development, the intricate configurations of the apparent state—society dichotomy and, in particular, grassroots reactions to state discourse and interventions, regardless of whether these come in the form of benign economic development or overt repression. The contributors start from the premise that, although deprived of access to conventional means of political power, Tibetans and Uyghurs are by no means powerless or helpless victims of central policies; faced with uncertainty and risk, they do and indeed often must express themselves and work both within and beyond state policies and discourses. The authors look at recent developments in these frameworks and study the interplay of myriad forms of agency – ‘backstage’: hidden, and official – in the arenas of socio-economic development and market liberalization, popular culture, relocation and urban planning, environment and ecological migration, civil society, education and language, ethno-nationalism, and religious policies and practices. On the Fringes of the Harmonious Society presents original research using discursive, statistical, historical, and ethnographic data. Each chapter delves into broad issues of national and even transnational significance, using locally situated case studies as a laboratory, with the aim to provide a better understanding of these two regions in terms of their relationship to the Chinese centre by identifying comparable patterns in local strategies of adaptation, accommodation, evasion, or rejection. With the sole exception of Eric Schluessel’s contribution (ch. 12), which addresses Uyghur attention (or rather, lack of attention) to the concept of the ‘harmonious society’, most of the authors focus on local people’s pragmatism rather than on legitimation discourses.

Development and agency

Several of the papers focus on the consequences of development and modernization orchestrated by the Chinese centre. Andrew Fischer addresses issues of development in the two regions through a comparative analysis of labour transitions in the context of rapid economic growth and the related dimensions of wage, income, and educational inequalities. Using statistical data, he points to numerous structural differences which are manifested in economic profile, pace of urbanization,
urban–rural and intra-urban inequalities, literacy rates, and educational attainments in the respective regions. Fischer considers these differences through a longitudinal and comparative trend analysis of national accounting data, aggregate employment, and wages, comparing the TAR and the XUAR to several other provinces in western China and to the national average. His analysis reveals that both minorities appear to have been significantly underrepresented in state-sector employment relative to their numbers as a proportion of the regional populations, at least up until 2002 or 2003, after which point relevant data were no longer published. Fischer argues that the statistical data indicate irreversible processes which affect people's lives and livelihoods in very real ways. He shows that an increased emphasis on nationally standardized qualification criteria for employment within urban work units, combined with a retreat from preferential treatment of minorities in public employment, has resulted in the intensification of exclusionary pressures on the upper strata of urban employment. This has important implications in terms of restricted upward mobility for both Tibetans and Uyghurs at a time of rapid economic growth. Fischer’s analysis thus offers a particular insight into the background of recent outbursts of discontent in these two regions, suggesting that, in spite of the socio-economic differences, the overriding common denominator is a strongly assimilationist and discriminatory macro-political and economic context. In the process, he substantiates similar claims about the nature of development made on the basis of qualitative research or anecdotal evidence. His argument also complements Henryk Szadziewski’s analysis (ch. 3), which shows how a rights-based approach to development, unrealized at present, could lead to the empowerment of these minorities.

Taking a theoretical perspective on development, Szadziewski argues that the state’s centrist approach to development appears out of step with contemporary thinking on development practices and is unlikely to produce the equality and stability proposed by the Open Up the West campaign and the ‘harmonious society’ development philosophy. This chapter explores a rights-based approach to development and focuses on the experiences of Uyghurs in the XUAR from 2000 to the present. This offers the possibility to assess the potential of the participatory framework of state-led development interventions in an ethnic minority region, as well as local responses to development planning. Exploring
an alternative approach that positions local people not as recipients of development, but as rights holders, the author seeks to understand how ethnic minority actors working outside state organizations in China could partner with the Chinese state to operationalize a grassroots approach to economic and social development. Szadziewski starts from the premise that the state plays a pivotal role in creating change, and suggests that the rights-based approach may offer Uyghurs opportunities for the structural and social change needed to achieve the goal of equity and to move Uyghurs away from the periphery of the harmonious society.

Tracy Zhang also explores rapid growth and its consequences through a sensitive ethnographic study of the commodity hierarchy in Lhasa’s carpet (Tib.: kha gdan) sector and its dynamic relationship to the cultural politics of difference. Using primarily qualitative research methods and deriving her data from long-term fieldwork, she describes how the marketization process interacts with two cultural hierarchies: the production of economic knowledge that identifies Tibetan culture as incompatible with the development of market economy, and Western tourists’ quest for an authentic Tibet, along with the rise of Tibetan cultural nationalism. The first cultural hierarchy informs China’s development strategies in Tibet, opening spaces of encounter through tourism, migration, and cross-regional trade. The second one has elevated the status of khadens, placing these carpets above Chinese carpets in the commodity hierarchy. This commodity hierarchy is consolidated through the convergence of two trade and production constellations: one links the Tibetan capital city to producers and dealers in the Chinese regions; the other connects the Lhasa carpet industry to the Tibetan diaspora in South Asia. Zhang argues that contestations among various actors, production centres, and trade networks draw on four main axes along which inequality becomes manifest: residence (rural–urban), socio-economic status, cultural difference, and skill/knowledge. She points to people’s struggles over the subject positions that determine accesses to information, technical knowledge, and various networks of producers and dealers. She demonstrates that state policies and government agencies are part and parcel of the marketization dynamics, and that market reform is intrinsically linked to the politics of difference and the hierarchies of culture.

Rapid social change taking place in the wake of modernization among Tibetan nomads is the focus of the next two chapters. Introducing the
On the Fringes of the Harmonious Society

concept of ‘harmonious development’, Tashi Nyima looks at the separation of pastoralists from their pastures on the Tibetan Plateau. Conducting an in-depth investigation of the relocation process and post-relocation livelihood of a pastoral township in Kham-Qinghai, the main focus of this chapter is the implementation of the nationwide Pastures to Grasslands (Chi.: tuimu huancao) campaign. The policy has been justified by emphasizing the combined need for modernization, sustainable development, and urbanization – all projected as necessary preconditions for creating a harmonious pastoral community and ensuring stability. In contrast, local pastoralists’ discourse articulates concerns about livelihood and subsistence, the need to protect their homeland and cultural identity, and, echoing Szadziewski's line of argument, the right to have a say in development. Although the author points to examples of Tibetans asserting their own agency in shaping the outcome of the state’s sustainable development intervention, their attempts to voice discontent at the different state-society interfaces often result in failure and have in reality had little impact on policy implementation and its aftermath. In the end, Nyima concludes, sustainable development interventions may result in effective control over pastoral communities, but this takes place at the cost of social harmony.

State-orchestrated relocation policies and their implementation are also the focus of the work of Elisa Cencetti, who has carried out fieldwork on the Tibetan Plateau of Amdo-Qinghai. Like Nyima, Cencetti also searches for the agency of ordinary Tibetans in relation to the ‘ecological migrations’ (Chi.: shengtai yimin) programme, but she situates her discussion within the framework of the spatial reproduction of a political ideology. Cencetti presents the case of Tibetan herders who, since the beginning of the 2000s, have been resettled in new urban spaces within the Headwaters of the Three Rivers Nature Reserve on the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau. These new settlements, the author argues, are state-driven attempts to ‘harmonize’ this region and its inhabitants by using spatial strategies and by promoting particular political ideologies. Cencetti points to several practices by which the herders actually challenge the state-imposed idea of the ‘harmonious society’, but they are unable explicitly to influence the political agenda set by the centre or to show open forms of resistance. Nonetheless, once relocated in the new settlements, herders interfere with and modify the living space designed for them. At the same time, they are themselves subject to changes that
are manifested in, for example, the transformation of their production system and the emergence of new consumption patterns. The new settlements thus become sites of constant interaction and negotiation between relocated Tibetans and the state apparatus.

**Education and culture**

While the chapters discussed thus far address issues of development that are directly or indirectly informed by the legitimizing discourse of social harmony, several contributions focus on education and culture, both of which remain intimately related to development. This is demonstrated by Chris Hann (ch. 7), who, on the basis of data collected in the course of long-term ethnographic fieldwork in the eastern Xinjiang prefecture of Hami/Qumul, considers the connections between access to education and social mobility among rural Uyghurs. The chapter outlines how a ‘low-level equilibrium trap’ has taken shape in the Xinjiang countryside during the three decades of reform socialism. The major factors contributing to this trap have been population control policies, egalitarian access to land, and the household registration (Chi.: hukou) system. In addition to helping peasants avoid dispossession, the state has taken steps to open up new settlements through land reclamation projects and some limited seasonal wage labour opportunities are available outside the village. However, Hann argues that current educational policies are having a more significant impact. Many rural Uyghurs have long viewed education as the best route – indeed, often the only feasible one – to go beyond the limited opportunities offered by village life. For decades this prospect of social mobility was gratefully accepted. During the last decade, however, this ‘social contract’ has been broken: study and educational qualifications no longer guarantee employment and a pension. At the same time, the closure of many village schools and new policies to promote ‘bilingual education’ in both the rural and the urban sectors are feared and criticized by many Uyghurs, who view the declared policy goal as a thin disguise for the state’s assimilationist aspirations.

Françoise Robin’s contribution also discusses the sensitive issue of ‘bilingual education’, the implementation of which shows very striking similarities among Tibetans and Uyghurs. Moreover, these policies are also similarly perceived by Tibetans and Uyghurs as posing a threat to their mother tongues and, by extension, their ethnic identities and their
very survival as distinct groups. However, Robin’s analysis is situated in the framework of recent waves of social discontent rather than in the context of development. While Tibetan protests in the late 1980s and again in 2008 mainly dealt with religious and political matters, in October 2010, soon after the announcement of a ten-year bilingual education plan, for the first time in the history of Tibetan protests in China, Tibetan students and teachers took to the streets to defend the Tibetan language. Most slogans reminded the authorities of the right to use the Tibetan language and the constitutionally mandated equality of all nationalities, while others appropriated the state’s slogan of building a ‘harmonious society’ as an explicit reminder to the Chinese authorities of their own stated goals. The chapter maps the string of demonstrations that took place between October 2010 and the end of 2012, which were organized around the topic of education and the place of the Tibetan language in China’s education system. Robin then details the triple-pronged approach that Tibetans have resorted to in order to express their opposition to Sino-centred policies on education and language: street protests, poems and opinions in the Tibetan blogosphere, and grassroots language projects. Robin convincingly shows how a new generation of politically and socially engaged young adults apply these novel strategies in defence of the Tibetan language. In conclusion, she asks whether this mode of action can be interpreted as a new paradigm of Tibetan strategies to counter state policies perceived as going against Tibetan interests.

Social movements and Tibet are also the central themes in chapter 9, although the author, Emily Yeh, approaches them from a completely different angle. Yeh starts from a significant but hitherto neglected aspect of China’s environmental movement: the fact that it was first constituted in the mid-1990s in relation to Tibet. This chapter explores the early days of China’s environmental movement through a discussion of the two earliest campaigns that galvanized Chinese activists, both of which focused on Tibetan areas: the campaign to save the snub-nosed monkey in Diqing, Yunnan, and the campaign against the poaching of the Tibetan antelope in the Kekexili region of Qinghai for its wool, used to make the fashionable shahtoosh shawls. In exploring why and how imaginations of Tibet and the relationship between Tibetan culture and nature preservation played a role in early environmentalism, the chapter
provides a rare example of Sino-Tibetan cooperation that diverges significantly from the imposition of ‘harmony’ from above as illustrated in the previous chapters.

The contribution by Joanne Smith Finley looks at a popular television series in Xinjiang and focuses on the very sensitive issue of interethnic relations, specifically interethnic marriage. She starts from the premise that in contemporary Xinjiang, community enforcement of the taboo on Uyghur–Han intermarriage has become one of the sole remaining means for Uyghurs to show symbolic resistance against the state’s sinicizing efforts. This becomes evident in Smith Finley’s analysis of both the contents and the reception of a popular TV soap opera, Xinjiang Girls (Chi.: Xinjiang guniang) (2004), which caused a furore within the Uyghur community. The TV drama tells the story of four Uyghur sisters, one of whom almost marries a Han Chinese man. The drama was seen by many Uyghurs as a cynical attempt on the part of the state both to propagandize Uyghur youth on the acceptability of interethnic marriages in the multiethnic Chinese nation and to suggest that cultural and political assimilation of the Uyghurs was inevitable and had entered its end phase. Smith Finley argues that although the Chinese state has used television as a vehicle for promoting the ideal of harmonious coexistence between ethnic groups, the TV drama Xinjiang Girls has in fact had the reverse effect of reinforcing social taboos and strengthening Uyghur ethno-nationalism. The author does not, however, assume uniformity of opinion throughout the Uyghur community regarding this matter. There are internal divisions, as is evinced by young Uyghur women who aspire to mixed unions. However, as Smith Finley explains, the small increase in recent years in mixed marriages and courtships in urban settings has had the effect of heightening the degree of ethnic boundary maintenance among large segments of the Uyghur community.

Rachel Harris’s contribution (ch. 11) stands out as the only chapter in the volume addressing contemporary religious practice. Her ethnomusicological analysis of women’s religious practices in rural Xinjiang provides a rare insight into the multiple marginalization of female Muslim religious practitioners in contemporary rural China. Known as büwi in Uyghur, these are respected women within the local community who wash the bodies of the deceased and perform rituals of mourning, healing, and
commemoration. This form of women’s ritual practice is embedded in local tradition and is widespread among the Uyghurs of Xinjiang. Within the village, participation in these rituals offers women status, community, and opportunities for artistic and emotional expression. In the wider political arena, however, they are doubly marginalized: they earn the disapproval of the new Muslim orthodoxy and the suspicion of the authorities, who seek to suppress or control ritual activities outside the sphere of officially approved and regulated religion. These women do important spiritual work within the community, but because their ritual activities are seen as situated outside the sphere of officially approved religion, they are perceived as a threat rather than a contribution to social harmony. This chapter follows contemporary trends in ethnomusicology, arguing that an investigation into the Uyghur village soundscape provides important insights into the ways in which gendered and ethnic hierarchies are sonically negotiated within village society, in relation to the state, and in relation to global trends in Islam.

Chapter 12, ‘Thinking beyond harmony’, also focuses on Xinjiang approaches to social harmony, but from a much broader perspective. In this pioneering study, Eric Schluessel takes an excursion into Uyghur intellectual history in order to illuminate contemporary Uyghur public intellectuals’ social thought as expressed in their published writings. Situating this in its historical context, Schluessel convincingly demonstrates that influential authors draw on and transform state-sanctioned discourses to articulate solutions to the problems of contemporary Uyghur society in Xinjiang. Such works by prominent thinkers are consumed by a large readership, and so can provide insights into the questions that concern them. The author argues that there is a sense of crisis in Uyghur society that comes both from a perceived distance from the past and from a lack of direction for the ethno-national community (Uy.: millät). The writings discussed here reflect a desire to engage with the outside world on an equal footing and as part of a community of nations, but they also indicate that Uyghur authors feel inadequate or ill-equipped to do so individually or as a nation. Interestingly, the proposed solutions rely on a modernist vision of progress that draws on Marxist materialism in its modern Chinese mode, but reconfigures this vision in idealist terms: public intellectuals diagnose Uyghurs’ communal problems as primarily psychological or creative, and so prescribe solutions focused on
promoting native language and education. ‘Nationalism’, which scholars have employed as a catch-all term for Uyghur creative and intellectual production that does not strictly conform to official ideology, is thus an inadequate label for much of the new Uyghur intellectual discourse. A case study of recent writings on language and society in and beyond the discourse of the ‘harmonious society’ demonstrates the need to take debates and discussions internal to the Uyghur intellectual sphere more seriously and consider them as equals to, and in their interaction with, official ideology.

This invitation to consider local viewpoints more seriously and in the broader context of their interactions with larger discourses, currents, and social forces operating on the national and international levels is an appropriate way to conclude, since most of the contributors try to do just this. The concept of the harmonious society may be losing its currency in official discourse, but the numerous interpretations and contestations which make up its semantic field are likely to remain salient for quite some time to come. Negotiations of all sorts between local actors, politicians, agents of the state, and global forces will continue to shape academic research, as the themes, approaches, and styles represented in this volume attest. The contributions reflect the centrality of development in the characterization of official Chinese discourse, and the diverse but overlapping perspectives also demonstrate some of the parallels in policy directives affecting the two regions. Contrary to our expectations, the analysis of ethnographic data has not always led to a distancing from the state–society dichotomy, and some of the contributions leave us with the feeling that Uyghurs and Tibetans cannot exercise the same degree of agency in all contexts. In fact, through the choice of subject matter, the Tibetan contributions by and large suggest a more cautious optimism than do the Uyghur chapters. While such discrepancies undoubtedly have multiple causes, it is worth noting that local and foreign scholars active in both regions face comparable difficulties, and the political sensitivities inevitably influence their choice of focus and method of data collection.

Taking our cue from Chris Hann’s chapter, we can conclude that all contributions deal with the ostensible dichotomy of harmony and homogeneity. Any attempt to achieve harmony assumes the perpetuation
of a measure of diversity, at least in the foreseeable future. However, as most of the chapters reveal, state attempts which aim at implementing harmony are seen by locals as barely disguised attempts to force their assimilation, which is tantamount to replacing diversity with homogeneity. Nevertheless, it is significant that most of our authors refrain from overemphasizing such facile dichotomies and uncritically employing them in their analytical frameworks. Rather, they present case studies focusing on ongoing processes involving a multiplicity of forces rather than a tug-of-war between two reified entities, be they abstract concepts or categories of people. This tendency to contextualize policy implementations and their reception in real-life situations also indicates a preference among our authors to focus on the complexities of everyday interactions rather than exclusively on conflicting interests, repression, discontent, and resistance. In turn, this scholarly tendency accurately reflects most local people’s aspirations for a better life under the combined conditions of economic advancement and sustained recognition of and respect for diversity and the accompanying rights, in other words, a modus vivendi which would substantiate the (at present still utopian) vision of a harmonious society.

References


INTRODUCTION


ON THE FRINGES OF THE HARMONIOUS SOCIETY


INTRODUCTION


— (2010). ‘Scaling back minority rights? The debate about China’s ethnic
ON THE FRINGES OF THE HARMONIOUS SOCIETY


CHAPTER TWO

Labour transitions and social inequalities in Tibet and Xinjiang: A comparative analysis of the structural foundations of discrimination and protest

Andrew Martin Fischer

The minority nationality areas of Tibet and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region share obvious similarities as two sparsely populated, resource-rich, and politically suppressed restive minority areas in the far western hinterlands of China, although they also exhibit certain notable differences. Most of the discussion about these differences has focused on culture and religion, on different political histories of integration into China, or on certain political variables such as the presence or absence of a unifying charismatic leader in exile. However, far less attention has been paid to the more structural aspects of socio-economic development and how these have conditioned the political dynamics of minority grievance and protest. One example of the latter is the issue of population and migration dynamics. As highlighted by Fischer (2008), despite similar discourses of ‘population invasion’, Tibetan areas differ considerably from Xinjiang in that Tibetans remain a predominant majority in their areas except in the case of major towns and cities, whereas large-scale population transfers have been far more evident in Xinjiang, both prior to the reform period and also in the 1990s and 2000s, as clearly evidenced by recent census data. This insight leads us to question more broadly the similarities or differences in the changing

1. In this chapter, the terms ‘Tibet’ and ‘Tibetan areas’ refer to all of the Tibetan areas in China, including the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and the Tibetan areas that are incorporated into the provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan. ‘China’ refers to the People’s Republic of China (PRC).
socio-economic circumstances of these two differing contexts amidst rapid economic growth.

The economies of western China have been growing very rapidly since the mid-1990s, to a certain extent catching up with the national average per capita GDP after lagging behind for much of the first 15 years of the reform period from the early 1980s onwards. Xinjiang (and to a lesser extent Qinghai) was an exception in this regard in that the per capita GDP of Xinjiang was higher than the national average up until the mid-1990s, and thus its convergence has been towards the western norm from above, rather than towards the national average from below. Nonetheless, the pace of economic growth in Xinjiang, as in the Tibetan areas, has been phenomenal. Even though the two regions account for the bulk of territory in western China, the weight of such growth in the national economy has been marginal given that they are quite minor in population and economic terms in comparison to the densely populated and Han-dominated eastern parts of western China such as Sichuan. However, it is precisely this marginal weight that has allowed the central government to subsidize these regions so intensively, especially in the case of the TAR, where direct budgetary subsidies exceeded 100 per cent of the region's GDP for the first time in 2010 (see Fischer 2013). Despite (or perhaps because of) such prioritization and the resultant speed of growth, both regions erupted into widespread protests, by Tibetans in 2008 and Uyghurs in 2009, and both regions have remained unstable ever since.

This chapter provides a comparative overview of labour transitions and some insights into social inequalities in Tibet and Xinjiang in this context of rapid growth from the mid-1990s to 2010. ‘Labour transitions’ refer to proportionate shifts of employed people out of agriculture and into other sectors of employment such as manufacturing, construction, or services. Such transitions can be seen as reflecting underlying structural conditions of socio-economic change. They are here explored through a longitudinal and comparative trend analysis of aggregate employment, wage, and national accounting data, as well as household income and education data from household surveys and my own insights from fieldwork in Tibet.2

2. See Fischer (2011, 2013) for detailed explanations of the sources of data used and the fieldwork conducted between 2003 and 2007 in Tibetan areas (although the fieldwork findings are marginal to the present study). For a discussion of the accuracy of the official data, see Fischer (2005: 6–12).
The method derives from a structuralist development economics approach, focusing inductively on the evolution of aggregates, averages, and compositions, rather than on the statistical variations and associations of individual and/or household characteristics within a sample.

The use of this approach is not meant to suggest a deterministic understanding of the structural transitions studied, nor a homogeneous experience among the social groups represented. Rather, in combination with an institutionalist understanding of context, it is used as a means to reflect on the speed and characteristics of the socio-economic change that has been induced in these areas within a very short period of time – even after taking into account their very different starting points from other regions in China – with effects on people’s lives and livelihoods that have been occurring in very real and rapid ways. These are in many respects irreversible and are quickly transforming the landscape faced by the current generation of young Tibetans and Uyghurs. The fact that these changes have been happening under conditions of political disempowerment and disadvantage for these minorities, which impede their ability to mediate the speed and course of these transitions, offers particular insight into the underlying causes of the recent outbursts of discontent in these regions.

For the purpose of analysing provincial aggregates, the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) are compared to several other provincial cases in western China and the national average. The aggregate focus on the TAR (as opposed to other provinces with Tibetan areas) is necessary because, given the lack of socio-economic data disaggregated by nationality (except in the case of population censuses), the experience of Tibetans is easiest to decipher from the aggregate TAR data. This is because the entire province is made up of Tibetan autonomous areas, and Tibetans constitute the majority of the population – about 93 per cent according to the 2000 census and apparently still a little more than 90 per cent according to the 2010 data. In particular, the rural areas of the TAR are almost entirely Tibetan (at 97.6 per cent of the 2000 census population tally). In contrast, in Qinghai, the province with the next highest proportion of Tibetans and where Tibetan autonomous areas account for about 97.2 per cent of the territory, Tibetans are nonetheless a minority even in the rural areas because of the much more densely populated
non-Tibetan rural areas around Xining, the capital city. Using the TAR to represent all Tibetan areas is justified given strong similarities across these Tibetan areas and stark differences between these areas and other parts of China in terms of topography, population density, patterns of land use and livelihood, levels and composition of rural household incomes, education levels, and health indices. Moreover, similar labour transitions can be observed in other Tibetan areas as well, albeit with less intensive subsidization and more intensive integration with neighbouring Han urban centres than in the TAR.

The same cannot be said with regard to the province-level data from Xinjiang given the strong presence of Han Chinese in both urban and rural areas of the province and the greater regional variation in the concentration of minority populations across the province. In this respect, Xinjiang is more like Qinghai, albeit with a majority ‘minority’ presence (largely Uyghur). According to the most recent disaggregated data from 2009 (XSY 2010: table 3-7), Uyghurs amounted to just over 46 per cent of the total provincial population of 21.59 million people and the Han amounted to almost 39 per cent. The remainder was made up of other minorities (mainly Kazakh and Hui). Han Chinese were dominant in the more industrialized and urbanized northern parts of the province, especially in the capital, Ürümchi, where they outnumbered Uyghurs almost six to one, whereas Uyghurs were heavily dominant in the southern parts of the province. The demographic divide parallels this north–south divide: some of the highest fertility rates and natural population increase rates in China have been observed in the southern parts of the province, whereas the urbanized core in the north has a demographic profile similar to eastern China (e.g. see XSY 2010: table 3-9). This demographic difference is similar to the contrast between Yulshul and Golok Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures in the south of Qinghai and the urbanized core around Xining in the north of Qinghai (although this

3. See Fischer (2013: ch. 3) for a detailed discussion of these population data.
4. The detailed 2010 census data were not yet available to the author at the time of writing, although these 2009 data would have been adjusted on the basis of the 2000 census results and appear fairly accurate in the sense that the very aggregated results from the 2010 census presented in XSY (2011) are close to the 2009 estimates, taking into account population growth between the two years. It appears that the Han population was slightly higher than estimated, although this would be expected given increased in-migration during the intercensal period.
demographic similarity is not matched by educational disparities, as discussed below).

As a means to overcome this problem of identifying Uyghurs in the aggregate statistics of Xinjiang, data from two predominantly Uyghur prefectures are used, namely Kashgar and Khotan (Chi.: Hetian). The very limited prefecture-level data available for Xinjiang restrict this technique to mere glimpses in many cases. The choice of these two prefectures is nonetheless relevant for comparison to the TAR because of similar concentrations of Uyghurs. According to the 2009 data cited above, these two prefectures together had a population of 5.83 million, of which 5.48 million were minorities, of which 5.42 million were Uyghurs. This Uyghur population approximates the size of the entire Tibetan population in China in 2000 (5.42 million according to the 2000 census), and is about double the Tibetan population of the TAR in 2010 (2.72 million according to the 2010 census). The Uyghur population of these two prefectures accounted for 54 per cent of the Uyghur population in Xinjiang in 2009, or about 27 per cent of the total population of Xinjiang. Similar to Tibetans in the TAR (especially outside Lhasa) or in remote regions of Qinghai such as Yulshul and Golok, Uyghurs accounted for 91 per cent of the total prefecture population of Kashgar and 96 per cent of Khotan. Both prefectures were as agrarian as the TAR in the late 1990s, the starting point of rapid labour transitions in the TAR and other Tibetan areas.

However, a strong contrast between the labour transitions of the TAR and Xinjiang became apparent in the 2000s. Development strategies in the TAR and other Tibetan areas appear to have placed an overriding emphasis on urbanization, to the extent that rapid subsidy-sustained growth has been associated with a rapid transition of the local (mostly Tibetan) labour force out of the primary sector (mostly farming and herding). As a result, within one decade the TAR to a considerable degree caught up with the (also rapidly changing) norm in China, albeit without the productive economic foundations to support these changes. In contrast, labour transitions in Xinjiang, and especially in Kashgar and Khotan, appear to have been exceptionally slow compared to elsewhere.

5. ‘Primary sector’ is the national accounting term for farming, animal husbandry, forestry, and fishing. In Tibetan areas, the primary sector is about half farming and half animal husbandry (pastoralism).
in China, with the exception of Gansu. Similar to Gansu, Xinjiang appears to have experienced a ruralization of its labour force, although not necessarily an agrarianization because this expansion of rural employment appears to have taken place in non-farm secondary and tertiary sectors. Nonetheless, the definitely slower pace of labour transition out of agriculture is perhaps indicative of a development strategy that places greater priority on an agrarian labour regime that restricts labour mobility relative to other parts of China. Within this context, social inequalities also appear to have followed different trends, albeit with similar indications of an intensification of exclusionary pressures at the upper end of the labour hierarchy in urban areas, in which both Tibetans and Uyghurs were already hugely underrepresented relative to their population shares in the early 2000s. Indeed, such intensifications of exclusion and the synchronicity of the large-scale protests in both regions despite quite different structural socio-economic circumstances suggest that minority grievances have been driven by a common, particularly assimilationist and discriminatory macro-political and economic context that is, somewhat ironically, associated with the era of the ‘harmonious society’ under the leadership Hu Jintao.

These transformations of Tibet and Xinjiang are analysed in three sections. The first briefly outlines some of the outstanding features of recent growth in both provinces since the mid-1990s. The second section analyses in more detail the changing characteristics of employment structure that have accompanied such rapid growth, and compares them to several other provinces in western China. The third section offers an overview of certain aspects of social inequalities, focusing on income and educational inequalities, as well as the issue of minority representation in urban state-sector employment. The conclusion offers some reflections on the interaction of exclusion, discrimination, and grievance against the backdrop of such developments.

**Background on rapid economic growth in the TAR and Xinjiang**

As mentioned in the introduction, western China generally experienced a period of economic lagging in the early part of the reform period. This was definitely the case with the TAR, which went through a sustained period of stagnation (in real terms) for almost a decade from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s. Xinjiang performed much better during these
years, maintaining a level of per capita GDP above the national average until 1995, whereas other previously privileged western provinces such as Qinghai fell below the national average in the 1980s or early 1990s. In response to such economic lagging, Beijing launched a variety of policy initiatives in the mid-1990s. These culminated in the Open Up the West campaign (Chi.: xibu da kaifa, hereafter, OWC), announced in 1999, which was complemented by the Tenth Five-Year Plan in 2000. These general initiatives were supplemented in the TAR by the Fourth Tibet Work Forum in 2001.

Since then, economic growth rates in western China have been very rapid in all provincial cases, often exceeding the national average. For instance, the aggregate GDP of the TAR grew by 332 per cent from 2000 to 2010 (in nominal terms), whereas the GDP of Xinjiang grew by 299 per cent, in comparison to a nominal growth rate of 304 per cent for China overall. Hence, rapid growth in most western provinces stalled the increasing lag with eastern China and, in some cases, even closed the gap with national average per capita GDP, with the exception of Xinjiang and Yunnan. Growth in Xinjiang lagged in the early to mid-1990s, when its per capita GDP fell below the national average for the first time in 1996, and then again after 2006, when it converged with the per capita GDP of Qinghai in 2009 and 2010 (albeit still growing rapidly). Besides Xinjiang and Yunnan, the shuffling of rank orders among the other western provinces was minor. The lagging of the 1980s and early 1990s was stalled as western China joined the national growth experience, although the region generally remained poorer than the national average. At the end of this period, the GDP per capita of the TAR reached 17,319 yuan in 2010, versus 25,034 for Xinjiang and 29,992 yuan for China as a whole.

Despite these otherwise similar growth experiences, the structural change accompanying such growth in the TAR was very distinct from all other western provinces including Xinjiang. Unlike the rest of China, economic growth was not only disconnected from productive sectors, particularly the primary sector (mostly farming and herding) – which is predictable in a context of industrialization in the wider economy – but also from manufacturing and mining within the secondary sector. Instead, it was heavily concentrated in urban services and construction,

6. See Fischer (2013) for a more detailed discussion of these earlier dynamics. Also see Szadziewski and Hann (chs. 3 and 7 in this volume) for a discussion of the OWC.
fuelled by massive subsidization, mostly from the central government. The primary sector was the largest sector in value-added GDP terms in the TAR up to 1996, when it accounted for 42 per cent of GDP and just over three-quarters of employment (almost all Tibetan). In contrast, the tertiary sector (a combination of government and Party administration, social services such as education and health, trade, hotels and catering, transport, and other services) accounted for 41 per cent of GDP and only 19 per cent of employment (much of which would have been non-Tibetan). The tertiary sector surpassed the primary sector in terms of share of GDP for the first time in 1997. The primary-sector share fell from 31 per cent of GDP in 2000 to 13.5 per cent in 2010, even while still employing 53 per cent of the labour force in 2010. In contrast, the secondary sector increased in share from 11.5 per cent in 1997 (or from a brief previous peak of 17 per cent in 1995) to 24.5 per cent in 2010. This was not due to ‘industry’ (i.e. manufacturing and mining activity), which declined in GDP share from 10.6 per cent in 1997 to 7.8 per cent in 2010. The tertiary sector in the TAR increased in GDP share from 40 per cent in 1997 to 54 per cent in 2010.

Besides the decline in the primary sector as a share of GDP, the experience of the TAR was starkly dissimilar to all other provinces of western China, including Qinghai, the next most similar province to the TAR in terms of topography and demography. Subsidization strategies in other western provinces were focused on intensively restructuring the antiquated industrial base left over from Maoist interior industrialization strategies of the 1960s and 1970s.7 In all these cases, intensive subsidization and construction activity bolstered the leading role of industry within a few years. In China as a whole, secondary industry (including mining, but only as a very minor share) was generally the largest sector driving growth throughout the 1990s and 2000s, amounting to over 40 per cent of GDP. Construction remained at more or less the same share in 2010 (6.7 per cent of GDP) as in 1995 (6.1 per cent), despite the evident construction boom in China. The share of the tertiary sector increased considerably in the late 1990s, settling at around 43 per cent by 2010.8 The primary sector share fell from 20 to 10 per cent over the decade. These patterns were broadly similar in most western provinces, albeit with a stronger

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7. See Yang (1997) for an excellent discussion of these earlier industrialization strategies.
8. All data calculated from CSY (2011: table 2-1).
role for construction since 2000, reflecting the larger role of subsidies and investment under the OWC.9

Xinjiang was dissimilar to the experience of other western provinces in one important respect, which was not shared with the TAR: it had a more resilient share of primary-sector output, which amounted to 21 per cent of GDP in 2000 and, after a slight fall in the middle of the decade, recovered in share to 20 per cent of GDP in 2010. In this respect, Xinjiang was the only province in China (besides Hainan) that managed to sustain its primary-sector GDP share despite strong growth in other parts of its economy, which probably reflects the intensity of agroindustry in this province during this period (see further discussion of this below). Secondary activities were also strong in Xinjiang, with a share reaching almost 48 per cent of GDP by 2010, up from 43 per cent in 2000, although this was in line with the western provincial norm. Also similar to the western provincial norm, construction accounted for 8 per cent of GDP in 2010, while industry accounted for 40 per cent. Like in other western provinces, the strength of this manufacturing and mining activity was built on a period of intensive investment and construction activities in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In 2000, for example, construction amounted to 12 per cent of GDP, whereas industry and mining amounted to only 31 per cent. The tertiary sector rose from 36 per cent of GDP in 2000 to a height of 39 per cent in 2002, but then fell back to 33 per cent by 2010, which was significantly lower than the national tertiary share and against the rising national trend, although it was in line with the trends in other western provinces besides the TAR, such as Qinghai and Sichuan.

Indeed, while both the TAR and Xinjiang experienced an upsurge in the share of the tertiary sector in the early 2000s, in both cases reflecting a sharp expansion in government administration alongside the OWC (Fischer 2005; 2009b), this similarity faded after the early years of the OWC. In Xinjiang, the boost to government administration and construction in the early years of the OWC were associated with subsequently resurgent productive sectors, whereas they were not in the TAR. This being said, the disaggregated tertiary GDP data at the provincial level ceased to be reported in the yearbooks after 2003. It might be the case that government administration continued to be dispropror-

9. See Fischer (2013) for more detail on Sichuan, Gansu, Qinghai, and all China.
tionately large in Xinjiang (as well as in Qinghai), indirectly reflecting the relatively large military and security presence in these provinces and possibly a strengthening of this presence in the opening years of the OWC. Nonetheless, GDP growth in Xinjiang over this period – more or less equivalent to the national growth rate – was built on particularly resurgent productive sectors, in which mining no doubt played a strong role, whereas rapid growth in the TAR was based on rapid tertiарization and a construction boom alongside a small, slightly shrinking GDP share of secondary industry (including mining). Indirect indicators suggest that government administration continued to play a leading role in the GDP of the TAR throughout the 2000s, probably more than even tourism, which was nonetheless skyrocketing in the 2000s.

Both of these drivers in the TAR (tertiary sector and construction) were mostly determined by policies of subsidized spending and investment decided in Beijing and, to a much lesser extent, supported by various rich coastal provinces in China. The intensity of such forms of subsidization in Xinjiang has been far less (albeit rising since the mid-1990s). For instance, the local government fiscal deficit in Xinjiang, which would have been largely subsidized, was 22 per cent of GDP in 2010, in contrast to over 100 per cent in the TAR, which would have been almost entirely subsidized (the deficit in Xinjiang only jumped to this level in 2009 – perhaps as a response to the protests – and was 17 per cent in 2008). The proportions in Xinjiang were more or less in line with the (heavily subsidized) deficits of other western provinces in 2010 such as Gansu (27 per cent) and Sichuan (16 per cent). Investment would have been substantially subsidized in these cases as well, especially in the TAR, where investment in fixed assets reached 91 per cent of GDP by 2010, versus 63 per cent of GDP in Xinjiang and 69 per cent of GDP in China overall. We do not have data to estimate investment subsidies, although most large-scale investment in the TAR would have been mostly subsidized (or otherwise financed by out-of-province state-owned enterprises), whereas investment in Xinjiang would have been

10. This is a matter of informed speculation, as military activity is a closely guarded secret in China (see Fischer 2005: 44–45).

11. According to data presented by TAR governor Padma Choling, tourist numbers in the TAR (mostly domestic Chinese) rose from 1.9 million in 2006 to 6.82 million in 2010. Tourist numbers would have exceeded the total population of the TAR of about 2.8 million in 2007 (see Tibetinfonet 2011).
financed locally to a much greater extent than would have been possible in the TAR, such as through various provincial investment vehicles or corporations, including the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (Chi.: bingtuan).

As noted in the introduction, industry in Xinjiang is concentrated in northern Xinjiang or in various mining enclaves, whereas a focus on the two southern prefectures of Kashgar and Khotan reveal an economic structure quite similar to the TAR (particularly when Lhasa is taken out of the TAR economic data). Both prefectures remained predominantly agricultural in 2010, with the share of primary-sector output in Kashgar falling from 52 per cent of prefecture GDP in 2001 to 42 per cent in 2010, and from 53 per cent to 35 per cent in Khotan. Like in the TAR, the GDP share of construction was equal to or exceeded the industry share within the secondary sector: construction amounted to 8.9 per cent of GDP in Kashgar in 2010 versus 9.2 per cent for industry, and construction amounted to 11.2 of GDP in Khotan versus 5.7 per cent for industry. Correspondingly, the tertiary sector had a strong weight in both prefectures, at 40 per cent of GDP in Kashgar (up from 32 per cent in 2001) and 48 per cent in Khotan (up from 33 per cent in 2001). Like in the TAR, both prefectures exhibited a missing middle between the primary and tertiary sectors of the economy, although unlike the TAR, both had sustained much greater shares of agriculture. For instance, the most agricultural prefecture in the TAR was Shigatse, where the primary sector accounted for 24 per cent of GDP in 2010 (calculated from TSY 2011: table 2-10).

However, unlike the sustained primary shares in Xinjiang as a whole, the higher primary-sector GDP shares of Kashgar and Khotan were probably not due to intensive agroindustrial modernization, as analysed in the next section. Notably, the per capita GDP of these two prefectures was relatively very low – even much lower than the poorest province in China (Guizhou) – reaching 8,748 yuan in Kashgar in 2010 and 5,181 yuan in Khotan, or respectively 35 per cent and 21 per cent of the per capita GDP of Xinjiang as a whole (25,034 yuan in 2010). Prefecture-

12. This comparison is not entirely fair to Xinjiang because remote rural regions of all provinces are likely to be far less industrialized than their urbanized core regions, although this point emphasizes the situation of the TAR given that the very weak manufacturing and mining output includes Lhasa.

13. Calculated from XSY (2011: table 2-10) and equivalent in earlier XSYs.
level per capita GDP data are not available for the TAR in TSY (2011), although as analysed in the third section, the per capita rural household incomes in Kashgar and especially Khotan were significantly lower than those of the poorest prefecture in the TAR in 2010. Hence, even though economic growth in these two prefectures over the decade was more or less at the same pace as in Xinjiang overall, this growth was from a very poor base relative to the rest of Xinjiang, which in turn is probably representative of a continued reliance on fairly small-scale agriculture by a large share of the workforce.

**Labour transitions in the context of rapid subsidized growth**

According to the official aggregate employment data, the labour forces of the TAR and Xinjiang experienced quite distinct transitions, as shown in Figure 2.1. In the TAR, the labour force (mostly Tibetan) experienced one of the latest and, once started, fastest transitions out of agriculture from the late 1990s onwards relative to the rest of China. The share of people employed in the primary sector (mostly farming and herding) in the TAR dropped from 81 per cent in 1990 (then the most agrarian labour force in China) to 74 per cent in 2000, and then to 53 per cent in 2010, more or less converging with the norm of other poor (but more densely populated) provinces such as Gansu and even falling below the share in Yunnan (not shown in Figure 2.1). In other words, about one in five employed people in the TAR moved out of agriculture between 2000 and 2010 according to these data. These people would have been mostly if not entirely Tibetan given that the rural areas in the TAR are almost entirely Tibetan, as discussed in the introduction.

Moreover, the increase in the absolute numbers of people employed in the primary sector in the TAR in the 2000s – around half a per cent per year – was significantly less than the rural rate of natural population increase, which was well over one per cent over these years, the highest in China (see Fischer 2013: ch. 5). These absolute numbers are significant because they reflect that the rapid transition in the local labour structure out of agriculture was happening regardless of the effect that

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14. Fischer (2011; 2013: ch. 5) discusses how actual trends are both under- and overestimated by these data given various registration issues. However, overall these data are probably roughly accurate in the sense of reflecting real changes in socio-economic structure, as corroborated by the field insights of myself and other scholars. See also Goldstein et al. (2008, 2010) and Childs et al. (2011).
non-Tibetan (i.e. Han Chinese) out-of-province migrants might have had on the overall employment shares of the TAR given that very few of these migrants come to the TAR to work in agriculture in rural areas (besides temporary migrants working as vegetable farmers in cities such as Lhasa or Shigatse, although most of them are probably not reflected in these statistics in any case).

In contrast, the transition of labour out of agriculture in Xinjiang was much slower, similar to that of Gansu, falling only 10 percentage points over 20 years, from 61 per cent in 1990 to 58 per cent in 2000 and then 51 per cent in 2010. The relative slowness of the transition in Xinjiang was such that the share of people employed in agriculture in 1990 was more or less at the national average (like in Qinghai), whereas by 2010 it had converged with that of the TAR (and Gansu) and was well above the shares in China overall (37 per cent), Qinghai (42 per cent), and even Sichuan (43 per cent), which was much more agrarian than Xinjiang in 1990.

**Figure 2.1**: Primary-sector share of total employment, 1990–2010

*Sources*: CSY (2011: table 4-4) and equivalent tables in previous yearbooks.

*Note*: Data for 2006 were not available in CSY (2007) and were taken from provincial statistical yearbooks, although where an obvious discrepancy was apparent in the case of Gansu and Xinjiang, an average was taken between 2005 and 2007 instead. Some data from the early 1990s were also taken from provincial yearbooks, although the discrepancies in these data were so severe in the case of Gansu before 1993 that they were not used. Also note that the data for Sichuan up to 1996 include Chongqing.
ON THE FRINGES OF THE HARMONIOUS SOCIETY

These data for Xinjiang tell us little about the labour transitions differentiated by nationality, i.e. Uyghurs as distinct from Han Chinese, and whether a more rapid transition among one group was compensated by a slower transition among the other. Unfortunately, this sectoral decomposition of employment data at the subprovincial level in Xinjiang was only reported in XSY (1998) and XSY (1999), hence we only have data for Kashgar and Khotan from 1997 and 1998. At that time employment in both prefectures was as agrarian as in the TAR, at 75 per cent of total employment (implying that the share in northern Xinjiang would have been significantly less than the provincial average of 57 per cent in 1998). The share in the TAR fell suddenly and rapidly after this point, although we do not know whether the same occurred in Kashgar and Khotan, or whether the experience in these two Uyghur prefectures was distinct from the TAR, explaining part of the slowness of the transition in Xinjiang overall. The rural-urban employment data, as analysed below, would tentatively suggest the latter possibility, although more detailed prefecture-level data are required to be able to confirm this extrapolation.

To a large extent, the shift of the labour force out of agriculture in Tibetan areas implied urbanization, much more so than in other regions.

Figure 2.2: Share of the total employment classified as rural, 1993–2010

Sources: Calculated from CSY (2011: table 4-2) and equivalent tables in previous yearbooks. The same qualifications and adjustments as specified in Figure 2.1 apply to this figure.
of China, whereas the slower transition out of agriculture in Xinjiang was marked by an apparent ruralization of the local labour force, in contrast to most other western provinces, especially after the early 2000s. This is shown in the next two figures. The share of total employment that is classified as rural from 1990 to 2010 is shown in Figure 2.2.\footnote{The provincial data for each year in these figures are derived from the subsequent annual yearbook, e.g. 1993 data are reported in CSY (1994). Hence, 1993 is the starting point because, starting with CSY (1994), there was a change in the reporting categories for these particular data, as a result of which they are not comparable with the reporting categories of previous years.} This is based on the decomposition of employment data by urban or rural place of employment registration (which is not necessarily the same as place of residency registration), and is distinct from the sectoral decomposition in that much of rural employment is ‘off-farm’ or non-agrarian. Hence, there is a difference – often even in trend – between the shares of total rural employment and primary-sector employment. This difference, shown in Figure 2.3, could be taken as a very rough proxy for rural off-farm employment, although some of this difference might represent misclassifications of people who have migrated to urban areas but have maintained their registration status in the rural areas and

\textbf{Figure 2.3:} Percentage difference between rural and primary-sector employment shares, 1993–2010

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example_graph.png}
\caption{Percentage difference between rural and primary-sector employment shares, 1993–2010}
\end{figure}

\textit{Sources:} Calculated from CSY (2011: tables 4-2 and 4-4) and equivalent tables in previous yearbooks for provincial data. The same qualifications as specified in Figure 2.1 apply to this figure.
hence are counted as part of the rural employed (or vice versa). The rural employment data for Kashgar and Khotan are available from 2003 onwards, which makes this particular decomposition interesting.

According to these measures, it is clear that off-farm rural employment opportunities were scarcer in Tibetan areas than in other areas of western China, where much off-farm employment remained in rural areas. Hence, a stronger shift out of rural employment took place in the TAR than in other western provinces, implying that the transition out of agriculture involved faster urbanization of the local labour force than elsewhere in western China. This was not the case throughout the 1990s, when the TAR labour force, like other western provinces, was actually becoming slightly more rural up to 1999, in contrast to the declining rurality of the labour force in China overall. The rising share in these western cases is probably explained by demographic factors (faster population increase in rural areas than in urban areas) combined with more restricted rural-to-urban mobility, which was slower to take off in the west than in the east (on the latter point, see Iredale et al. 2003). In the case of the TAR, the high rural employment share would have obviously been sustained by the high primary-sector employment share, given that the rural cannot decline below the level of the primary (presuming that farmers are registered as rural), and a decline in the rural is usually stimulated by a decline in the primary. Indeed, in 1993 almost all rural employment in the TAR (at 81 per cent of the labour force) was in the primary sector (at 79 per cent of the labour force), whereas by 2000, 82 per cent of the labour force was rural, but primary-sector employment had declined to 74 per cent.

However, after the late 1990s, the pattern in the TAR diverged from the other western provinces shown here, which continued to experience a rising rural share for several years (up to the mid-2000s in Gansu and up to 2010 in Xinjiang). The rural share in the TAR started to fall from 82 per cent in 2000 to 70 per cent in 2010. This was more than half of the almost 21 per cent drop in the primary employment share over these same years. Notably, this corroborates the survey results of Goldstein et al. (2008: 522), in which about half of the respondents who were ‘going for income’ (i.e. labour migration) were doing so by migrating to urban areas, whereas about half migrated to other rural areas.16 As a

16. Despite the prevalence of entrepreneurial activities in the three villages surveyed by Childs et al. (2011), labour migration remained the most prevalent emerging livelihood strategy for
result, the TAR ended this period with a much less rural labour force than in Sichuan or Gansu, converging with Qinghai and in tandem with the national trend.

In contrast, the rural share of employment in the other western provinces (besides Xinjiang) fell later and by much less. If these data are accurate, three-quarters of the shift of labour out of the primary sector in Qinghai was absorbed by other types of rural employment. Similarly, Sichuan became a surprisingly rural province (at almost 80 per cent of total employment in 2010), despite the sharp reduction in primary share to 43 per cent, which was close to the national average and probably reflects strong rural off-farm employment generation over these years, as indicated in Figure 2.3. Thus, while the Sichuan labour force was apparently less urbanized than that of the TAR, it was also less agrarian. Nationally, trends between these two shares were broadly correspondent over this period, implying that by the end of the decade almost all of the labour that shifted out of agriculture shifted out of the rural areas altogether (in an aggregate sense). Among the western cases shown here, the TAR exceptionally shows the strongest shedding of primary-sector employment outside of the rural areas altogether, paralleling the national trend most closely albeit under very different economic conditions.

The heavily subsidized surge in rural development initiatives in the TAR under the OWC would have attenuated this trend in the TAR to a certain degree. As indicated in Figure 2.3, there was a substantial increase in the difference between the rural and primary employment shares in the TAR during the early years of the OWC, rising from 6 per cent of total TAR employment in 1998 to 14 per cent in 2003, and thereafter stabilizing at around 16 per cent. The OWC thereby appears to have generated a substantial increase in the share of non-agricultural employment in the rural areas, similar to other western provinces but at a consistently lower level, as would be expected of a more sparsely populated remote area. This would have been the result of efforts to raise rural incomes through the provision of rural employment opportunities in the TAR by means of intensive subsidization, particularly since 2003, as discussed by Childs et al. (2011) and Goldstein et al,
The convergence with the national trend is also interesting, insofar as other western provinces, particularly Sichuan, diverged from the national trend in terms of a widening gap between rural and primary shares. This presumably reflects a strong focus on rural off-farm employment in these other western provinces, perhaps as a way to stem out-migration. In contrast, the gap actually narrowed after 1996 at the national aggregate level, reflecting the declining importance of township and village enterprises and the increasing prominence of urbanization in national employment patterns. The fact that the TAR converged with this national trend, in terms of percentage difference between rural and primary shares, belies a fundamentally different economic setting in the TAR compared to China as a whole. Also, despite the increase in rural off-farm employment, it probably only absorbed about half of the labour moving out of agriculture, as noted above.

Inversely, if the urban employment share can be taken as a rough proxy of the rate of urbanization, it also suggests that the TAR population – and Tibetans in the TAR more specifically (given that the rural areas are almost entirely Tibetan) – had been experiencing some of the most rapid urbanization over this period compared to other western provinces. Obviously, the TAR also started from a low urbanization rate of almost 20 per cent according to the 2000 census (including temporary migrants), or 15 per cent for Tibetans only (see Fischer 2008). Nonetheless, the relative scarcity of off-farm rural employment in the TAR (and other Tibetan areas) implies that movements out of agriculture have required relatively greater movements to towns and cities, and that urban labour markets have been relatively more central to labour transitions in the Tibetan areas than in other parts of western China. Hence, the predominant trend in the TAR overall has likely been towards the rapid urbanization of the local TAR labour force, at a similar pace as the national trend since the early 2000s.

17. In an interview in November 2004, a senior scholar/official from the Tibetan Academy of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry (TAAAS) in the TAR indicated to me that a policy shift was taken in the TAR in 2003 to emphasize rural incomes, in accordance with national policy trends.

18. The measurement of urbanization is very problematic in China given that definitions of ‘urban’ are quite different in each of the five censuses (see Zhou and Ma 2003). Also, annual surveys on population change are only based on people registered as permanently residing, and thus provide no basis for evaluating changes due to migration. See Yeh and Henderson (2008) for an interesting discussion with respect to Lhasa.
In contrast to all of these cases, the rural share of total employment in Xinjiang continued to increase even after the early 2000s. In an apparent anomaly, the rural share had been in fact lower than the primary-sector share up until 2005, and only started to exceed the latter from about 2006 onwards. For instance, 53 per cent of employed people in Xinjiang in 2000 were rural, whereas 58 per cent were employed in agriculture. It is not clear why this is the case, although it might have something to do with the employment classification of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC, Chi.: bingtuan) involved in agricultural production over this period. The anomaly is not evident in the data for Kashgar and Khotan – or at least the rural share in 2003 was marginally higher than the primary share in 1998 in both cases – which again might be related to the fact that the XPCCs are concentrated in the northern part of the province. Similar to the TAR in the 1990s, it would appear that most of the rural employed in Kashgar and Khotan around this time were working in agriculture.

In both of these cases and in Xinjiang overall, the rural share increased slightly over the 2000s, from 53 per cent in 2000 to 55 per cent in 2010 in the case of Xinjiang, from 76 per cent in 2003 to 78 per cent in Kashgar, and from 81 to 82 per cent in Khotan over this same period. This trend in the latter two prefectures, in combination with the respective economic data showing limited secondary activities by the end of the decade and hence little potential for rural off-farm employment, supports the suggestion made earlier that the primary-sector employ-

19. As noted by Spoor and Shi (2009), the XPCCs were originally organized as large-scale state farms (also known as ‘regiment farms’ because of their military command structure). Hence, a bi-modal agrarian structure emerged in Xinjiang, with small-scale peasant farming (e.g. with 0.7 hectare of farmland on average) co-existing with the large XPCC farms. In this regard, if some of the XPCC employees working in agriculture are categorized as urban employees, this would explain the discrepancy. This is possible given that 583,455 people employed in urban units (i.e. a formalized category of urban employment) in Xinjiang in 2010 were working in agriculture (and most of these in state-owned units), or about 23 per cent of total urban unit employees, equivalent to almost 12 per cent of rural employment (XSY 2011: table 3-11) and 6.5 per cent of total provincial employment. This proportion of urban unit employees working in the primary sector was much higher than in any other province besides Heilongjiang in the north-east (20 per cent) and Inner Mongolia (11 per cent). The proportion was 4 per cent in the TAR and 3 per cent in Qinghai and Gansu (CSY 2011: table 4-6).

20. Again, the high proportion of urban unit employment in the primary sector in 2010 was concentrated in Ili Kazak Autonomous Prefecture, Tacheng (Tarbagatai) Administrative Offices, and several other northern prefectures.
ment share probably did not fall very much in these two prefectures during the 2000s. In turn, this would suggest a very different pattern of development in this southern part of Xinjiang compared to the TAR, as well as a very different agrarian regime based on more commercialized forms of cotton production, together with still existing implicit production quotas applied to the small-scale peasant farming that prevails in these Uyghur-dominated parts of southern Xinjiang.\footnote{On explicit and implicit production quotas in Xinjiang, see Spoor and Shi (2009).}

However, the question remains why such conditions have not led to greater movements of the local rural labour force out of agriculture or out of the rural areas altogether, particularly given that average incomes were lower than in rural Tibet. This question, which needs further research, nonetheless provides a contrast to the conditions in the TAR, where urbanization has been much more emphasized as a central component of rural development policy, and hence where employment exclusions in urban areas have been particularly contentious (Fischer 2013). We might speculate that the absence of a significant degree of labour transition in Xinjiang (and especially in these two prefectures) proportionate to the speed of economic growth, and the apparent absence of urbanization of the local labour force, indicate stronger exclusionary pressures are occurring earlier in these Uyghur regions, such that they prevent the extent of urbanization that has been taking place in Tibetan areas.\footnote{See Hann (ch. 7 in this volume) for a related discussion on these points.}

**Secondary-sector employment**

Unfortunately, secondary-sector and tertiary-sector employment data are only available for Kashgar and Khotan for 1997 and 1998, as with the primary-sector data. Nonetheless, the provincial data from Xinjiang reveals that, more or less like Gansu, the share of employment in the secondary sector was stagnant throughout the 2000s at around 14 per cent of the labour force, after falling from about 18 per cent in the 1990s (see Figure 2.4). The decline occurred despite the industrial resurgence observed in the GDP data. This was in contrast to the situation in Sichuan and Qinghai, where the resurgent secondary GDP share was matched by a resurgent employment share in that sector, or in the TAR, where there was an increase in the secondary-sector employment share from a very low level from 2003 onwards – to a certain extent converging with that of...
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Xinjiang – despite no increase in the industry share of GDP (i.e. most of the increase was due to construction and related activities). The limited data from Kashgar and Khotan reveal that the share of employment in the secondary sector was about the same as in the TAR in the late 1990s, at around 7 per cent, as we would expect from the GDP structure.

Transition out of agriculture in the TAR (and likely in Kashgar and Khotan, to the extent that there has been transition) and, for the large part, into urban areas has resulted in an equally rapid transition towards tertiary employment in the TAR, largely bypassing employment in the secondary sector (especially manufacturing). The increase in the TAR secondary employment share following the beginning of the OWC, particularly between 2002 and 2003 when the share rose from 6.2 per cent to 9.1 per cent of total employment in the TAR, corresponds to the beginning of major railway construction in the TAR and related OWC projects. The increase was sustained and rose further to more than 10 per cent in 2007 and 2008, even after the completion of the railway construction in 2006. This corresponds to the boom in rural construction activity generated by the Comfortable Housing Project (CHP) under the Eleventh Five-Year Plan, which started in 2006 (see Goldstein et al. 2010). Notably, most of the increase in share was due to sharp increases in the numbers of people registered as employed in construction: 63 per

Sources: Same as Figure 2.1.

**Figure 2.4:** Secondary-sector share of total employment, 1990–2010
cent of secondary employment in the TAR was in construction by 2010 (up from 49 per cent in 2000), versus 13 per cent in manufacturing, 19 per cent in mining and quarrying, and 5 per cent in the production and distribution of electricity, gas, and water.

In contrast, manufacturing led secondary employment in most other provinces, despite the apparent construction booms over this period. For instance, 46 per cent of secondary employment in Sichuan was in manufacturing in 2010, versus 43 per cent in construction and nine per cent in mining and quarrying. Even in Qinghai, with its high levels of subsidization and investment (second only to the TAR), manufacturing accounted for 39 per cent of secondary employment, versus 51 per cent in construction and 6.6 per cent in mining and quarrying. The structure of secondary employment in Qinghai was more similar to the TAR in this respect, except with a much higher and surging share of overall secondary employment in total employment, accounting for almost 23 per cent of total employment in the province in 2010. Notably, the decline in the secondary employment share in Gansu, Sichuan, and Qinghai from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, and the subsequent strong increases in Sichuan and Qinghai, reflect the restructuring of the antiquated industrial structure inherited from the Third Front era in these two provinces and, in particular, the shedding of labour from state-owned enterprises, which happened later than in coastal China.

This more detailed breakdown of the secondary employment data is not available for Xinjiang (at least, not in XSY 2011), although the ‘jobless’ growth in the secondary sector has been striking, as it has in Gansu. ‘Jobless’ refers to the lack of an increase in employment share to match the increasing GDP share (employment has nonetheless increased in this sector in proportion to the increase in the labour force as a whole). This is obviously a reflection of the capital intensity of industry and mining in Xinjiang, although in combination with the lack of labour transition out of agriculture, as analysed above, it suggests a particularly polarized economic structure, more so than in other western provinces. In other words, 48 per cent of economic value added was produced by 14 per cent of the labour force in the secondary sector in Xinjiang in 2010 (versus 43 per cent produced by 14 per cent in 2000), while 20 per cent of output was produced by 51 per cent of the labour force in the primary sector (versus 21 per cent produced by 58 per cent in 2000). Hence the
value added per employed person in the secondary sector was 3.4 times the overall average for all employed in the province in 2010, or 8.8 times the value added per employed person in the primary sector (up from 3.1 and 8.5 in 2000). This ratio of value added per employed person in the secondary sector to the overall average in Xinjiang was similar to other western provinces in 2000, but the increase in this ratio up to 2010 was in contrast to a decline in other provinces, e.g. from 4 to 2.9 in the TAR (albeit mostly from construction, not industry), from 3.2 to 2.4 in Qinghai, from 3.2 to 3.2 in Gansu, from 2.9 to 2.2 in Sichuan, and from 2.0 to 1.6 in China overall. Hence, the increase in the ratios in Xinjiang reflects polarization in the economy driven by the secondary sector, alongside intensification in agriculture, in contrast to other western provinces where the secondary sector became less polarizing and much more labour absorbing through the course of industrial expansion over the decade (besides Gansu), while the contribution of agriculture was much more marginalized. In Xinjiang, secondary-sector expansion was particularly employment inelastic (and hence less labour absorbing and more exclusionary).

To the extent that such sectoral polarization overlaps with the segregation of Uyghurs and Han Chinese in different economic sectors, with the latter dominating capital intensive and high value-added manufacturing and mining (and capital intensive agriculture for that matter), this would further suggest a form of ethnic economic stratification that is quite distinct from the TAR. Stratification in the TAR was structured more by access to high value-added construction (as opposed to lower value-added construction in rural areas) and in tertiary activities, both heavily subsidized, hence facilitating an institutional form of discrimination through the application of universal and meritocratic hiring standards within such sectors, particularly within public employment, as analysed below. We can speculate that the situation was even more polarized in Kashgar and Khotan, given the much more limited role of construction in these two prefectures (in comparison to the TAR), and hence an especially stark duality in the local economy between primary and tertiary-sector employment.

**Tertiary-sector employment**

Inverse to the secondary sector, the tertiary sector in Xinjiang played a much less polarizing role than it did in the TAR, given the gener-
ally higher tertiary-sector employment shares than in China overall and other western provinces, as shown in Figure 2.5, despite more or less equivalent or even lower GDP shares. In the TAR, the bulk of the declining primary share (about three quarters) was absorbed by the tertiary sector, which rose from a share of around 20 per cent of total employment in 2000 to almost 36 per cent in 2010. The tertiary share rose so rapidly in the TAR over this period that it surpassed the national share in 2008, the share in Xinjiang in 2010, and was on par with Qinghai by 2010. Despite quite divergent patterns in the 1990s, all western provinces and the national average had more or less converged at very similar (and rising) tertiary shares from 2006 onwards. In the TAR this is reflective of the rapid expansion of tertiary-sector output over this period, as discussed in the first section. We can suspect that the situation was similar in Kashgar and Khotan, insofar as whatever labour shifted out of the primary sector in these two prefectures would have mostly ended up in the tertiary sector (or migrated out of the prefecture) given the very limited secondary activity.

As a result, tertiary employment played a less polarizing role in Xinjiang. For instance, 36 per cent of value-added output was produced by 29 per cent of the labour force in 2000 (a ratio of 1.25), while 33 per cent of output was produced by 35 per cent of the labour force in 2010 (ratio of 0.93). This was similar to Qinghai, where the tertiary ratio of

**Figure 2.5:** Tertiary-sector share of total employment, 1990–2010

![Figure 2.5: Tertiary-sector share of total employment, 1990–2010](image)

*Sources: Same as Figure 2.1.*
Labour transitions and social inequalities

GDP/employment shares also fell below parity by 2010, from 1.64 in 2000 to 0.98 in 2010. These two and other western provinces besides the TAR thereby experienced depolarization between the relative value-added contributions of employed people in tertiary versus primary sectors. In contrast, the rapidly shrinking GDP share of the primary sector and the exceedingly rapid growth in construction and the tertiary sector contributed to sectoral polarization in the TAR economy.23

The implication is that value-added incentives in China create a bias towards investment or employment in industry (especially manufacturing), whereas in the TAR they create a bias towards investment or employment in construction or tertiary services (especially state-sector employment). Moreover, the bias has been increasing over the decade despite the enormous expansion in construction and tertiary activities, and even though such expansions would tend eventually to lead to diminishing returns under most normal circumstances, especially at the scale and speed of expansion observed in the TAR, where the tertiary sector came to account for more than half of GDP since 2002 and construction came to account for almost one-quarter of GDP by 2010. Obviously, such an outcome in the TAR (both expansion and that this occurs with an increasing imbalance) is entirely guided by state policy; it is meaningless to refer to this as a ‘market’ outcome, even though discourses of market incentives and discipline might have been used in certain cases to justify certain policies (such as in the case of urban developments in Lhasa as discussed in Yeh and Henderson 2008).

The setting in the TAR is compounded by the fact that nominal value added per employed person in the overblown construction and tertiary sectors was significantly higher than the norms prevailing in western and central China (although an underreporting of migrant labour in these sectors, particularly in construction, might exaggerate this difference). In other words, the amount of value added per employed person in construction in the TAR reached 104,728 yuan per employed person in 2010, versus 38,490 yuan in Qinghai and 24,168 in Sichuan. Similarly, value added per employed person in the tertiary sector in the TAR reached 79,577 yuan in 2010, versus 59,557 yuan in Xinjiang, 45,147 yuan in Qinghai, 35,433 yuan in Sichuan, and 65,732 yuan in China overall. These interregional imbalances set the incentives for attract-

23. For further discussion of these ratios, see Fischer (2013: ch. 5).
ing out-of-province migrants into these sectors given their high profit and/or remunerative potentials, particularly in construction, where the imbalance is exceptional.

However, these subsectors of the secondary and tertiary sectors (construction and urban service activities such as trade and catering) are particularly important as sources of employment for local (Tibetan and Uyghur) labour transitions out of the primary sector given that these subsectors are, in principle, the easiest and most accessible for rural migrants to enter in terms of the skills required and the formalized institutional barriers to overcome. In this respect, the sectors where Tibetans appear to have made significant in-roads, as studied by Goldstein et al. (2010) and Childs et al. (2011), have been in low value-added construction, artisanal manufacturing, and local transport and trade, all of which are much closer to the norms of the primary sector or the economy average – in terms of their GDP contribution per employed person – than the bulk of construction concentrated in high-value (and highly subsidized) ventures or the higher value-added half of tertiary-sector employment. The equalizing role of the tertiary sector in China on average and the other provinces, and particularly the equalizing role of construction in Qinghai and of the tertiary sector in Xinjiang, is notable in this respect, whereas the polarizing role of these two sectors in the TAR – and the polarization within these sectors as well – is suggestive of increasing rather than decreasing difficulties for local Tibetan labour to access the employment opportunities generated by economic growth within these sectors. In contrast, such structural sectoral obstacles appear less intense in Xinjiang, although more data are required to enable analysis of these dynamics at the sub-regional level within Xinjiang.

Some comparative reflections on other dimensions of inequality

Whether or not sectoral polarization results in increasing inequality across households is more difficult to judge without more detailed data, given that a household might include a farmer, a construction worker, and a trader or even public employee among its members. Similarly, whether sectoral equalization in Xinjiang or polarization in the TAR resulted in lesser or greater inequality between nationalities is also very difficult to gauge without more data on forms of ethnic segregation across various economic sectors, as noted above. Moreover, tabulated
panel data on rural household income distribution in the TAR were last made available in TSY (2000), for data up to 1999, making it impossible to evaluate both income poverty rates and income inequality in the rural areas of the TAR in the 2000s on the basis of publicly available statistics. Such data are available for Xinjiang, although because they are aggregated for the whole province it is impossible to tease out regional or ethnic variations. Nonetheless, some brief explorations across several other dimensions of socio-economic inequality can help to infer a few more contrasts between the TAR and Xinjiang.

The first is urban–rural household income inequality (Figure 2.6). The contrast between the two provinces is notable, in that urban–rural inequality in the TAR was among the highest in China, especially in the early 2000s, whereas in Xinjiang it was among the lowest in western China and lower than the national average (with the exception of the late 1990s). In Xinjiang, this was partly due to a stronger growth of rural than urban household incomes: rural incomes increased from 1,618

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24. According to these data, 13 per cent of the rural residents sampled in the 2010 household survey had an annual net income of less than 1500 yuan, which was roughly the absolute poverty line used in China at that time (XSY 2011: table 9-20). It is quite likely that the bulk of these residents were based in Kashgar and Khotan given the low levels of average rural incomes in those two prefectures.
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yuan per person in 2000 to 4,643 yuan in 2010, or by two times in real (constant value) terms, versus an increase in urban incomes from 5,645 yuan in 2000 to 13,644 yuan in 2010, or an increase of 1.9 times in real terms. Moreover, the lower level of urban–rural inequality was also due to the fact that average salaries and wages among those employed in urban units in Xinjiang were among the lower range in China, similar to those of Gansu or Sichuan, whereas such wages in the TAR were among the highest in China, neck and neck with those of Beijing and Shanghai from 2000 to 2007, resulting in average urban incomes (of permanent resident households) that were much higher than other western provinces and even the national average up to 2003.

The reduction in urban–rural inequality in the TAR from the excessive height reached in 2001 – at least down to the upper range of rising urban–rural inequality in western China – occurred in large part because of the increasing integration of rural households into secondary and tertiary-sector employment, as described above, alongside a relative lagging of average urban incomes. The latter was due to an increasingly exclusionary urban employment context for permanent residents (largely Tibetan) with respect to integration into the privileged urban unit (mostly state-sector) employment.26 Indeed, the high value-added GDP contribution of government administration – perhaps the largest tertiary GDP category in the TAR, as discussed in the first section – was directly due to the instituted wages of state-sector staff and workers, and such public employment in the TAR appears to have become increasingly dominated by non-Tibetan non-locals (see below). Thus, increasing polarization within the urban areas of the TAR in the confluence of local and out-of-province migration flows probably contributed to the reduction in urban–rural inequality since 2001 by depressing the incomes of erstwhile privileged (Tibetan) urban permanent resident households.

These aggregate data for Xinjiang do not show the considerable regional inequalities that exist within rural areas, such as between XPCC farms in the north and small peasants in the south. In Tibetan areas, on the other hand, agrarian conditions are more homogeneous. This is re-

25. ‘Employees in urban units’, a slightly wider category than ‘staff and workers’, refers to a large and relatively privileged component of urban employment that drives the value of urban incomes because a large proportion of the incomes of permanent resident households are generally derived from this source.

26. See Fischer (2013: ch. 5) for further discussion of these points.
Labour transitions and social inequalities reflected by the regional disparity of average net rural household incomes within Xinjiang in 2010, ranging from 2,754 yuan per person in Khotan and 3,270 yuan in Kashgar (0.59 and 0.70 times the provincial average of 4,643 yuan respectively), to 8,555 yuan in Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture, or 1.84 times the provincial average and 3.1 times that of Khotan. In comparison, the range in the TAR was much less, ranging from 3,451 yuan in Ngari Prefecture (0.83 times the provincial average) to 5,411 yuan in Nyingtri (Chi.: Linzhi), or 1.31 times the average and 1.57 times that of Ngari. For further comparison, Sichuan had a disparity similar to Xinjiang, from 2,744 yuan in Kardze (Chi.: Ganzi) and 3,741 in Ngawa (Chi.: Aba), to 8,205 yuan in Chengdu, and a provincial average of 5140 yuan, although the population weight of Kardze and Ngaba was very small in the province and the average of Chengdu was exceptional, due to the proximity of those rural areas to the capital city. Otherwise, most prefectures in Sichuan were closely clustered around the provincial average. The disparity in Xinjiang is exceptional given that the population of Kashgar and Khotan together amounted to 27 per cent of the provincial population and the three northern prefectures with relatively high incomes (Changji, Tacheng and Bayangol) also have a large population weight (17 per cent of provincial total between the three) and are not simply peri-urban areas. All three have high Han population shares, at 75 per cent of the total population of Changji, 59 per cent in Tacheng, and 58 per cent in Bayangol according to the 2000 census. From this perspective, lower urban–rural inequality in Xinjiang masks much higher regional inequality in rural incomes, corresponding closely with concentrations of Han and Uyghurs across the province.

Intra-urban inequalities appear to reflect similar comparative patterns insofar as there was a much greater increase in urban wage inequality in the TAR than in Xinjiang, as measured by the ratio of average wages for staff and workers over average per capita urban household incomes. This ratio in the TAR reached by far the highest levels in China by 2007, whereas the more gradual increase and level in Xinjiang was in line with other provinces such as Gansu and Sichuan. In the TAR, this suggests a sharp upward adjustment of urban inequality over the 2000s, precisely at the same time as urban–rural inequality was being tempered and

28. See Fischer (2013: ch. 5) for further explanation.
rapid labour transitions out of agriculture and towards urban areas were taking place.

There are two principle reasons that explain the sharp rise in this measure of urban wage inequality in the TAR. One is that the wages of staff and workers (or people employed in urban units) rose relative to the average of all urban wages; in fact, they had become the highest in China in 2002 and 2004, and remained very close to those of Beijing and Shanghai up to 2007. Second, these sharp wage increases took place parallel to a sharp reduction in the share of staff and workers (or urban unit employees) in total registered urban employment, from 72 per cent in 2000 to 42 per cent in 2010, thereby reducing the weight of staff and worker (or urban unit) wages in the calculation of average urban incomes of households registered as permanently residing. While this reduction occurred throughout China, it was larger in the TAR and resulted in the lowest share across all provinces in China by 2010, despite the fact that the state sector had been the main locus of economic growth over the decade and that very few formal employment opportunities were available outside the state sector besides in the more informalized forms of private or self-employment (or else in fully informal unregistered employment). The high wages earned by this 42 per cent of registered urban unit employees in the TAR thereby resulted in a high degree of wage and income concentration. For instance, the equivalent wage levels in Beijing were earned by almost 67 per cent of formally registered urban employees in 2010. In other western provinces (including Xinjiang), lower wages (more in line with urban income norms) were also earned by a larger share of urban employment than in the TAR. In the TAR, some of the highest wages in China were captured by the smallest share of employees earning such wages in China, which explains the heightened wage inequality of the TAR, even in 2010 when wages started to lag behind those of Beijing or Shanghai.29

The general policy of reducing employment in the state sector was undoubtedly a national directive, given that urban employment in state-owned units in China overall dropped from 81 million in 2000 to just under 69 million in 2003 (and to 65 million by 2010). However, in the TAR the reduction was disproportionately borne by Tibetans, especially considering that Tibetans officially accounted for more than 90 per cent of the provincial population and about three-quarters of the permanent

29. See Fischer (2013: ch. 5) for further detail.
urban resident population. Calculating from TSY (2004: table 4-5), the share of Tibetans in total staff and worker employment in state-owned units fell from 71.3 to 64.6 per cent, while that of non-Tibetans rose from 28.7 to 35.4 per cent. At the cadre level, which accounted for two-thirds of permanent state-sector employment in 2003, the change was even sharper: overall cadre employment increased from 69,927 cadres in 2000 to 88,734 in 2003, while the number of Tibetan cadres fell from 50,039 to 44,069, or from 72 per cent of total cadre employment to just below 50 per cent, whereas the numbers of non-Tibetan (mostly Han) cadres actually increased. Hence, the shift in 2003 revealed a sudden move away from Tibetan representation in urban state-sector employment, that is, from the most privileged and formalized forms of employment in the TAR, and non-Tibetan cadres outnumbered Tibetan cadres for the first time since 1980. Government assertions that Tibetans were the dominant beneficiaries of increasing state-sector wages, thereby contributing to an emerging ‘middle class’ of Tibetans, became much more tenuous by 2003, after which the government stopped publishing this particular disaggregation of employment data for the TAR.

Rather, Tibetan employment was shrinking during these early years of the OWC in precisely the parts of the economy that were growing fastest. Up to that point, Tibetans working as staff and workers would have mostly been permanent urban residents, implying that the burden of such employment reduction was more specifically borne by these relatively privileged urban residents. As a consequence, the sharp wage increases were increasingly and disproportionately captured by non-Tibetans and by a shrinking share of permanently registered urban households, which helps to explain the growing divergence between average wages of staff and workers and urban per capita household incomes up to 2003. Unfortunately, we have no idea of these trends since 2003 because this particular ethnic disaggregation of the staff and worker data was discontinued after TSY (2004) and replaced by sex disaggregation. However, given the fact that the sharp urban wage polarization continued up to the end of 2007, similar exclusionary dynamics were probably at work later in the decade, which would definitely provide much insight into the outburst of protests that took place in Lhasa and elsewhere in March 2008.

Earlier statistical yearbooks for Xinjiang also reported the numbers of minority nationalities in staff and worker employment in Xinjiang
up to XSY (2003), albeit not differentiated by nationality. As with the TAR, the National Bureau of Statistics stopped reporting this particular disaggregation of data from XSY (2004) onwards. According to these data, Xinjiang did not appear to experience a collapse of minority representation in such employment up until 2002, although the data for 2003 might have been revealing, as the big shift in the TAR data came specifically in 2003. However, minorities were definitely underrepresented within such privileged and coveted staff and worker employment in Xinjiang. They also experienced a substantial reduction in such employment from the late 1990s to 2002, although this reduction was nonetheless proportionate with the overall reduction in such employment in Xinjiang as a whole, similar to the trends throughout China. For instance, total (fully employed) staff and worker employment in Xinjiang dropped from 2.709 million in 1999 to 2.423 million in 2002, of which minority staff and workers fell from 806,000 to 716,000, resulting in a consistent minority share of total staff and worker employment of 29.7 per cent in 1999 and 29.6 per cent in 2002. Nonetheless, this share hugely underrepresented the minority population, which amounted to 59.4 per cent of the total population according to the 2000 census.

Moreover, minority staff and worker employment was heavily concentrated in state-owned units (at 85 per cent of the minority total in 2002, versus 80 per cent for overall staff and worker employment in Xinjiang). Minorities were also disproportionately located in the categories ‘education, culture, arts, radio, film, television’ and ‘government and Party administration and social organizations’. In other words, like in Tibetan areas, education and cultural institutes and government administration accounted for a disproportionate share of minority staff and worker employment up to the early 2000s, and served as the traditional bulwark for minority representation in the more privileged sectors of the economy. Laid-off minorities – especially Uyghurs – from these and other sectors would have had more difficulty competing in the Han-dominated non-state corporate sector and/or would have had less propensity to migrate out of the province in search of work elsewhere. As a result, it is likely that the overall reductions in such forms of employment fuelled perceptions of unfairness and hence grievances among minorities, as they did in the TAR and other Tibetan areas.³⁰ In particular, similar institutional mechanisms

³⁰. See Szadziewski (ch. 3 in this volume) for further discussion of this point.
would have been used to implement such rationalization of state-sector employment, such as through the increased use of Chinese-medium exams, as described for Tibet by Fischer (2009a; 2013) and also by Zenz (2013).

Measures of urban wages or income are based on formalized employees in urban units and permanent resident households, and therefore have the serious deficiency that they do not include the lower, more informalized end of migrant or otherwise temporary resident workers. Similar to the case of urban–rural inequality, the lower level of urban wage inequality in Xinjiang might actually mask substantial wage inequalities between such migrants and the more formalized sectors of the workforce, particularly with respect to Uyghur migrants from southern Xinjiang in the northern parts of Xinjiang. Notably, Xinjiang stood out in the late 1990s as having an exceptionally high poverty rate among temporary migrants in Ürümchi. This insight is based on the work of Hussain (2003), who managed to construct the first available province-level urban poverty lines for each of the 31 Chinese provinces (albeit only for urban areas, not rural areas), based on local cost-of-living data that previously had not been made available by the government. Hussain applied these poverty lines to the results of a one-time urban survey in 1998 that incorporated all urban residents, permanent and migrant, in the main urban centre of each province in China (the TAR was not included in this survey). On average, urban migrant poverty rates in China were about 50 per cent higher than permanent resident poverty rates (15 per cent versus 10 per cent), as would be expected. In Lanzhou (Gansu), migrant poverty rates were also about 50 per cent higher, although poverty rates were actually lower than the national average, at 8.6 per cent for residents versus 12.5 per cent for migrants, reflecting a much more affordable cost of living. However, migrant poverty rates in Xining (Qinghai) were actually more than a third lower than the resident rates, similar to Chengdu in Sichuan and Xi’an in Shaanxi.

In this survey, Ürümchi stood out as a striking anomaly. Migrant poverty rates in Ürümchi were almost four times the permanent resident rates: 54 per cent of migrants sampled were poor (in absolute income terms) versus 14 per cent of the local residents sampled. This was also

31. These poverty lines were based on a notion of ‘absolute poverty’, meaning an estimate of the income required to be able to procure 2100 calories of food a day and to meet other essential non-food needs.
by far the highest poverty rate observed in the entire survey (Hussain 2003: 21). Discussions about these findings with several recent Uyghur exiles in 2003 indicate that the main slums in Ürümchi were primarily Uyghur migrant areas at the time, in large part populated by Uyghurs from the south of Xinjiang. I was never able to confirm this explanation, although the high poverty rates among migrants in Ürümchi do call into serious question the urban inequality measures that exclude them. If these migrants were included into such measures, it is quite probable that these measures would resemble much more the polarization of the TAR in the late 1990s, where over 70 per cent of the registered urban employed (including Han migrants) were employed as privileged state-sector staff and workers and benefited from some of the highest salaries in the country, while urban permanent residents nonetheless experienced some of the highest income poverty rates among urban permanent residents in China, which Hussain (2003: 16) estimated at 11 per cent, the third highest in China.32

While we are unable to ascertain the trends since the early 2000s in either province, it is probable that exclusionary pressures intensified in both the TAR and Xinjiang, given the intensified in-migration from other parts of China over the 2000s. The implementation of employment and education reforms throughout China also accentuated the premium placed on Chinese fluency in formal urban employment. Given that Chinese is a second language for both Tibetans and Uyghurs, this places particular pressure on the nexus between schooling and employment as an arena for exclusion (see Fischer 2009a, 2013 for detailed analyses).

With regard to schooling, the situation in the TAR is again quite different from that in Xinjiang. The TAR possessed the highest illiteracy rates in China, albeit falling from 47 per cent in the 2000 census to 32 per cent in the 2010 census (which include non-Tibetan migrants – the rate measured by the 2009 survey, which only surveyed permanent residents, was almost 40 per cent). In Xinjiang, the rate was actually lower than the national average, at 7.7 per cent in the 2000 census (versus 9.1 per cent nationally), and then falling to 3.1 per cent in the 2010 census (versus 4.9 per cent nationally).33 If we focus solely on the Uyghur

32. See Fischer (2005: 121–123) for further detail.
33. Calculated from CSY (2011: tables 3-9 and 3-11). Data from 2000 onwards are from CSY (2002: table 4-13).
population, illiteracy rates were slightly higher, although still low in comparison to Tibetan areas. For instance, using the data on levels of schooling attainment for the population aged 6 and older and treating ‘no schooling’ and illiteracy as synonymous, the no-schooling/illiteracy rate for all Tibetans in China was 45.5 per cent according to the 2000 census, whereas it was 8.8 per cent for all Uyghurs, 15.6 for all Hui, 7.3 per cent for all Han Chinese, and 7.7 per cent for the entire population. In this respect, the Uyghur nationality was more similar to the illiteracy/no-schooling rate of Mongolians, at 7.2 per cent. This average for all Uyghurs did not appear to mask significant regional variations given that illiteracy rates in Kashgar and Khotan were not much higher than this average, at 9.5 per cent and 12.2 per cent respectively, according to the 2000 census.

In essence, these rates describe very different socio-economic realities in terms of how Uyghurs and Tibetans faced the Han-dominated labour markets of their urban areas. Illiteracy essentially excluded almost half of Tibetans from competing in anything but the least skilled categories of employment in these urban areas, whereas far fewer Uyghurs would have faced such exclusions on the basis of lacking the most basic schooling criteria. Nonetheless, the fact that literacy in the census and surveys refers to literacy in any official language in China, the rates in Xinjiang (and in the TAR) underestimate the extent to which Uyghurs (and Tibetans) are illiterate in Chinese (as opposed to in Uyghur or Tibetan), given that primary schooling (and hence the formation of basic literacy) has until now taken place largely in the Uyghur (or Tibetan) language (see Hann, ch. 7 in this volume).

Accordingly, the relatively strong performance in basic literacy among Uyghurs was more tempered at higher levels of schooling, although they still significantly outperformed Tibetans, who were by far the least schooled of all of the major minority groups in China in the 2000 census. Secondary schooling is particularly important for such non-Chinese mother tongue minorities given that proficiency in spoken and written Chinese is typically only acquired at the secondary level, especially the senior secondary level. Tertiary levels of schooling are crucial criteria to be able to qualify for and hence compete in urban unit, especially state-

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34. The previous measurements were based on the population aged 15 and older.
sector, employment. In this respect, despite their strong enrollments at the primary level, the proportion of Uyghurs in China aged 6 and older with a secondary level of schooling (junior or senior) or above was only 35.3 per cent according to the 2000 census, versus 44.9 per cent for the Hui,\textsuperscript{36} 53.4 per cent for the Han, 54.8 per cent for Mongolians, 52.3 per cent for the total population of China, and a dismal 13.3 per cent for all Tibetans in China. The rates were similarly proportioned at the tertiary level in the 2000 census, with 2.7 per cent of the total Uyghur population in China with some form of tertiary schooling, versus 4.1 per cent for the Hui, 3.9 per cent for the Han, 5.2 per cent for the Mongolians, 3.8 per cent for all Chinese, and 1.4 per cent for all Tibetans. The rates for Xinjiang were significantly higher than for all Uyghurs in China – 5.6 per cent of the population in Xinjiang had some tertiary schooling according to the 2000 census – which implies that the levels of schooling attainment among the Han in Xinjiang were quite high in order to compensate for the lower levels of attainment among Uyghurs. This would imply that, like in the TAR, the demand for skilled labour in urban unit employment in Xinjiang was substantially met by the Han population, especially in the state sector.

Nonetheless, from this perspective Xinjiang had a significantly larger cohort (relative to local labour demand) that was qualified and able to compete in various employment opportunities in the upper strata of urban labour markets as the province entered a phase of rapid economic growth in the 2000s. Insofar as exclusionary pressures were faced by Uyghurs and other indigenous minorities in Xinjiang within such forms of employment (or in urban employment more generally), it is probable that these pressures were the result of more explicit and overt forms of discrimination, whereas such exclusion in the TAR could operate more implicitly through increased application of standardized institutional norms in public employment, such as Chinese-language exam-based competitions for public employment in which Tibetans generally face severe disadvantages. While Uyghurs also suffer from a similar linguistic

\textsuperscript{36} The incongruence between higher secondary schooling attainment but lower literacy among the Hui when compared to Uyghurs is probably explained by a compositional effect of aggregating diverse Hui populations across China, given that Hui schooling levels would be quite high in eastern China but quite low in western China. In comparison, the literacy and schooling rates among the Salar Muslims in Qinghai were as low as the rates among Tibetans, whereas the Dongxiang, another non-Hui Muslim group in Gansu, had by far the lowest literacy rates in 2000.
disadvantage, their educational disadvantages are otherwise much less acute than in Tibetan areas, at least in the terms indicated by these aggregate measures, and the opportunities for non-state urban unit employment are also much greater than in Tibetan areas.

However, with the intensification of development strategies targeting the western regions and related political developments since the mid-1990s, it is likely that both regions witnessed an intensification of strong linguistic, cultural, and political modes of bias deriving from the dominant Han Chinese group in control of most of the power and financial flows from outside the province. These biases include Chinese fluency, Chinese work cultures, and connections to government or business networks in China proper. While the upper end of schooled Tibetans and Uyghurs can choose to attempt to assimilate into such networks, the degree to which direct discrimination might block them in such efforts is an important consideration for understanding the intensification of political protests in both regions.

Conclusion

In this chapter, a comparative analysis of Xinjiang and the TAR was sketched out, focusing on labour transitions in a context of rapid economic growth and various related dimensions of wage, income, and educational inequalities. Significant structural differences between the two provinces were analysed. However, beyond these differences, one strong similarity between the two provinces was that ‘minorities’ were hugely underrepresented in the respective provincial state-sector employment (or urban unit employment more generally) relative to their population share, at least up until 2002 or 2003, when these data were still being reported. According to the most recent data available, the Tibetan share of state-sector employment had fallen to 65 per cent by 2003, and their share of cadre employment to less than 50 per cent, despite a population share of almost 93 per cent in the 2000 census (apparently including migrants). In Xinjiang, minorities (mostly Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and Hui) accounted for almost 30 per cent of urban unit employment in 2002 (mostly state-sector), for a population share of almost 60 per cent. This underrepresentation in Xinjiang persisted despite much higher levels of (modern, formal, mainstream) education among

37. See Fischer (2013) for a full elaboration of this argument.
these minorities in Xinjiang than in the TAR, belying the argument that such education is the pathway to improve representation of Tibetans in the TAR. Rather, in both provinces, skilled labour needs appear to rely heavily and increasingly on Han Chinese, whether this is through implicit discrimination by way of institutional norms that are biased against non-native Chinese speakers, or else through more direct, overt, and explicit forms of identity discrimination.

Since this time (2002/2003), the government has intensified labour market reforms in western China, implying an increased emphasis on nationally standardized criteria of employment within urban unit employment, which places ever greater emphasis on Chinese fluency and literacy as a precondition for competition within such employment. This has been combined with a retreat from preferentiality in public employment among other policy dynamics, as further discussed in this volume, in particular by Szadziewski and Hann. The combination of these circumstances suggests that exclusionary pressures have probably intensified for both Tibetans and Uyghurs in the upper strata of urban employment of their areas, with important implications in terms of restricted upward mobility at a time of rapid economic growth and improving schooling levels. The fact that such exclusionary tendencies operate through educational, linguistic, and cultural modes of bias that severely disadvantage the majority of Tibetans and Uyghurs within their urban labour markets – irrespective of their very different structural socio-economic conditions – provides important insights into the outburst of protests in both Tibetan and Uyghur areas in 2008 and 2009. Indeed, the similarity of the protests despite differences in socio-economic conditions suggests that the synchronicity of the grievances and protests has been driven by a common and particularly assimilationist and discriminatory macro-political and economic context.

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CHAPTER THREE

The Open Up the West campaign among Uyghurs in Xinjiang: Exploring a rights-based approach

Henryk Szadziewski

Introduction

The Open Up the West campaign and the Harmonious Society are consistent Chinese Communist Party approaches to tackling economic inequities in China that have widened since the initiation of the reform era. Although the Open Up the West campaign was adopted as state policy prior to the conceptualization of the Harmonious Society, it represented an analogous recognition for the need to balance economic growth regionally across China. While the Open Up the West campaign and the Harmonious Society highlighted state-recognized economic fissures between China’s eastern and western regions, they also unintentionally reopened the question of whether inequity in China has an ethnic dimension, as the poorer western region is home to many of China’s ethnic minorities. Indeed, the Open Up the West campaign’s downplaying of the ethnic aspect of slower rates of economic development is new in the context of Chinese Communist Party interventions in minority regions. Prior to the campaign, the Chinese government had mobilized state resources to identify the nationalities within its borders and assess their ‘civilization levels’ in order to implement targeted development campaigns (Harrell 1995: 23–24). The right to economic equality and non-discrimination of ethnic minority peoples are protected in the legal instruments of the People’s Republic of China. The 1982 Chinese Constitution and the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law both contain clear language that upholds these principles. In addition, the state’s obligation
to realize balanced economic growth among ethnicities is manifest in article 62 of the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law (CECC 2008; Chinese Government 2005a).

The ‘harmonious society’ concept emphasizes balanced economic growth as a means to encourage social stability. The concept is synonymous with the Chinese Communist Party’s transition from an entity managing social transformation to one of establishing consolidation that also acknowledges the uneven and breakneck growth of the early economic reform era. The harmonious society concept was further intended to fill an ideological gap, which was created as the dominance of socialist orthodoxy gave way to the pragmatism of market-based reforms. For this reason, a ‘harmonious society’ of balanced development and social stability is central to the Chinese Communist Party’s efforts to maintain political control and continued legitimacy.

The pursuit of stability in China under the leadership of Harmonious Society architect, former Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Hu Jintao, paradoxically resulted in the suppression of dissent, particularly in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and Tibetan ethno-cultural areas (Li and Cary 2011). Indeed, it is arguable that it has been the policies of the Open Up the West campaign in the regional economies of Xinjiang and ethno-cultural Tibet that have exacerbated destabilizing tensions in these areas – a contention explored by Andrew Fischer in chapter 2 of this volume. Discriminatory hiring practices, higher levels of poverty among ethnic minorities, and influxes of Han Chinese into Xinjiang and Tibet as state investment pours in have all been highlighted as probable causes for instability and ensuing government crackdowns.

Outbreaks of unrest in Xinjiang in 2009 and in Tibet in 2008 dramatically illustrate the boiling over of ethnic minority frustrations during the Open Up the West campaign period, as well as the state’s response to quelling dissent. In each case, while employing armed security forces to maintain immediate order, in the long term the state has tightened political and civil restrictions on ethnic minorities and persevered in its centrist approaches to development. The continued top-down approach of the state in ethnically complex regions containing diverse histories, cultures, and indigenous economies is unlikely to produce the stated goals of equality and stability proposed by the Open Up the West
campaign and the Harmonious Society, and appears out of step with contemporary thinking on development practices.

Top-down and grassroots approaches to development have long been at the centre of debates concerning the fulfilment of citizens’ economic welfare. In popular discourse, individuals living in centrally controlled economies are viewed as having little to no political and social space in which to promote interests that reflect their needs or the needs of their local community. Even though policymaking and implementation vary across China, their characteristics in Xinjiang largely remain Party-driven and centralized. The hierarchical nature of Party and central interventions in Xinjiang generates the notion that individuals are merely recipients of state largesse who are without an active role in guiding state policy regarding their locales.

Approaches to economic development among some multilateral, bilateral, and non-governmental donors have recently taken an evolutionary path that has seen a gradual move away from ‘handouts’ and towards ‘empowerment’. Poverty can be viewed as not only the deprivation of material wealth, but also the deprivation of social justice and equality. Considering people as passive recipients of donor handouts merely reinforces underlying political and social deprivation. In the 1990s, an attempt to redefine economic development around legal instruments emerged among development theorists and practitioners. Proponents of a rights-based approach (RBA) took a step back from established practice to suggest an alternative role for people not as recipients, but as rights holders.

Economic inequity as viewed through international law and domestic legal instruments is a human rights violation according to RBAs. As rights holders, marginalized people are at liberty to advocate for state accountability to legally binding obligations regarding economic and social conditions. According to international human rights lawyer Julia Häusermann, ‘By contrasting their current situation with what they are entitled to pursuant to human rights law, [marginalized people] are encouraged to work for change and seek their rights’ (1998: 61). Structural change is a key component of RBAs in cases of persisting inequity. The realignment of policymaking processes to be more inclusive of marginalized people is fundamental to achieving balanced solutions. The state has a critical role in creating this type of environment by ‘ensuring civil
and political rights, freedom of speech, association and participation, to empower poor people to claim their social, economic and cultural rights ... and [by] ensuring their participation in decision-making’ (UNDP 2000: 8).

The following theoretical assessment, with reference to case studies, analyses the Uyghur experience of the Open Up the West campaign since its inception. Although the policy was formulated as a response to economic inequities between the eastern and western regions of China, it also raised questions of interethnic inequity in living standards and opportunity within Xinjiang. This is largely due to the geographic location of the campaign in areas with significant numbers of politically marginalized ethnic minorities, who tend to view economic equity on an intraregional and interethnic, rather than an interregional, basis. For that reason, this study approaches the assessment of the Open Up the West campaign from an ethnic perspective. This chapter also explores the viability of RBAs in Xinjiang as a way to alleviate the problems that have been brought to the fore by state policies under the Open Up the West campaign among Uyghurs. A general discussion of the operability of RBAs in politically restrictive environments is included in order to understand how RBAs could be leveraged to move the Open Up the West campaign in Xinjiang towards its stated aim of creating greater material equity.

The Open Up the West campaign in Xinjiang

The People’s Republic of China adopted the Open Up the West campaign as state policy in February 2000. The Chinese government characterized the policy as an economic campaign that would bring China’s western region1 to economic parity with its thriving eastern region (ADB 2002: xxiii). Indicators illustrate why the government moved to address the growing economic inequality. Although the western region comprises more than 71 per cent of China’s total landmass and more than 28 per cent of China’s total population, it accounted for only 17 per

1. China’s western region comprises five autonomous regions (the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, the Tibet Autonomous Region, and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region); six provinces (Gansu, Guizhou, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Sichuan, and Yunnan); and the Municipality of Chongqing.
cent of the national gross domestic product (GDP) by the end of the last century (Lu and Neilson 2004: 1).

In dealing with this imbalance in growth, the Open Up the West campaign did not appear to be a state economic intervention as generally understood among development practitioners. The campaign did not outline any measurable aims beyond the broad goal of interregional equity, establish a specific monitoring body, or define a participatory process in decision making on priorities and implementation. This opaqueness of process and the absence of yardsticks created a certain amount of elasticity for the Chinese state to repeatedly redefine the characterization of the campaign’s success.

In a review of the campaign’s initiatives, Holbig (2004: 41) identified the quest for equality, infrastructure investment, and tackling the nationalities issue as among the government’s broader aims. The quest for equality is the one clear measurable goal of the campaign, while the development of infrastructure and imposition of ‘stability’ among nationalities indicated how the Chinese government would achieve that parity. Xinjiang contains an estimated 20.9 billion tons of oil and 10.8 trillion cubic metres of gas, which accounts for approximately 25 per cent of China’s reserves (China Internet Information Center 2004). Infrastructure investment was a primary stimulus for the growth of natural resource industries in Xinjiang and for natural resource shipment to the booming market for energy in China’s eastern provinces (Benson 2004: 215).

Since 2000, Chinese government officials and agencies have provided a variety of statistics charting the progress of the Open Up the West campaign across the entire target region, including in Xinjiang, that highlight the infrastructure investment in natural resource extraction industries, as well as the positive effect on the regional economy. The National Development and Reform Commission stated that the western regions as a whole had averaged an economic growth rate of almost 12 per cent since 2000, which represented an increase of more than 4 per cent when compared to the figure for 1999 (Tan 2009; Xin 2010). Commission figures also reported that public- and private-sector investment had reached approximately US$3 trillion between 2000 and 2010, five and a half times the amount invested in the western regions in the 50 years prior to the implementation of the Open Up the West campaign (Xin 2010).
In Xinjiang, the Chinese government subsidized the region to the tune of nearly US$60 billion from 2000 to 2010, of which nearly US$17 billion went towards 20,000 projects spread across transportation and energy industries. From 2001 to 2005, crude oil output increased from 19.5 million tons to 23.9 million tons, and by 2007 Xinjiang was producing 26.4 million tons of crude oil (Blank 2008; Center for Energy and Global Development 2006: 1). In 2009, GDP growth of 8.1 per cent in Xinjiang was slightly lower than in China as a whole, which stood at 8.7 per cent (Yu 2010).

What the official statistics reveal is that the government’s approach to balancing economic growth in Xinjiang is focused on large-scale industry and the construction of the requisite supporting infrastructure. Nevertheless, the wish for a trickle-down effect in the region has not translated into opportunity for the Uyghurs in Xinjiang. Non-state sources report that on a number of economic measures Uyghurs have consistently fallen behind their Han Chinese counterparts in the region during the Open Up the West campaign era. In chapter 7 of this volume, Chris Hann writes of the linguistic dimension to this absence of prospects for economic advancement among Uyghurs. His analysis of ‘bilingual’ education finds that an education in Mandarin (Putonghua) does not necessarily lead to increased employment opportunities on the Xinjiang job market for the Uyghur labour force.

While the Chinese government does not make statistics detailing poverty by ethnicity in Xinjiang readily available, a comparison between intraregional metrics and the geographical distribution of Uyghurs allows for some analysis. Northern Xinjiang, which is more urbanized and the primary location of natural resource extraction industries, has a predominately Han Chinese population, while the predominately rural and agrarian southern Xinjiang contains the majority of the Uyghur population (Becquelin 2004: 58; Wiemer 2004: 177). Chaudhuri (2005: 6) records significant disparities in per capita GDP between southern prefectures and northern prefectures in Xinjiang. For example, Karamay in the north, with a 78 per cent Han Chinese population, recorded a per capita GDP of 45,033 yuan as compared to a per capita GDP of 1,977 yuan in Khotan, with a population that is 97 per cent Uyghur. The highest per capita GDP in an Uyghur-majority prefecture (Turpan) was only 13,059 yuan.
Cao’s study of interethnic income disparities in rural and urban Xinjiang concluded similarly. In the course of his research, Cao found a very high correlation between poverty-designated counties and counties in which ethnic minorities exceed 90 per cent of the total population. Cao added that rural ethnic minority areas in Xinjiang recorded significantly lower income levels when compared to rural communities in non-ethnic minority areas (Cao 2008: 16). Furthermore, Hopper and Webber’s (2009: 185) detailed survey of Han Chinese and Uyghur migrants to the regional capital Ürümchi in 2004 discovered that incomes among Han Chinese in the city were generally higher than their Uyghur co-residents. This suggests that the differences in incomes cannot be solely attributed to the distribution of lucrative industries between urban and rural Xinjiang, and that income disparity contains an ethnic dimension.

According to Yang (2010: 18), discriminatory practices in Xinjiang have aggravated economic disparities between Uyghurs and Han Chinese. Although the number of unemployed by ethnicity in Xinjiang is not publicly accessible through official publications, two hypotheses can be made about Uyghur unemployment from non-state sources: it is high and it is in part a result of ethnic discrimination. In their 2004 research, Hopper and Webber (2009: 192) also surveyed Uyghur and Han Chinese attitudes to employment opportunities. Asked whether employment conditions in Xinjiang were better or worse than ten years earlier, 76.3 per cent of Uyghurs stated that the employment situation was worse, while only 48.6 per cent of Han Chinese felt the situation had worsened. Precise unemployment figures for Uyghurs are unavailable; however, Uyghur economist Ilham Tokhti suggests that by the end of the ninth Five-Year Plan (2000), the Uyghur unemployment rate may have been as high as 1.5 million, which is much higher than the 3.8 per cent reported by the Chinese state for Xinjiang as a whole (Hoshur 2009; Wiemer 2004: 180). Wiemer adds that even the state figure is indicative of an unemployment problem worse in Xinjiang than in other parts of China (2004: 180).

The natural resource extraction industry in Xinjiang is dominated by Han Chinese labour and managed in line with central government directives (Bovingdon 2004: 47; Ma 2003). The prevalence of Han Chinese labour in natural resource extraction has existed for the entire Open Up the West campaign period. In 2000, the Washington Post reported that
the oil industry was almost entirely a Han Chinese preserve (Pomfret 2000). Ten years later, the Congressional–Executive Commission on China recorded no improvement among natural resource industry employers in recruiting Uyghurs. For example, the commission documented that all 50 jobs advertised by the Xinjiang PetroChina Pipe Engineering Co. via an online recruitment agency specified that only Han Chinese applicants need apply (CECC 2010a).

Differences between ethnic groups in the distribution of jobs can also be detected across a number of types of skilled and unskilled employment. Reed and Raschke (2010: 25) claim 80 per cent of the workers employed in Xinjiang’s manufacturing, transport, communications, oil and gas, and science and technology sectors are Han Chinese. Additionally, Han Chinese occupy 90 per cent of jobs in the active construction industry. Research conducted by the Congressional–Executive Commission on China spanning six years of the Open Up the West campaign illustrates discrimination against Uyghur candidates for jobs with the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, the civil service, and in the regional education sector (CECC 2005a; CECC 2006; CECC 2009; CECC 2011: 203). Maurer-Fazio’s (2012: 30) study of the challenges facing ethnic minority applicants to jobs advertised on the Internet discovered that Uyghur women faced a high degree of discrimination in the labour market.

Given the evidence of exacerbated ethnic imbalances in economic opportunity and levels of poverty since the inception of the Open Up the West campaign, Vicziany and Zhang (2004: 20) conclude that among Uyghurs:

The perception is that this development strategy privileges the Han and disadvantages the Uygur and other minorities. Such perceptions reinforce the negative images of the development process – negative images fed by empirical evidence showing the decline of employment opportunities for Uygur people in skilled urban jobs and the tertiary sector.

**Making a rights-based approach operable**

The role of human rights in economic development is a matter of perception. From the state’s view, the motivation to restructure development policies around human rights norms can stem from a number of administrative factors such as donor requirements, international obligations,
or national plans. In such cases, human rights can be mainstreamed into existing economic initiatives without the necessity for a core reassessment of the state’s approach to poverty alleviation. From the standpoint of the marginalized, if leveraging human rights entails taking on the structural issues that created deprivation in the first place, they are an existential matter. RBAs have been successful both in recalibrating development from a government-led to a grassroots-led process in states as diverse as Kenya and Vietnam and in increasing state accountability through domestic law (Nyamu-Musembi and Musyoki 2004; Pham Nguyen Ha et al. 2010).

The following description is a brief overview of how an RBA is made operable by state and civil society, with an eye towards its applicability to the political context of Xinjiang. Two key aspects are examined: accountability and participation.

Under an RBA, a successful measure of accountability is contingent upon the state meeting its domestic and international legal obligations, as well as commitments made in public policy. A state’s progress towards fulfilling its international obligations is monitored in the United Nations system, and the UNDP emphasizes that multilateral assessments of individual states’ commitments be at the centre of realigning existing domestic laws with international human rights standards, promoting human rights norms, strengthening a network of human rights organizations, and establishing a rights-enabling environment (UNDP 2000: 112).

Internationally, the right to participation is notionally protected in two international human rights instruments: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Declaration on the Right to Development. While article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guarantees the right to participate in public life through the electoral process, the Declaration on the Right to Development offers a more extensive description beyond the selection of political representatives. Orford (2001: 139) states the Declaration on the Right to Development defines the development process as one in which people direct strategies rather than consult with the state on preset policies or projects. The United Nations system also sets standards for economic conditions in member states through the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, articles 6, 7, and
11 of which outline the rights to work, to just and favourable conditions of work, to an adequate standard of living, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions (OHCHR 2010).

The key issue with the multilateral system is enforceability. The People’s Republic of China is a signatory to, but has not ratified, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and is therefore not legally bound by its provisions. In any case, as Quane (2005: 668) observes, the electoral process as protected in article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights does not necessarily mean marginalized groups will be represented or involved in policy formation. Weak enforceability of the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Alston 1997: 188), which the People’s Republic of China ratified in 2001, and the absence of binding obligations in such United Nations General Assembly declarations as the Declaration on the Right to Development offer marginalized people in China few opportunities to utilize the multilateral system to seek redress.

Existing domestic legal instruments may present better opportunities for legal work on rights claims. Handmer and Monson (2004: 44) suggest that because RBAs rely heavily on enforceability of the law, greater success might be achieved through an emphasis on domestic laws, which are largely more enforceable than international laws and more accessible than international institutions. In the People’s Republic of China, legal instruments such as the Chinese Constitution and the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law contain articles that guarantee minority rights and outlaw discrimination. The People’s Republic of China has also mainstreamed ethnic minority protections in the Labour Law and the Employment Promotion Law. In an RBA, an improvement in accountability to these domestic laws initiated by rights holders not only creates government transparency, but also encourages state policies targeting poverty alleviation. The foundation of accountability enables the state to remove barriers so that marginalized communities can pursue rights claims and promote social change. This means conceiving of development in terms of discrimination and exclusion rather than the transfer of capital.

Genuine and meaningful participation in an RBA is measurable in terms that are set out by rights holders themselves. Coercive participation led by the state, i.e. what appears to be participation, is a threat to
the social change that characterizes RBAs. State reasoning for coercive participation supplies continued legitimacy for the existing political structure through an appearance of popular consent that also lends policies of economic intervention the veneer of broad appeal. An understanding of genuine and meaningful participation can be gleaned from an analysis not only of the political system as it should operate, but also as it actually operates. VeneKlasen et al. (2004: 5) classify interactions of contention between state and civil society into three categories: closed, invited, and claimed. Closed spaces are completely restricted to the government; invited spaces occur when civil society is asked to participate in a predetermined state agenda; and claimed spaces arise when the determination of priorities is made by claims makers. The extent to which policy outcomes meet rights holders’ claims is often dependent on the kind of interaction in process.

The ability to freely mobilize and establish networks is a significant component to genuine and meaningful participation. The state is a key agency in promoting this freedom by refraining from repression of grassroots mobilization. RBAs suggest mobilization of rights holders need not be restricted to the target community; support from sympathetic NGOs external to the community as well as alliances with similarly positioned communities help to form more potent coalitions. Information sharing regarding relevant laws, petition mechanisms, and reports of violations is an important element in empowering networks of rights holders. Under the People’s Republic of China’s climate of restricted information accessibility, this aspect of genuine and meaningful participation presents a significant, but not insurmountable, obstacle to marginalized people in China.

Genuine and meaningful participation not only serves as a caution against possible state malfeasance, but also as a transformative process in how marginalized people interact with the state. Empowerment and participation reduce ingrained perceptions among marginalized and minority peoples as outsiders, and the sense of ownership in the prospects of the wider state that comes from genuine and meaningful participation reduces tensions in the longue durée.

In the RBA model, genuine accountability and participation are dependent upon the consistent rule of law. The arbitrary application of domestic Chinese law is covered in the human rights reporting of organiza-
tions such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and Freedom House. However, Donnelly (1999: 132) argues that just because a human right is not justiciable does not mean that the right does not exist. Quoting Steiner and Alston, Uvin (2004: 132) elaborates: ‘The right to political participation ... will hardly be vindicated by a court within an authoritarian regime. ... It remains nonetheless a human right, to be vindicated in most instances through paths and strategies distinct from the formal legal system.’ Taking a parallel path, considering the People’s Republic of China’s rule-of-law record, may provide the Uyghurs with their best opportunity to achieve a measure of state accountability and stake in the development process. The following, adapted from Uvin (2004: 134) to the Uyghur condition, could be considered possible strategies:

Accountability
- The creation of ombudsmen, whistle-blowers, and other administrative complaint mechanisms.
- The use of shame.

Participation
- Pressure emanating from the spread of shared expectations and socially acceptable discourses.
- The mobilization of grassroots and citizen power in favour of certain rights.
- The certainty that international actors will speak out loudly against violations and will extend support to local actors opposing these violations.

Monitoring the financial transparency of interventions should be added to this list. Uvin (2004: 134) adds, ‘All of these may be second-best solutions when compared to formal mechanisms of justiciability, but they do suggest that there are many alternative ways by which accountability can be fostered. All these, as well, are part and parcel of a rights-based approach to development.’

Rights-based approaches in Xinjiang
The key domestic legal instruments of Chinese state accountability under the Open Up the West campaign are the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China and the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law. Article 4
of the constitution obliges the state to protect the rights of minority peoples and to develop relationships of equality and non-discrimination among China’s nationalities (Chinese Government 2005b). Article 9 of the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law also has provisions that are iterative of the state commitment to non-discrimination of ethnic minorities (CECC 2008; Chinese Government 2005a). In addition, the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law contains articles protecting autonomous region self-government, adjustment of central dictates to local circumstances, and jurisdiction over economic development (CECC 2005b). Article 4 of the Chinese Constitution also outlines the role of the state in aligning economic development with the individual contexts among different ethnic minorities (Chinese Government 2005b). Nevertheless, despite all the protections afforded under Chinese law, Bovingdon (2005) concludes that the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law does little to uphold minority rights:

In plain language, the Law does not specify legal consequences if a right is abridged, nor does it indicate where redress might be pursued. In sum, given the fuzziness with which the right of each minzu2 to administer its own internal affairs is defined, the paucity of minzu representatives empowered to exercise that right in Xinjiang, and the absence of clear legal recourse if the right is infringed, one is led to the conclusion that the Regional Autonomy Law as amended in 2001 does little to protect minority rights.

The petitioning (Chi.: xinfang) system has been in place through most of China’s socialist history and is protected in Chinese law. From an RBA perspective, it can be considered an ‘administrative complaint system’ within the state apparatus, which Uvin puts forward as an alternative strategy serving accountability. The system permits individuals and groups to submit grievances to the State Bureau for Letters and Calls and its local offices, which then inform relevant departments. However, human rights groups have expressed concern over the efficacy of the system, claiming that local officials are subjected to sanctions if petitioners reach Beijing with grievances. In many cases, local officials sent to Beijing from a particular locality have illegally detained petitioners in order to prevent the presentation of their grievances in the capital (Human Rights Watch 2009).

2. Minzu is the Chinese term for officially recognized ethnic minority groups.
Multiple cases of harassment of Uyghur petitioners by state authorities have been reported. Uyghur petitioners have generally travelled to Beijing after receiving no hearing from local authorities in Xinjiang, and regional police have forcibly returned many of those petitioners to Xinjiang. In 2012, a group of ten Uyghurs petitioned the Central Politics and Law Commission offices in Beijing with a variety of grievances against the state, ranging from unfair dismissal from a state job to state appropriation of land for resale to a private company. The group reported to Radio Free Asia that they had been beaten by police, among them officers sent from Xinjiang and charged with returning the ten Uyghurs to the region (Abdilim 2012).

Members of a group of Uyghur petitioners living in an encampment under a bridge in Beijing were pursuing a variety of claims. Many of the group had been living under the bridge over the second ring road for two years. Of the group, Aygul Tokhti claimed government seizure of her house during state-led demolitions in Xinjiang in 2004 had left her homeless and without compensation. Nurdun Tuniyaz lost his livelihood when the government appropriated the land from where he ran his lumber business. Tursun Ghupur was injured by unexploded ordnance left after military drills near the Kashgar airport. His claims for compensation for injuries sustained during the accident resulted in his imprisonment for two years. Tokhti and Ghupur were forcibly returned to Xinjiang after speaking with Radio Free Asia and petitioning in front of a United Nations building in Beijing (Demick 2011; Hoshur 2011).

An additional report from Radio Free Asia details the experiences of two Uyghur petitioners, Buhälchäm Rusul and Ämät Qasim. Rusul had opened a dressmaking school in Aqsu, but a local bank manager refused to grant her a loan to expand her thriving business, despite the fact that the loan was initially approved. Rusul alleges that the refusal was based on ethnic discrimination and that the negative decision could only be reversed if she paid a bribe. Nevertheless, in 2005, Rusul built the extension using loans from local merchants. The next year, Aqsu authorities ordered the demolition of her new building, and she received no compensation. Qasim, also from Aqsu, alleged that in 2000 local officials had confiscated three tons of wheat from him following accusations that he had failed to sell it to government companies. After six years and seven trials, the courts ruled that the officials involved had abused their
power, but no compensation was ordered. As a consequence, Rusul and Qasim went to Beijing to make their petitions to the government, only to be detained and forcibly returned in 2012 (Hoshur 2012a).

Hakim Siyit, an Uyghur farmer from Yengi Hisar near Kashgar, travelled to Beijing to petition China’s State Council for compensation for losses sustained under a compulsory crop plan. Siyit petitioned for the compensation invoking the Law on the Popularization of Agricultural Technology, which requires the repayment of losses due to state directives. In Beijing, officials from the Kashgar Public Affairs Office detained Siyit, and he was later returned to Xinjiang by police officers from Yengi Hisar County. For two years, Siyit and other farmers had attempted to file cases against Yengi Hisar’s Party secretary regarding the crop plan, all to no avail. Siyit had petitioned the prefecture’s government offices in Kashgar and the region’s government offices in Ürümchi before going to Beijing (Shohrat 2009).

Cai (2008) explains how in China the ineffective petitioning apparatus can on occasion lead to outbreaks of protest that exploit weak points in the dynamics of local–central authority. Officials keen to keep political contention from the attention of the centre attempt to resolve grievances locally; however, with the reported frequent petitioning in Beijing by Uyghurs, this does not seem to be the situation. In cases where demonstrators have managed to shame local officials, their success has stemmed from the discontent of the Han Chinese community in Xinjiang and the intervention of Beijing. The central government’s removal of former Xinjiang Party Secretary Wang Lequan, which required a significant protest from Han Chinese in Ürümchi in September 2009, is such an instance.

The RBA framework calls for the state to promote a rights-enabling environment to empower marginalized people towards participation in structural change. To this end, China has produced two National Human Rights Action Plans (2009 and 2012) that attempt to move the state in this direction. The most recent plan contains protections on a range of rights that seemingly encourage a claims-making environment in China, including a section devoted to the rights of ethnic minorities. Ethnic minorities are guaranteed rights of equal participation in state and social affairs, as well as to economic development (Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China 2012).
The plans also contain an important provision on the right to oversee state performance. Nevertheless, in assessments of the first of the two plans, Human Rights Watch stated that the Chinese government had ‘failed to deliver’ on commitments to protect human rights. Human Rights Watch alleged the Chinese government had reneged on rights pledges such as freedom of expression, association, and assembly, and concluded that the plans would not significantly protect universal rights (Human Rights Watch 2011; Human Rights Watch 2012).

Given the flaws in the petitioning system, the ineffectiveness of the legal code to protect minorities, and the criticisms levelled at the National Human Rights Action Plans, formal routes to accountability are few for Uyghurs. In terms of operationalizing a form of RBA, it would be fair to say that Uvin’s framework for non-legal forms of redress are of greater importance.

The history of Uyghur protests over economic, social, and political issues suggests a broadly shared awareness of social inequity and common expectations of state performance. While the nature of Uyghur protest is frequently viewed through the lens of ethno-nationalist grievances over self-determination, demonstrations for greater state protection from discrimination have taken place, and protest across China in general is on the rise. Estimates put the number of ‘mass incidents’ in China in 2010 at 180,000, which is a significant increase from the state-reported figure of 87,000 in 2005 (Pei 2011). The growing participation of Chinese citizens in ‘mass incidents’ illustrates how frustration over corruption and the public shaming of dishonest officials are mobilizing communities in seeking alternative routes to state accountability. In 2011, the inhabitants of Wukan village in Guangdong staged protests against land grabs initiated by corrupt local Party officials. The protests in Wukan were notable for the government’s eventual compromise with the villagers after a protracted dispute. Officials acknowledged the grievances of the villagers, agreed to tackle corruption, and opened up the village’s financial records for scrutiny by the villagers.

The ‘enforced transparency’ in Wukan can be interpreted as being in keeping with the original intent of village committees. In recent years the Chinese government has promoted village committees as possible vehicles for self-governance and participation at the local level (Chinese Government 2007). Although within the formal state apparatus, com-
munity members have exercised a degree of supervision over local-level cadres’ fiscal management and decision-making activities through village committees (Yu 2004: 14). Taylor (2004: 31) records that village committees are also making significant infrastructural improvements to their communities and developing services for people through securing funds for these initiatives. Yan and Yang state that village committee ‘elections’ positive role in reducing income inequality is not played through more income redistribution, but through more pro-poor public investment’ (2008: 2182).

However, in Xinjiang, especially in majority Uyghur areas, village committees have functioned to create greater allegiance to the state rather than to monitor state performance. According to a 2010 Congressional–Executive Commission on China report, a region-wide ‘pledge system’ was in effect that sought villagers’ compliance with state-mandated codes of conduct. If villagers did not comply with the restrictions, they faced fines. For example, the Khotan government called on neighbourhood committees to implement codes of conduct that covered ‘social order, religious belief, education, and population planning’ (CECC 2010b). Plummer and Taylor (2004: xviii) observe that despite the language of empowerment, village committees remain subject to the state’s needs rather than the needs of grassroots communities: ‘Expanding the power of local institutions, with participation as part of their mode of operation, would be zero-sum only when and to the extent that decision-makers at the centre did not want for communities at the periphery what those communities want for themselves.’ In a study based on fieldwork among rural Uyghurs in Kashgar, Bellér-Hann suggests that the state, even at lower administrative levels, implements policies in Xinjiang to serve its own political ends rather than the local communities’ requirements:

The perpetuation of certain repressive agricultural policies on the local level, which do not even necessarily make economic sense, may be a barely disguised attempt to continue to keep the most marginalized, yet numerically most significant Uyghurs in check, who are perceived as the ultimate threat to Xinjiang’s stability. (Bellér-Hann 2012: 9)

In 2003, Zhang (2003: 20) described the necessity for NGOs in China to meet needs created by overwhelming social issues in the modern state, and that the government bore a responsibility to create a constructive legal framework to enable the growth of NGOs. NGOs in China have
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experienced growth in recent years: by March 2012, the *China Daily* (2012) reported the existence of nearly 460,000 NGOs in China – an increase of 100,000 in five years. This growth may indicate the willingness of the Chinese government to outsource the state’s role in offering social services or to permit a certain amount of monitoring on issues deemed politically safe. However, in Xinjiang, the latitude for NGO development seen elsewhere in China (excluding other politically sensitive areas such as Tibet) has not been commensurate, which may indicate that the state’s approach to participation and accountability is more permissive in other parts of China, thereby relegating Uyghurs to the periphery. Han (2010) discusses the dearth of civic engagement among Uyghurs and the lack of organizations that promote interethnic dialogue.

Prior to the Open Up the West campaign era, independent organization among Uyghurs had been increasingly criminalized by the Chinese state. Rebiya Kadeer’s grassroots Thousand Mothers Association, a self-initiated organization founded in 1994 that aimed to tackle social problems among Uyghur youth, was at odds with state control of Uyghur activities. On the mobilization of Uyghurs in the Thousand Mothers Association, Dautcher concludes that one of the factors for the sentencing of Rebiya Kadeer to eight years in prison in 2000 was to quell the growth of organizations beyond the reach of the state (Dautcher 2004: 290). In the mid-1990s, a similar attempt at organizing Uyghurs independently to combat social problems in Ghulja through traditional gatherings (Uy.: mäshräp) was also subject to official censure. The government, sensing a mobilization of Uyghurs outside of its control, shut them down in 1995 (Bovingdon 2010: 125–26; Millward 2007: 329–30).

More recently, Radio Free Asia reported on sentences of seven to fifteen years in prison handed down to ten Uyghurs for subverting state power and related charges. According to Radio Free Asia, the Uyghurs were part of an organization called the Täwpiq Foundation, which supported a number of social initiatives for disadvantaged Uyghur students, such as financial assistance and extracurricular activities. The foundation, established in 2002, was legally registered and attracted media attention in China for its charity work. In 2005, the state began to investigate the organization for its political stance, and following the 2009 unrest its leaders were detained as part of a crackdown on separatism (Juma 2012).
NGO work among marginalized Uyghurs outside of Xinjiang also runs the risk of government censure. A former Uyghur employee of the Beijing AIZHIXING Institute, an AIDS-awareness group, relates how the government interfered in a project that aimed to offer health care and legal assistance to the population of unregistered Uyghurs living in Beijing. The alleged harassment of the organization peaked in the build-up to the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing. The project was shelved, and staff members moved out of Beijing to other parts of China for their safety (Rayila 2011).

Independent mobilization in China is fraught with political risks, as the above accounts relate. While censure from the state is a large demotivating factor for participation in claims making in China, analysis of the 1989 Beijing student movements also highlights the difficulty of coalescing groups around shared issues due to the suspicion-filled environment of making claims (Wright 2008). The social networking necessary to initiate RBAs is undermined by repressive conditions that make the participants of protest politics distrustful of each other’s motives. In this case, it is not the censure that prevents the organization from developing, but the state’s ability to engender enough suspicion among participants concerning each other so that claims cannot even get off the ground. One of the key factors contributing to the Chinese Communist Party’s longevity is how it has been able to prevent coalition building by isolating and dividing Chinese society (Cai 2008).

Yang (2008) points out how the Internet presents a challenge to Chinese government control of information and mobilization, and that the power of the medium is quantified by the extent of government monitoring of cyberspace. Although Internet use is common among many Uyghurs, the government does not hesitate to cut off its use if control is an issue. This was exemplified in the region-wide shutdown of the Internet after the unrest in July 2009. In addition, the utilization of portable and affordable technology that can be used to mobilize people, such as text messaging, is also at the discretion of the state. With such a dearth of opportunity to organize independently, the creation of a claims culture is some way off in Xinjiang.

Dautcher adds an additional layer of complexity to Uyghur claims making that highlights ethnicity as an impediment. He suggests that the making of particular kinds of claims creates a dilemma for the Uyghurs.
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Claims for better social conditions communicate a message to the state that the Uyghur want to be a part of the Chinese state, while claims focused on structural change give the impression that there is no place for Uyghurs in the Chinese state (Dautcher 2004: 293–94). Given the restrictions on the freedom of speech in Xinjiang and the heavy price for outspokenness, Bovingdon (2010) discusses the use of jokes, songs, and stories – which he calls ‘everyday resistance’ – as one of the few remaining channels of expressing grievances among Uyghurs. However, this avenue provides negligible opportunity to change official policies or the manner of their implementation.

Efforts from international groups to promote local coalition building have not gained much traction in Xinjiang. Entities such as Save the Children and AusAID have been able to work in Xinjiang on sensitive subjects such as bilingual education and HIV/AIDS prevention. However, in all these projects the partner was the state rather than any independent Uyghur group. This is consistent with the state’s need for sovereignty over social issues in Xinjiang. Despite the lack of meaningful participation of Uyghurs in the development of a bilingual education policy, Save the Children asserted that the policy was indeed desirable to Uyghurs, and defended this INGO–state interface: ‘Working within the system, and in collaboration with government partners in Xinjiang, we believe, is the best way to influence regional bilingual education practices, and bring changes that help to restore the place of mother tongue in Xinjiang minority schools and communities’ (Strawbridge 2008: 6).

Conclusion

The Xinjiang Work Forum, which was convened in May 2010 and attended by all of China’s central leadership, was a tacit admission that the economic policies implemented during the Open Up the West campaign had fallen short of bringing either stability or equity to Xinjiang. The fine point put on reassessing economic policy during the Work Forum signalled the state’s conclusion as to the underlying tensions of the July 2009 unrest in the regional capital Ürümchi. The term ‘Development by Leaps and Bounds’ was coined to pithily capture the significant financial boost to the region, and the total aid package earmarked by the government for the 2011 to 2020 period would reach US$314 billion. Policies
emerging from the Work Forum also promised to create more jobs and to eliminate absolute poverty by 2020 (Yu 2010).

The Xinjiang Work Forum as a policy-making platform has continued Uyghur exclusion from regional economy decision making. Despite some acknowledgement of the spatial imbalance of development in the region, there was no overt discussion of ethnic disparity. The unsurprising outcome was to financially boost existing Open Up the West campaign initiatives through further investment in the natural resources industry, with state-owned enterprise investment in the sector reaching 700 billion yuan (US$10.96 billion) from 2011 to 2015 (Chang 2012). The recognition that some investment and preferential policies should make their way to predominantly Uyghur areas of Xinjiang was illustrated in the creation of two new economic zones in the areas of Kashgar and Khorgas, as well as some tax breaks for small businesses and assistance for ‘zero-employment’ families. However, reports that some government assistance to individuals is conditioned upon the submission of a signed statement expressing support for government policies are of concern (Hoshur 2012b). The inclusion of a tax on price rather than a tax on volume for oil is also noteworthy for the boost it should provide to regional coffers, but the administrative transparency of the increase in revenue is questionable, given that there is no monitoring mechanism to alleviate the Uyghurs’ suspicion that the natural resources of Xinjiang have been commandeered for eastern China.

Whether the Work Forum has gone far enough in addressing the imbalance in Open Up the West campaign policies remains to be seen. Perhaps most indicative of the unoriginality of the government’s approach to addressing economic disparity is the expansion of ‘expertise’ transfers from eastern China to the region. The Work Forum ‘pairing assistance’ initiative, which matches 19 prosperous provinces from eastern China with 82 prefectures in Xinjiang in a transfer of expertise and capital, does not include any provision for experts’ familiarity with local conditions (Toops 2010), and reinforces the notion of a Han Chinese ‘civilizing project’ to the border regions of China.

Development planning in the closed spaces of the Chinese central government is viewed in material rather than human terms. It should therefore be no surprise that state development policies do not contain a specific focus on the empowerment of marginalized people
and structural change. The lack of input from marginalized people in policy formation is significant. If decision making over state-led development initiatives continues only at the highest levels, the inequalities experienced by marginalized people will only persist. Meaningful consultation with the grassroots in genuine institutions and processes will engender the kind of pro-poor polices that lead to economic and social equity – a conclusion similar to that reached by Tashi Nyima in regard to the articulation of discontent among Tibetan pastoralists (see ch. 5 in this volume). This suggestion entails a transition from closed to invited spaces, and a determined removal of barriers to civil society participation. Stability does not come through a cycle of imbalanced development, a build-up of frustration, civil unrest, suppression, and repackaged policies of discrimination.

In an analysis of Uyghur–Han Chinese relations, Han (2010) calls for the Chinese state to encourage civic engagement in Xinjiang, especially among Uyghurs, but most crucially across ethnic lines. An incremental (and less threatening) progression in state thinking towards structural change would be what Steiner (2010: 4) terms a ‘community policy’, in which ‘the self-negotiation of policy and identity among Uyghurs can be conducive to a partner relationship, wherein Uyghur and Han interests can maintain their cultural elements without necessarily being mutually exclusive of each other in the context of Chinese society’.

The dependence on and recurring use of top-down remedies that the Work Forum represents are in critical need of reform due to the destabilizing consequences of discrimination. The marginalizing effects of the government’s approach to ethnic minority economic development make a compelling case for genuine structural change that would orient the state’s policy approach more towards the grassroots. The rights-based approach may offer Uyghurs opportunities for structural and social change, in tandem with Xinjiang’s Han Chinese community, that are needed to achieve the goals of equity and of moving the Uyghurs from the periphery of the ‘harmonious society’. While the state may appear to be a major impediment to this evolution in the contemporary era, its role is important in creating change. While it is out of the scope of this chapter to speculate on the state’s willingness to effect genuine structural change, it is difficult to envision how the desired balanced growth can occur without it.
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THE OPEN UP THE WEST CAMPAIGN AMONG UYGHURS IN XINJIANG


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CHAPTER FOUR

Carpet worlds: The construction of a commodity hierarchy and the politics of difference in Lhasa

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Introduction

Many carpet catalogues assembled by international connoisseurs claim that carpets are an important part of traditional Tibetan material culture. For example, the khaden ( Tib. : kha gdan ) – a rectangular seating carpet usually three feet wide by six feet long – is one of the distinctive features of Tibetan home furnishings. These carpets are often laid in pairs on Tibetan couches, along with back cushions ( Tib. : rgyab snyes ). In pre-socialist Tibet, khadens were mainly produced by aristocratic estates, small artisan workshops, and itinerant artisans who produced carpets for farming households in exchange for food and shelter. Khadens were associated with various socio-cultural activities: they could be wedding gifts, ceremonial objects, and heirlooms, and could even serve as tax-in-kind. Historically, the production and circulation of khadens were embedded in complex social relations and organizations.

Lhasa – the Tibetan capital city – is in the twenty-first century a major khaden production and trade centre. In the city’s bustling downtown core, I found an assortment of carpets being sold to Tibetan custom-

1. Several English-language textile catalogues and books have discussed the functions and designs of Tibetan carpets. The first book on this subject, The Tibetan Carpets, was published by Philip Denwood in 1974. Both Hallvard Kåre Kuley’s Tibetan Rugs (1982) and Diana Myers’s Temple, Household, Horseback (1984) expand Denwood’s discussions on production materials, tools, methods, design, and social functions. A brief cultural history of Tibet’s carpet production is presented in Trinley Chodrak and Kesang Tashi’s book, Of Wool and Loom (2000). These works, however, limit their discussion of the history of Tibetan carpets to the pre-socialist period.
ers. One type of *khaden*, an acrylic carpet, was manufactured in such Chinese provinces as Shandong and Tianjin. In 2006 the market price of acrylic *khadens*, which varied from 150 to 250 yuan (US$19–312), depended upon the quality of the chemical fibres used in their production. A second type, a handmade wool carpet, was produced in the Chinese villages of Sichuan province. These coarsely textured carpets cost approximately 300 yuan each. However, several shops marketed these Sichuan carpets as Tibetan folk handicrafts. If a Sichuan carpet could pass as a *khaden* made by Tibetans, it could be sold for 600 yuan. A third type of *khaden*, a handmade wool carpet with a more refined look, was imported from India and Nepal. On average they cost more than 1,000 yuan. The most expensive handmade *khadens* were produced by the carpet factories in Lhasa. Sold exclusively in factory showrooms, these carpets brought between 1,200 to 2,500 yuan each in 2006. The Lhasa-based factories aimed at export sales; they reduced the production of *khadens* but increased the manufacturing of floor carpets to meet the demands of non-Tibetan buyers. Thus, Lhasa *khadens* became a luxury commodity for Tibetans. Wealthy customers generally placed special orders with the factories.

The different types of *khaden* bought and sold in Lhasa’s commercial districts constitute a commodity hierarchy that ranges from the cheapest acrylic *khadens* to Sichuan village carpets, South Asian imports, and finally to the most expensive export-quality Lhasa *khadens*. This commodity hierarchy, I argue, indicates the heterogeneity of trade and production networks linking various provinces of China, Nepal, and India to the Tibetan regional capital. Furthermore, the structure of the hierarchy, especially the ambiguous status of Sichuan carpets, suggests that these marketing activities are not immune to the politics of difference: discourses on Tibetan or Chinese culture can be manipulated and then translated into value judgments critical to the saleability of *khadens*.

This chapter analyses the construction of this commodity hierarchy in Lhasa’s carpet sector and its dynamic relationship to the cultural politics of difference. More specifically, I examine the extent to which regulations and rules influence the production and trade of *khadens*. Further, I explore what elements of marketization are necessary to en-

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2. At the time of my fieldwork in 2006, there were approximately 7.99 yuan to the dollar (1 yuan = approximately US$0.125).
able people to carve out particular niches in the *khaden* business, and what marketing strategies and motives contribute to the solidifying of this commodity hierarchy. Finally, I discuss specific discourses that are attached to different types of *khadens* and in turn affect their market value. My approach draws upon the theory of marketization developed by Michel Callon (2008) and Koray Çalışkan (2008, 2010). Callon and Çalışkan propose to analyse the ‘market’ as a socio-technical assemblage of heterogeneous elements that includes, for example, rules and regulations, logistical infrastructures, discourses, technical and scientific knowledge, and competencies and skills embodied in human actors. From this perspective, marketization is an ongoing process of creating, maintaining, and reproducing socio-technical assemblages (Callon and Çalışkan 2008: 24). These authors recognize that the state is not external to the market; the implementation and influence of government policies must be examined in concert with other elements in the market assemblage. Using Callon’s and Çalışkan’s approach, this chapter aims to delineate how marketization processes in Lhasa’s *khaden* sector produce sites of domination and contestation in contemporary Tibet.

The assemblage approach is especially useful for analysing the extent to which the production of economic knowledge affects peripheral regions in China. ‘Developing the socialist market’ has been the central agenda of the post-Mao reforms since their inception three decades ago. In recent years, under the rubric of building a ‘harmonious society’, the central government’s main policy framework continues to prioritize state–market relations, along with the notions of good governance and national sovereignty.3 Underlying this policy is the Chinese Communist Party’s new political economic theory, which assumes that the market economy is an objectified phenomenon that the government can control and manipulate (Chi.: *tigao jiayu shichangjingji de nengli*). This notion of the market economy prepares the ground for government interventions in minority areas. In other words, the economic theory is used to establish the supremacy of scientific knowledge for the country’s development path, and then to justify the transfer of this knowledge to the peripheral regions in the form of technology and expertise. Furthermore, as Aihwa

Ong has observed, economic discourses can render state activities in China as non-political and non-ideological endeavours that only need technical solutions (Ong 2006: 3). In the Tibetan context some critics have already pointed out that pro-market policies are often represented by the government as value-free, scientific techniques for advancing Tibetans’ livelihoods; these development programmes in fact play an important role in countering Tibetan nationalist resistance and religious organizations (Barnett 2001: 297). My study of the khaden sector demonstrates that state policies and government agencies are part and parcel of the marketization dynamics. Such dynamics can produce a hierarchical commodity structure and can also generate economic knowledge that reinforces the domination of Chinese entrepreneur culture in Tibet.

Furthermore, this chapter explores how the construction of the commodity hierarchy draws on inequalities stemming from ethnic, gender, skill, and class differences. Studies on contemporary Sino-Tibetan cultural politics offer three important insights that inform my analysis. This literature first exposes the ideological basis on which minority cultures are deemed inferior to the loosely defined, urban-based Chinese culture (Harrell 1995). Some researchers have shown that policy makers link the discourse on Tibet’s ‘low quality of human resources’ (Chi.: suzhi) to what they consider Tibet’s economic backwardness, and thus justify the need to bring ‘skilled’ workers and entrepreneurs from the Chinese regions to Tibet (Yeh 2007: 597). In the same vein I also explore how discriminatory economic and cultural discourses influence development policies that open new spaces of encounter, fostering uneven development of various production and trade networks.

Second, the literature on contemporary Tibetan cultural politics reveals various appropriations of Euro-American discourses on ‘Tibet’ by Tibetan enterprises. In the Western imaginary Tibet is a pre-modern world of spirituality and mystique destroyed by Chinese communism (Tsering Shakya 1991). This orientalist discourse has been adapted to create a cultural brand, enabling the regional tourism industry to attract local and foreign capital (Bovair 2008; Mercille 2005; Peng 1998). In some cases, local and international actors also mobilize this discourse to justify their activities in recreating an ‘authentic’ Tibet (Adams 1996; Harris 1999; Hillman 2009; Klieger 1992; Kolás 2008). Adopting this approach, this chapter also demonstrates how romantic notions of
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Tibetan material culture have elevated the status and market value of Tibetan carpets in the commodity hierarchy.

Finally, some recent studies of Tibetan cultural transformation have been concerned with the accelerated commercialization of ethnic culture that links identity politics to profit-seeking activities. Several researchers have identified the shifting role of the state in ethnic cultural production. On the one hand, the reduced government control over the private sector opens up the space for non-state actors to participate in the production of cultural commodities for minority groups (Morcom 2008; Reynolds 2011). On the other hand, local governments, especially at the provincial and municipal levels, have adopted a preservationist approach to ethnic culture, but such preservation activity is exclusively informed by the official definition of Tibetan history and heritage (Harris 2013; Shepherd 2006). Overall this literature acknowledges the influence of post-Mao market reforms, but most studies interpret ‘market economy’ somewhat facilely either in terms of an abstract sociological concept or as state policies, and use it simply to foreground their research subjects. Little attention is paid to the material conditions and power relations that enable or disable various forces and actors to realize market transactions of cultural commodities. This chapter is intended to enrich our understanding of the political economy of Tibetan cultural production by linking the hierarchy of culture to the construction of a commodity hierarchy, and also by shifting the focus away from ‘identity-based’ politics to people’s struggles over subject positions that determine access to information, technical knowledge, and diverse networks of producers and dealers.

The empirical data used in this chapter are largely drawn from four months of fieldwork in Lhasa in 2006. I employed two main data collection strategies. First, I conducted two surveys involving a total of 146 artisan-workers and 23 interviews with key managerial staff and artisan-workers in Lhasa’s two major carpet factories. I also had informal interviews with several development workers and overseas businessmen who had connections with the handicraft business in Lhasa. The survey and interview data helped me identify the production aspects of the local carpet industry. Second, I frequently visited downtown bazaars to research the geography of carpet shops and their business conditions. During the festival season, I spent several hours a day in selected carpet
shops observing interactions between buyers and sellers; I also conducted informal interviews with shop owners when business was not so brisk. Most interviews and surveys were carried out in the Lhasa dialect of Tibetan. With interviewees who were fluent in Mandarin or English, I chose to conduct the interviews in those languages.

The following section discusses the formation of a socio-technical assemblage and how this assemblage contributed to the production and trade of commercial khadens. In particular, this section highlights the uncertainty and irregularity of policies and rules that engender unequal relations and new spaces of encounter, where heterogeneous elements of marketization interact or confront one another. This is followed by an analysis of the economic-cultural discourses, marketing strategies, and motives that shape and consolidate the commodity hierarchy of the khaden. I shall demonstrate that through the market assemblage, the politics of difference produces two seemingly contradictory but in fact interrelated hierarchies. In the hierarchy of culture, Tibetan culture is deemed incompatible with China’s market economy. However, in the hierarchy of commodity, the Tibetan khaden is placed above Chinese carpets. In the last section I describe an incident in a carpet factory in which the invention of a new commercial carpet incurred resistance from both workers and managers. This section revisits the question of cultural hierarchies and also expands the discussion to include the hierarchy of labour on the shop floor.

**The formation of a socio-technical assemblage**

Not until the mid-1970s was the production of carpets placed under systematic state planning in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). The production orientation was announced at the 1974 TAR Commerce and Handicraft Work Meeting, according to which the carpet industry should support agriculture and animal husbandry within the overall TAR economy (*Tibet Daily* 1975). By the end of 1975, the major provincial newspaper, the *Tibet Daily*, reported that mutual aid teams had been phased out, small independent workshops had been closed down, and 460 handicraft cooperatives had been formed and placed under

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4. Because my research project is concerned with the production and marketing aspects of the carpet industry, my research subjects are artisan-workers, managers, factory owners, and carpet dealers. I did not interview customers.

In 1978, four years after the 1974 socialist centralization, the TAR government – now led by critics of the centralized economy – introduced the idea of ‘market’ into the policy discourse. They argued that the socialist economy had failed to meet people’s consumption needs. The new guideline was to ‘integrate the guidance of the state with market fine-tuning’ (Chi.: *guojia jihua zhidaohuo shichang tiaojie xiangjiehe*) (Feng 1981).6 This revised view on state–market relations was also used to legalize small-scale household production and village-based collective enterprises rejected by the previous socialist government.

In the early 1980s two key policies were implemented under the rubric of ‘building a socialist commodity economy’ (Chi.: *shehuizhuyi shangpin jingji*). First, the centrepiece of the socialist rural economy, the rural commune-brigade system, was replaced by the ‘household responsibility system’. Commune properties were divided among farmers, who could regain some degree of responsibility over their lands and livestock and control their labour allocation. In the TAR this policy was applied to both farmers and nomads (Dreyer 2006: 133).

The second policy aimed to reorganize urban-based government enterprises according to certain principles that were believed to improve the socialist commodity economy, including the following: state enterprises were to be responsible for their own profits and losses; cadre7 managers were to have more autonomy to manage production and labour; these managers could recruit their own workers; and they could create their own wage and benefit policies (Luo 1985).

The official discourse of ‘building a socialist commodity economy’ signalled the replacement of Mao’s ideological approach with Deng’s pragmatism: providing firms and individuals with material incentives and promoting ‘market competition’ to stimulate economic growth (Harvey

5. 615 square metres of carpets equals approximately 367 *khadens* (at 3 x 6 feet).
6. In addition to Feng Zetian’s article published in March, the *Tibet Daily* released another editorial commentary on 26 April 1981 with the title, ‘Cleansing the influence of the left-leaning tendency, promoting the development of the nationality [ethnic] handicraft industry’ (Chi.: *qingli zuoqing yingxiang caijin minzu shougongye fazhan*). This article also promoted a market approach to developing the ethnic handicraft industries.
7. Here and throughout this chapter the word ‘cadre’ refers to a government employee who is a member of the Chinese Communist Party and holds an officer position.
The policy announcements from 1978 to 1985 demonstrate (1) the government’s support for the substantial entry of non-state producers, particularly in rural areas, (2) the release of state investment in the consumer goods industry, and (3) the loosened government control of rural-to-urban migration and private trade (Naughton 1996: 9). To what extent could the new regulations and rules create the conditions for a commercial carpet sector? How successfully could individuals, such as Tibetan artisans, pursue opportunities not available during the Maoist era?

The stories of two Tibetan men, Norbu and Choejor, who since the 1990s have worked as shop floor managers for a private carpet factory in Lhasa, aptly illustrate the formation of a socio-technical assemblage contributing to the commercial production and trade of carpets in Lhasa. Neither Norbu (born in 1969), who comes from Nyemo County in Lhasa Prefecture, nor Choejor (born in 1965), who comes from Gyantse County in Shigatse Prefecture, was born into a family of carpet weavers. In our conversations they told me about how they got started as carpet makers, left their villages for Lhasa, and ended up working for a private carpet enterprise. It is clear from their stories that individual carpet makers play an active role in enlarging the commercial carpet sector.

Norbu remembered that ‘around 1979, many private businesses started in my town because the government supported these activities. Usually, if a family had extra labour, the parents would send off their children to find other jobs.’ Norbu went to work in a village khaden workshop and had good memories of his first job. ‘I worked and played with other young people in my workshop. Nobody inspected production quality. It was a very easy life.’ However, after a year this workshop went bankrupt. ‘We had difficulty selling carpets in the big markets, such as Lhasa’, he explained. ‘In our village, few people had money to buy our carpets. As soon as the government stopped giving us support, the workshop could not survive.’ After the closure, Norbu made khadens from home, which his father took to market. ‘We had a drought in 1983 and 1984. Our family was able to survive the drought because we could sell khadens for food and money’, Norbu said proudly. In 1985, he decided to venture to Lhasa to earn more money. He first found a job in City Carpets, a collective factory in Lhasa. City Carpets is also the place where the life paths of Norbu and Choejor crossed.
Choejor was also considered ‘extra labour’ by his family. When he turned 15 in 1980, his parents used personal connections to find him a job in Gyantse Carpets, one of the earliest socialist collective carpet factories in the TAR. Carpet production was divided into several stages, carried out by different workers. In his spare time, Choejor learned to contour carpets from his master, but since he was trained to be a weaver and not a carpet shearer, he never got to use this skill. He recalled that Gyantse Carpets was managed by party cadres, who were intrusive. He said, ‘They [the cadres] wanted to know everything. I even had to report to them that I wanted to get married.’ Finally he left Gyantse Carpets in 1983 or 1984. ‘Several young women’, he explained, ‘came to our factory because they wanted to learn how to use blueprints. I fell in love with one of the students and decided to marry her and live in Lhasa.’ Choejor’s wife was actually an employee of City Carpets. He migrated to Lhasa to start his family and then worked as a master weaver in City Carpets.

With different work experiences, Norbu and Choejor held contrasting views about City Carpets, which was undergoing a so-called enterprise reform. While comparing Lhasa’s City Carpets to his previous workplace in Gyantse, Choejor found City Carpets’ facility poor; managers, he felt, treated workers unfairly. He said, ‘The managers always gave their relatives and friends training opportunities. In Gyantse the weavers all helped each other. City Carpets paid our [piece-rate] wage a half month after we completed our piecework. In Gyantse, we were paid as soon as we finished our carpets.’ Norbu, on the contrary, was impressed with City Carpets. ‘Everything was better than my village workshop. In Nyemo we made rugs without any rules.’ Norbu also recalled that City Carpets sent weavers to Gyantse and the Chinese city Tianjin to acquire new skills. ‘I wanted to learn and improve my skills’, said Norbu, ‘so I worked very hard. I slept beside my loom and eventually became ill. But I was happy because my skills improved.’

While Norbu was still working for City Carpets, Choejor, in 1987, decided to quit and subsequently started making carpets on his own. ‘It was easy to live and work independently in Lhasa’, he said. ‘I made khadens in my clients’ houses. I also made and sold imitations of old khadens. Tourists like them.’ In the early 1990s both Choejor and Norbu were persuaded by friends and relatives to join foreign-invested joint ventures. ‘Because the factory was new’, Norbu said, ‘few people knew production techniques. I
quickly became one of the best weavers. The factory gave me several apprentices and treated me very well.’ Choejor had a similar experience with the same factory. He became the production manager, responsible for the quality and output of carpet production.

Choejor’s and Norbu’s stories illustrate the formation of a socio-technical assemblage that brings together regulations, factory rules, large and small organizations, and technical skills and knowledge embodied in various actors. Both men witnessed the rise of a commercial khaden sector from this assemblage in the 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, their stories reveal uncertainty and irregularity in marketization, as well as in how the assemblage produces new spaces of domination and contestation.

First, state investments in rural enterprises often give rise to unpredictable patterns of carpet production. With government loans, township and village workshops can grow quickly because carpet production requires low entry investment. The workshops can utilize the surplus labourers released by decollectivization. However, as Norbu suggested, in reality many of these rural organizations were short lived, and business conditions were often precarious. Although no survey data is publicly available to illustrate the business conditions of carpet factories, the TAR official statistics on the annual output of carpets offer clues about the rise and fall of the commercial khaden sector. For example, the TAR Statistics Yearbook (2003: 208–9) shows that between 1982 and 1983, carpet production increased by 120 per cent, from 8,709 square metres to 19,224 square metres. However, a significant setback soon followed: in 1985–86 the total output of the carpet industry dropped by 85 per cent. Two years later, production suddenly increased from 9,034 square metres to 37,861 square metres. Following that the growth curve fluctuated, finally reaching a breaking point of 80,000 square metres in 1994 (TAR Statistics Yearbook 2003: 208–9). By the end of 1993, the TAR Statistics Yearbook (1993: 433–65) recorded two prefecture carpet factories, five county carpet factories, and eleven village or township carpet workshops. Most were located in the agricultural or semi-agricultural areas in Lhasa, Chamdo, Lhoka, and Shigatse. Nonetheless, the following year witnessed a huge decline in the TAR’s carpet industry: the total output declined by 78 per cent (TAR Statistics Yearbook 1993: 208–9). The ups and downs of the carpet output were probably closely connected to the instability of village and township workshops. In short,
failed rural policy and bankruptcy in the countryside impelled some young carpet weavers to participate in household production and finally to seek opportunities in the more successful urban-based factories.

Second, the enterprise reform was represented by the government as an alternative to draconian socialism, which appealed to young workers like Choejor who were critical of the socialist factory regime. However, Choejor’s story suggests that the enterprise reform empowered a new class of managerial elites who have introduced self-interested rules and deployed exploitative techniques to run semi-privatized carpet workshops. Choejor’s romantic affair with a woman from City Carpets symbolizes his desire for personal freedom and mobility, which could only be fulfilled by breaking away from a socialist workplace and joining a semi-privatized factory. Ironically, Choejor soon found himself in the midst of familial labour politics and subjected to managerial power. What is implied in his critique of City Carpets is his own changing status from a government worker to a rural migrant labourer deprived of basic welfare benefits in the city and vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination. Thus the standard state regulations, which aim to reduce government interference in factory affairs, and the idiosyncratic factory rules, which largely serve the interests of factory directors and managers, constitute a new space of domination and repression. The relations of power between self-interested cadre managers and migrant workers draw on rural-urban inequality. On the shop floor, these tensions were expressed through struggles over the value of craft skills and business knowledge.

Technical knowledge and skills embodied in human actors are important aspects of the socio-technical assemblage. Norbu represented his training in the countryside as inadequate. By contrast, Choejor portrayed himself as a skilled master before coming to the city. Both men perceived craft skills as central to enhancing their socio-economic well-being and carving out new career paths outside a devastated village. Nonetheless, at City Carpets they confronted managers that depreciated craft skills and controlled access to new technical knowledge. In response to exploitation and discrimination, Norbu worked relentlessly to gain the trust of managers in order to learn new techniques; Choejor withdrew from the factory and started his own small business.

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8. The literature on migrant workers’ experiences in Chinese cities is vast. For specific case studies on migrant workers in the Sino-Tibetan context, I consulted Hansen (2005), Hu Xiaojiang and Salazar (2008), and Yeh (2008).
In summary, uneven distribution of technical knowledge among actors is an important manifestation of inequality that can also reinforce other forms of injustice and unequal power relations. The tensions between artisan-workers and managers are centred on both the valuation of skills and access to technical knowledge. In other words, by accumulating more ‘valuable’ technical knowledge, Choejor and Norbu could move to advantageous positions that would allow them to take control of their own work. Nonetheless, these individualist struggles for personal freedom, wealth, and mobility do not fundamentally challenge the exploitative practices that draw on rural-urban inequality.

When I met Choejor and Norbu in 2006, both men were production managers working for an export-oriented carpet factory. They spent most of their time patrolling inside the weaving workshops to supervise the production activity of over a hundred artisan-workers who came from the rural areas of the TAR. These workers were paid a piece-rate wage and lived in the factory’s dormitory. However, similar to rural migrants in Chinese cities elsewhere in the PRC, these Tibetan workers had no access to the standard urban welfare programmes available to Lhasa residents. While they sympathized with these workers, neither Choejor nor Norbu questioned the production regime in the carpet industry, which is based on rural-urban inequality and undermines the labour rights of the majority of migrant workers. This form of injustice and economic repression is one of the important features of this market assemblage.

Next, by looking closely at another feature of the socio-technical assemblage, namely the construction of a commodity hierarchy, I show the convergence of two constellations of production and trading centres that facilitate the hierarchization of khadens. I also discuss two parallel and paradoxical politics of difference that shape the content and structure of this commodity hierarchy.

The rise of a commodity hierarchy of khadens

In the early 1980s two Chinese economists, Wang Xiaqiang and Bai Nanfeng, conducted fieldwork in the TAR and several other western

9. In pre-socialist and socialist Tibet, artisans’ guilds, apprenticeships, or socialist work units regulated knowledge and skill transfers from generation to generation and from men to women (Zhang 2007; 2012a). The current form of knowledge/skill distribution is a legacy of socialist industrialization, through which the production of carpets was divided into several steps carried out by different artisan-workers. The enterprise reform gave cadre managers more power to decide how to train workers.
Chinese provinces. They concluded that the area’s economic backwardness was caused by the poor ‘quality’ of human resources (Wang and Bai 1991: 23). They explained that Tibetans despised artisans and businesspeople, and that their value system encouraged investment in religious rather than commercial activities (35). More generally, they diagnosed Tibetans and other ethnic minorities as suffering from a ‘poor ability to use resources’ (293). The scientific knowledge produced by Wang and Bai contributes to the transformation of the Tibetan economy into an object that can be analysed, guided, and incorporated into China’s national market economy. In short, the idea of Tibet as a peripheral and backward region is reinforced by the understanding of the Chinese national economy as an autonomous system incorporating a hierarchical order of economic communities.

Previously the revolutionary discourse, which included such slogans as ‘liberating Tibetans from feudalism’, provided an ideological foundation for Tibet’s socialist policies. Under the current regime, economic knowledge offers a new ideological basis on which Tibetan and other ethnic communities are identified as incompatible with the development of a market economy. Using concepts from the economic discourse such as ‘human resources’, government organizations can, in the interests of building what they perceive as a socialist commodity market, justify the policies imposed on minority peoples. Furthermore, the Tibetan carpet industry provides a unique case study because the local policymakers identify the carpet sector as a ‘nationality [i.e., ethnic] handicraft industry’ and promote the use of Tibetan cultural knowledge and labour. How might such seemingly contradictory ideas as ‘nationality industry’ and ‘poor human resources’ shape the production and marketing of Tibetan carpets? In this section I first discuss the extent to which the economic and cultural discourses opened up a new space of encounter, fostering cross-regional carpet production and trading activities. Second, using ethnographic data, I analyse what marketing strategies, discourses, and motives gave rise to a commodity hierarchy of *khadens*.

Both Wang and Bai worked for the Economic Structural Reform Institute of China, an influential think tank that advised the Chinese

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10. The roles of experts in the politics of development elsewhere have been discussed by Mitchell (2002) and Goswami (2004).
Communist Party leaders, in particular Zhao Ziyang, on reform policies. Their economic theory was put to the test in 1987 at the Second Aid Tibet Work Meeting, which identified development problems in Tibet as the result of poor human resources. The officials advocated using ‘the power of knowledge to support Tibet’ (Tibet Daily 1987). This policy rhetoric had at least three important implications for the commercial khaden sector. First, by linking knowledge production to economic development, this discourse stimulated the increase of government funding for Tibet’s literature and education sectors. Consequently, a Tibetan cultural renaissance emerged in the mid and late 1980s, and facilitated the rise of Tibetan cultural nationalism (Schwartz 1994: 19; Stoddard 1994). The promotion of Tibetan carpets, identified by Tibetan intellectuals and cadres as traditional Tibetan artefacts, was part of this trend (Tsering Shakya 2008). The carpet industry became Tibet’s prized nationality industry (Chi.: minzu tese chanye), in which the local government expected not only to make a significant profit, but also to enhance the region’s cultural prestige (Zhang 2012a: 93).

Second, Wang and Bai argued that tourists would sow the seeds of modern culture in Tibet and educate the inhabitants of this ‘backward region’ (Wang and Bai 1991: 171). These ideas informed a tourism policy that eventually led to the relaxation of foreign entry requirements to the TAR. The number of international tourists increased exponentially, from 1,959 persons in 1980 to 15,402 in 1985 and 108,750 in 1987 (TAR Statistics Yearbook 2006: 246). Studies have shown that international tourists play a vital role in disseminating Western discourses on Tibet; Tibetans also actively respond to tourists’ interests in finding an ‘authentic Tibet’ (Adams 1996: 510; Hillman 2009; Kolås 2008). As Choejor mentioned, he learned to make imitations of antique carpets as


12. According to Tsering Shakya (2008), there are two main trends of Tibetan cultural renaissance. One group advocates the continuation of ‘traditional’ arts and crafts and believes that these cultural forms are central to an authentic Tibetan identity. The other group looks for new means of expressing Tibetan culture. The development of the carpet industry has been influenced by both trends.

13. Since the early 1990s several international non-governmental organizations have implemented market-oriented handicraft projects (including carpet production activities) to alleviate the poverty in Tibetan communities. By marketing and selling Tibetan handicrafts as folk art to international tourists, these organizations also contribute to enhancing the value of Tibetan carpets (Zhang 2012a).
souvenirs in order to meet Western tourists’ demand for Tibetan handicrafts. Thus, Tibetan cultural nationalism and foreign tourists’ demand directly and indirectly contributed to elevating the status of khadens made in Lhasa.

The last important effect of the ‘human resources’ policy on the khaden sector was accelerated cross-regional trade. In the early 1980s Lhasa became a desirable shopping destination, with the number of domestic tourists, Tibetan pilgrims, and tourists from ‘inland’ China increasing, on average, 52 per cent annually between 1980 and 2000 (TAR Statistics Yearbook 2006: 246). At the same time, Lhasa’s booming commerce has attracted labourers and businesspeople from other parts of China. While Lhasa Tibetans privately discuss the negative impacts of migrants on the local job market, government organizations rarely put any restrictions on migrants’ profit-making endeavours (Yeh 2008: 54). Some groups of Han, Hui, and Tibetan migrants take advantage of Lhasa’s prosperity by engaging in the carpet business. To gain a better understanding of how this change has affected the Lhasa khaden sector, I interviewed several carpet dealers who had stores in downtown Lhasa. Their accounts show how diverse actors, production centres, and trade infrastructures are involved in shaping and consolidating the khaden commodity hierarchy.

Bai Shifu, a Han migrant in his fifties, comes from Fu Hong village, Qingbai River District, in the vicinity of Chengdu (Sichuan Province). His carpet store on Ramoche Street, one of the busiest shopping streets in the old town, sold both handmade and machine-made khadens. His customers were mostly Tibetans. He recalled that in the late 1980s several export carpet factories in Chengdu went bankrupt and sold their equipment to village and township factories in Sichuan or subcontracted their work to village workshops. At first Bai worked as a wool-purchasing agent for a township carpet factory. Seeing the potential profit in this business, he decided to open a workshop in his hometown. ‘People in our village were very poor’, he said. ‘They all wanted to work for me. So I hired a carpet master to teach them how to weave carpets.’ Bai first sold his handmade carpets in Chengdu. He soon learned that Tibetans

14. The ‘old town’ refers to Lhasa’s downtown area, centred around the Jokhang Temple and populated by Tibetan residents. The new town began to develop in the 1980s in the western part of Lhasa district.
Bai explained: ‘The labour cost of our carpets is very low. I pay a worker 30–40 yuan to contour a khaden. In Lhasa, it probably costs 200 yuan.’ An additional cost-saving factor was that Bai used wool and cotton yarns from Shandong, Hebei, Sichuan, or Jiangsu, which are much cheaper than Tibetan materials. His carpets all imitated Tibetan designs and resembled Tibetan village crafts, but cost only half as much. Strategic marketing and access to cheap labour and production materials contributed to Bai’s early success. His carpets sold well and drew more Sichuan carpet dealers into the Lhasa business. ‘Until 1998’, he recalled, ‘we were doing very well. On this street, there were around ten stores [run by Sichuan dealers]. They all sold khadens made in my village. Even Hui [Chinese-speaking Muslims] and Tibetan dealers purchased carpets from us.’ At that time, Bai had a large workshop, employing more than 200 weavers.

In 2004–2005 Bai’s business experienced significant setbacks because of two factors. First, machine-made acrylic carpets, which were much cheaper than even Sichuan carpets, became popular; second, many Sichuan villagers, finding more profitable employment in the cities, stopped making carpets. In 2006 most Chinese carpet stores on Ramoche Street were closed down. Besides Bai’s shop, only one was left. Bai strove to keep up his business through employing two Tibetan peddlers who, carrying his Sichuan carpets on their backs, sold them in the rich neighbourhoods of Lhasa as Tibetan village crafts. Bai also sold a small number of acrylic carpets. ‘Now I have only fifty weavers’, he said. ‘I lend the weavers looms and give them designs, yarn, and other materials. They work at home. I send an agent to collect their carpets.’ It was uncertain how long Bai’s outsourcing business would survive, and whether his handmade products would be completely replaced by acrylic carpets.

Besides the Han migrants, Hui carpet traders played a major role in the downtown market. I interviewed the Ding brothers, who are Hui from Linxia (Gansu Province). Like most of the Hui carpet traders in Lhasa, they specialized in acrylic carpets. The younger Ding, who was 18 at the time, had lived in Lhasa working for his brother for less than a year. The older Ding, then in his late twenties, had lived in Lhasa for several years. He ran a carpet store in Barkhor Market, in the heart of the old town. Hui people, like Tibetans, use carpets to furnish their homes.
In the early 1980s, as my Tibetan informants recalled, Hui merchants had already begun to capitalize on this interior design tradition by making khadens for the Tibetan market. Ding senior said he followed in the footsteps of his father and uncles, who used to trade hand-woven carpets in Lhasa. In the early 1990s, when Sichuan carpets took over the low-end market, Hui dealers stopped selling their handmade carpets in favour of acrylic carpets. Ding senior bought his khadens at wholesale prices in Linxia. These carpets, he said, were made in Tianjin or Shandong Province. Muslim carpet stores were the largest in the Barkhor. Usually, several dealers would set up their stores next to each other to create an impressive display of attractive products. They sold Tibetan-style acrylic khadens and back cushions. On the side they also sold a few handmade carpets that to me looked like Sichuan carpets, though the dealers claimed that they were made in Gyantse. Tibetan farmers, nomads, and pilgrims, the Ding brothers said, bought most of their khadens.

Unlike Han and Hui dealers, Tibetan carpet traders seek suppliers from South Asia. Yangye and her brother ran a carpet store on Mentsikhang Lam, near the Jokhang Temple in the centre of the old town. They are native Tibetans from Lhasa, although their mother is from Gyantse, where she learned carpet making. Yangye vaguely remembered her mother weaving carpets and teaching young weavers at home. None of the children inherited the mother’s skills. Instead, they sold imported carpets made in Nepal and India, which they ordered from overseas relatives several times a year. South Asian carpets, Yangye said, were the best and were a little cheaper than the carpets made in Lhasa. According to Yangye, few tourists would buy imported carpets and local demand was small. Yangye’s store had to sell wool cushions and electric blenders (for making butter tea) to supplement the sale of carpets. In the Barkhor I found three other carpet stores run by Tibetan migrants from Nepal or Kham (eastern Tibet). Their carpets resembled those in Yangye’s shop, and each khaden cost about 1,000 yuan. Tibetan dealers probably take advantage of their overseas connections to establish trade links with the Nepalese and Indian carpet factories.

Competition among the dealers was further complicated by rental regulations in the downtown neighbourhoods. Bai told me that rent for his shop was 1,500 yuan per month. If his monthly revenue exceeded
5,000 yuan, he had to pay additional taxes. He complained that this regulation did not apply to Tibetan renters. According to him, Hui dealers, who speak very good Tibetan, could evade this policy by collaborating with Tibetans and using Tibetan names to register their businesses.

The dealers’ stories reveal the structure of a commodity hierarchy of *khadens* and also demonstrate that the manufacturing and marketing of various *khadens* entail two major constellations of production centres and trade networks. Both constellations began to take shape long before the introduction of the post-Mao reforms and evolved rapidly under the influence of neoliberal globalization. The first constellation originated from the historical trading routes established by Hui and Tibetan communities across Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan, and the Tibet Autonomous Region. Some of these trading activities were banned under collectivization. However, these activities revived in the 1980s and were further expanded in the 1990s, when the widespread bankruptcy of state-owned factories ended the government monopoly over carpet production in the Chinese provinces. Newcomers like Bai relied on their previous work experience in government factories to tap into the *khaden* business. Bai in particular took advantage of his access to cheap labour to produce low-end handmade *khadens* that appeal to ordinary Tibetan buyers. The introduction of acrylic carpets in the 2000s shifted the dominant position of Sichuan dealers and expanded this constellation further east to include production centres in Shandong, Tianjin, and Guangdong provinces, where inexpensive labour, production materials, and technology are readily available.

The second important constellation emerged from the Sino-Tibet conflicts during the Cold War era. Carpet workshops were first established in Tibetan refugee settlement camps in India and Nepal (O’Neill 1999; Tsewang Phuntso 2003: 125). These workshops were initially organized as cooperatives under the direction of the Tibetan government-in-exile. The demand from overseas buyers (especially Western Europeans and North Americans) in the 1990s transformed the small *khaden* business into a major transnational export industry. As a result, the Tibetan carpet business in South Asia underwent significant changes in production technology, materials, designs, and labour force (O’Neill 1999: 26). Amid these developments Tibetan businesspeople from overseas have
expanded their activities to the TAR. In Lhasa I found at least four carpet factories involved with overseas Tibetan investors. In addition, Yangye’s story shows that family connections are also mobilized to facilitate small-scale trading activities across borders.

Within these constellations the dealers’ socio-economic positions – their cultural affiliation, technical knowledge, and communication and marketing skills – influence how they cope with the enhanced competition. The narratives about the Sichuan village carpets and the downtown rental policy suggest that intricate interethnic collaborations underlie the success or failure of the khaden business.

Furthermore, dealers’ various marketing strategies help circulate ideas about the quality and prices of khadens, thus consolidating a commodity hierarchy. The selling and marketing of the khadens from Chinese provinces and South Asia invest Tibetan-made khadens with a particular status and meaning. Lhasa khadens are generally perceived by dealers as very expensive because the local production costs are high. Foreign and local aspirations for reviving Tibetan culture further enhance the value of Lhasa khadens. These carpets have become a status commodity because they are made of Tibetan wool by Tibetans in Tibet.

In summary, I have closely examined the making of a commodity hierarchy in order to delineate the forms of contestation in the commercial khaden sector. I have analysed two parallel forms of politics of difference. One is the production of economic knowledge that identifies Tibetan culture as incompatible with the development of a market economy. This discourse informed China’s Tibet policy in the 1980s, a policy that opened new spaces of encounter through tourism, migration, and cross-regional trade. The other politics of difference involves Western tourists’ quest for an authentic Tibet, along with the rise of Tibetan cultural nationalism. This form of cultural politics has elevated the status of Tibetan khadens, placing them above Chinese carpets in the commodity hierarchy. Amid multi-directional flows of peoples, goods, and information, the commodity hierarchy is consolidated through the convergence of two major constellations of production centres and trade networks. One links the Tibetan capital city to producers and wholesalers in the Chinese provinces; the other connects the Lhasa khaden industry to the Tibetan diaspora in South Asia. Thus, the second form of politics of difference is also expressed through the shaping of a
particular commodity path for Lhasa *khaden*, which small dealers do not sell and most Tibetans do not use.

**Challenging the hierarchies**

The previous section analysed how various trading and marketing activities shape the structure and content of a *khaden* hierarchy. In this last section, I examine artisan-workers’ and managers’ activities in a privatized government factory to further explore the dynamic relationship between commodity and cultural hierarchies. In particular, I describe an incident in which a Tibetan factory owner wanted to create a new commercial carpet in collaboration with a Hui master. However, workers and managers resisted the owner’s initiative. In what follows, I demonstrate who has the power to determine the value and status of a commodity. I also look at the unequal power relations and discourses mobilized in the struggle over creating new commodities – both carpets and labour – on the shop floor.

Nima was a canny Tibetan businessman in his mid-forties. I came to know him as the executive director of Lhasa Carpets Ltd., a recently privatized government factory. The factory was founded in 1953 by the Tibetan government as a state workshop to produce high-quality *khaden* exclusively for the Dalai Lama. After the 1959 dissolution of the Tibetan regime, the socialist government transformed the workshop into a factory, producing inexpensive blankets and socks. In the early 1970s, the factory started to resume *khaden* production. Nima had worked at Lhasa Carpets since 2002, when the government dispatched him from his previous job at the TAR Economic Planning Commission and appointed him factory director. Nima claimed he had earned an MBA degree in a Chinese college, subsequently supervising reform programmes in several Tibetan enterprises. In 2005 Nima resigned from his position as a mid-level official (the carpet factory director). With several business partners, he bought the factory from the municipal government and turned Lhasa Carpets into a shareholding company – Lhasa Carpets Ltd. Nima became the biggest shareholder and the factory’s chief executive officer. Everyone listened to his orders and referred to him as ‘old chief’ (Chi.: *laozong*). I saw him in the factory inspecting products with production managers, giving speeches to workers, and accompanying customers to the weaving workshop. Fluent in Tibetan and Mandarin, he always wore a business suit and drove his Land Cruiser to work. "After
I bought the factory’s shares’, he told me, ‘I envisioned a new starting point. To quit my government job was like diving into the sea.’

Nima represented his switch to private business as his own individual choice. In fact, his decision corresponded to government policy, which, since the early 2000s, has pushed for the almost universal privatization of small and medium state-owned enterprises (Dickson 2007: 828). During our first interview, Nima claimed that ‘entrepreneurs move society forward. Without entrepreneurs, how could our society develop?’ He was also keen to talk about cultural problems in Tibetan development: ‘Although my blood and language are Tibetan, my way of thinking and doing business are actually drawn from Han culture. In Tibetans’ minds, businessmen are bad people. This is the old view.’ Justifying his factory rules, Nima continued: ‘Previously, I took additional expenses into account when I measured production cost, such as workers’ pensions, health plans, taxes, and other fees. So our production costs were very high. Now, I know I can make these costs lower. If I want to raise my workers’ wages, I have to first look at the entire industry [e.g., average production costs]. This is a market economy.’

During our conversation, Nima praised entrepreneurship in Guangdong, Fujian, and Zhejiang, three prosperous regions in China, arguing that Chinese mercantile culture is important to local economic success. However, he quickly pointed out the Tibetan characteristics of his business. ‘I am a Buddhist’, the former party cadre said. ‘I do not cheat while conducting business. From a Buddhist perspective, I want to increase wages. However, if I increase wages and do not have enough contracts, I will not be able to run my business.’

In the fall of 2006 Nima hired a new carpet master to experiment with Chinese knotting techniques to make decorative hanging rugs. Master Ma was a Hui from Ningxia who had acquired his skills in Mongolia and then, for many years, worked in the carpet factories of Tianjin. A special loom had been set up for him in the workshop. Ma, who did not speak Tibetan, worked quietly, rarely interacting with other workers. When I first met him he had been working for several weeks on a hanging rug decorated with intricate Tibetan auspicious symbols. Ma told me that Nima was keenly interested in his skills so he paid him 1,000 yuan per

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15. ‘Diving into the sea’ (xiāhai) is a Chinese phrase that became popular in the 1990s. It refers to quitting a secure government job in order to start one’s own business.
month, the highest salary in the factory. (On average, a weaver’s monthly wage ranged from 250 to 350 yuan in 2006.) Ma also revealed that he was negotiating with Nima to teach his skills to the other workers sometime in the near future.

Ma’s technique had actually been taught in this factory by Chinese masters more than a half century before. In the Dalai Lama’s workshop, the Tibetan government embraced Chinese production technology, including knotting, dyeing, and designing techniques, to make special *khadens* for government buildings. Chinese knotting resembles Persian techniques. The yarn is directly looped around warps to create a pile carpet surface. The most obvious difference between Tibetan and Chinese knotting is that the Tibetan method involves the use of a long rod with which the yarn is looped around warps to make the pile surface. In the early 1970s the TAR government ordered Lhasa Carpets to replace Chinese with Tibetan knotting in carpets for export. Nima, whose Lhasa Carpets Ltd. was the third reincarnation of the workshop, decided to resuscitate this legacy of the earlier Chinese technique.

A few weeks after I had met him, Master Ma invited me to his home for lunch. When the day came, he regretfully informed me that his wife was too busy to prepare good food, but he insisted that I come anyway to chat with him. During our conversation he told me that during the night, his hanging rug had been slit by people in the workshop. Then he revealed how difficult working at Lhasa Carpets Ltd. was for him. Some employees, especially the production manager, opposed his hiring because they believed that, since Tibetan carpets were superior to the Chinese, there was no need to hire a new master. As Ma spoke, he became emotional, directing my attention to two large sacks of raisins, dried apricots, and dates. He said he was once so disappointed by the situation in the factory that he considered giving up his job in favour of peddling sweets and dried fruits on the streets. Before I left his home, Ma quietly said that Nima finally agreed to hire him to teach workers the Chinese weaving method. Several days later I met with Nima in his office and spotted the sabotaged carpet. I asked Nima what had happened. ‘I want my workers to learn the Chinese knotting technique’, he explained. ‘But some of the workers and managers oppose this idea. They did not complain in front of me. Look, this tapestry was cut in the workshop. They reported to me that nobody saw who did it. They
thought that some workers’ children used a knife to slit the rug. I think this is an example of how they show their resentment.’ Then Nima compared the antagonism the workers felt towards Ma and the Chinese knotting technique with his own attitude. ‘I am a factory director’, he said. ‘I conduct business from a businessman’s point of view. If we do not adopt this technique, then we will eventually lose our competitive edge. Therefore, I want my workers to learn this technique. But my workers do not think in this way. They said that Tibetans make Tibetan carpets from generation to generation. They do not want to learn how to make Chinese-knot rugs.’ Nima suggested that the workers were conservative and suspicious of his initiative, but Ma claimed that the opposition came mainly from the production manager, a man who felt threatened by Ma’s rising position in the factory.

This incident at Lhasa Carpets Ltd. exposes several dimensions of the market assemblage I have discussed in the previous sections. The creation of a new kind of commercial carpet opened up a new space of encounter where relations of power drew on culture differences and an unequal distribution of skills. In this particular case the politics of difference was articulated not only through the commodity hierarchy of carpets, but also through the gendered hierarchy of labour. Here I shall examine this phenomenon from two angles.

First, the deployment of economic knowledge reinforces cultural hierarchies and in turn produces hierarchical subject positions for human actors. Nima portrayed himself to me as an agent of economic reform by showing that he knew all about the ‘market’. This knowledge was acquired through his professional training and his previous work experience with the government planning office. By evoking the term ‘market economy’, Nima justified his exploitative factory rules. More importantly, his ‘market’ expertise allowed him to occupy an ‘entrepreneurial’ position that gave him the power to define the meanings and value of commodities – both workers’ labour force and carpets. Ma’s wages were, for instance, much higher than the other workers.’ The ‘superior’ subject position that Nima occupied could not be fully consolidated without creating inferior subjects. In this case workers were condemned for being conservative and resisting change. In other words, Nima activated the well-known discourses on Tibetans’ conservatism and Chinese entrepreneurism to normalize the socio-economic inequality in the factory.
Nima’s politics of difference was further complicated by Tibetan cultural nationalism, which places Tibetan *khadens* above Chinese carpets in the commodity hierarchy. Thus, defining Tibetan-ness is central to the exchange value of *khadens*. Nima could establish his cultural authority by stressing his difference from Chinese businesspeople and his affiliation with Tibetan Buddhism. However, he still did not have complete control over defining Tibetan-ness in the carpets. Workers and managers could resist Nima’s demands by claiming their interests in protecting Tibetan culture embodied in the *khadens*, while, Nima used his economic theory to justify the need to adopt Chinese knotting. This economic justification again reinforced the dominant status of Chinese entrepreneurial culture in the cultural hierarchy.

Second, in addition to the politics of difference, the power relations in the factory drew upon inequalities between managers and workers, women and men, and Tibetans and non-Tibetans. Like City Carpets, Lhasa Carpets also recruited migrant workers, mostly young women from rural Tibet. The factory managers were mostly Tibetan men from Lhasa. The historical formation of this patriarchal relation of production is complex and beyond the scope of this chapter. What is relevant here is that this gendered labour hierarchy was intensified under the influence of the enterprise reforms in the 1990s because the reforms gave managers power to hire migrant labourers. These women were not protected by any government welfare programmes and thus remained vulnerable to exploitation (Zhang 2007, 2012b).

Ma’s presence in the workshop challenged the labour and gender hierarchies on the shop floor in two important ways. First, Ma possessed unique technical knowledge highly valued by Nima. His master status threatened the Tibetan managers’ position in the factory. Second, Ma’s presence disturbed the existing labour relations that depended on gender-based inequalities. If Ma continued to work in the factory and taught women Chinese knotting, the women could use their new skills as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the Tibetan managers. Ma’s experience of alienation and discrimination was exacerbated by his difficulty in communicating with Tibetan workers and a disturbed social order on the shop floor. More significantly, the damaged tapestry revealed people’s anxiety over the widening inequalities at Lhasa Carpets Ltd., and also demonstrated their resistance to Nima’s power.
over defining the terms of valuing commodities, in terms of both carpets and artisan labour.

Conclusion

Critics have argued that the ‘harmonious society’ discourse signals the government’s new approach to national development, a response to the Chinese Communist Party’s crisis of legitimacy in the twenty-first century (Guo and Guo 2008). These researchers also suggest that the CCP’s political influence is increasingly dependent on the extent to which the Party’s administrative body can make effective policies to build ‘a harmonious society’ and to regulate ‘the socialist market economy’. Their analyses of the ‘harmonious society’ are based on a premise that the government stands outside the society and market.

In this chapter, through the case of the commercial *khaden* sector, I offer an alternative epistemological approach to examining reform activities in Tibet in the twenty-first century. This approach aims to avoid state-market and state-society dichotomies that normalize the centrality of state actors in marketization and gloss over the agency of non-state actors and the effects of economic discourses, trading networks, and uneven distribution of technical knowledge. Furthermore, the chapter contributes to the literature on the politics of difference by shifting the focus from identity-based cultural politics to subject-position based cultural politics, and by linking the hierarchy of culture to the hierarchy of commodity. These aspects shed new light on the emerging space of contestation and forms of inequality that prevail in contemporary Tibetan society. Three main findings emerge from this research.

First, state regulations and rules are not detrimental to market formation; rather, they constitute part of a socio-technical assemblage – marketization. These regulations contribute to producing spaces of encounter in which relations of power mobilize various forms of inequality among human actors, voluntarily or involuntarily induced into such space. In particular, the discrepancy between what policies claim to achieve and what policies actually do to the people on the ground varies from one context to another. Politics – the transformation of power relations – is found in the uncertainty and irregularity that is produced by such discrepancy.

Second, the production of economic discourses, narratives, and texts has come to dominate the politics of difference in the post-Mao
era. However, the fact that Tibetan khadens have a higher status than Chinese carpets in the commodity hierarchy suggests that the Tibetan nationalist discourse and cultural preservationist discourse to some degree contest the economic discourse.

Third, the structure of the commodity hierarchy of khadens is shaped by the politics of difference. The content of this commodity hierarchy is consolidated through the convergence of two trade and production constellations that organize the conception, production, and circulation of khadens. In addition to the dominant Chinese entrepreneurial culture, four main forms of inequality underpin the complex interactions among various human actors, production centres, trading networks, and pricing devices. As I have shown, these four inequalities include rural-urban, cultural, socio-economic, and skill/knowledge inequalities.

This chapter has shown that market reform is intrinsically linked to the politics of difference and the hierarchies of culture. The official view of ‘social harmony’ also conveys a particular cultural-moral order that the Chinese government aspires to achieve. State-oriented research ultimately prioritizes the state’s view of and interventions in pursuit of the ‘harmonious society’. Like the other chapters in this book, my findings demonstrate the importance of paying attention to people’s everyday engagements with multiple hierarchies (e.g. culture, labour, commodity, and value) to understand the ongoing marketization processes in China’s peripheral regions.

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CARPET WORLDS


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CHAPTER FIVE

In the name of conservation and harmonious development: The separation of pastoralists from pastures in Tibet

Tashi Nyima

Introduction

The main focus of this chapter is to explore the practice of development as a state strategy in contemporary Tibet in light of the implementation of the nationwide Pastures to Grasslands (Chi.: tuimu huancao, hereafter PG) campaign aimed at protecting the ecology and preventing the overall degradation of the vast grasslands of China. In the Sanjiangyuan Tibetan area, the policy is associated in local government discourse with the concept of ‘ecological migration’ (Chi.: shengtai yimin), which is a component of the Chinese state’s plan to create a harmonious socialist countryside. The State Council, the highest body within the Chinese government, launched the nationwide PG campaign in 2003 with the stated objective of protecting grassland ecology and preventing degradation. The grasslands in China have been classified into three conservation zones on the basis of degree of degradation and conservation priorities: prohibited grazing, which bans grazing completely for a given time period; seasonal grazing, which allows grazing seasonally; and rotational grazing, in which permission to graze is based on the quality of the pastures regardless of time limit or season (Wang 2006). The State Council relayed the policy directives to the pastoral provinces based on what it called the ‘five to the provinces’ principle, which transferred the target, task, funding, grain, and responsibility to the provinces for implementation (ibid.). Local governments in Sanjiangyuan (Tib.: gtsang gsum chu mgo) started to implement the PG policy between late
2003 and early 2004. Intervention in the form of ecological migration programmes in Sanjiangyuan likewise affected the pastures and pastoral livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Tibetan herders.

This chapter examines one such community subjected to ecological migration in the Yulshul Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. It analyses the perspectives and voices of diverse actors, focusing specifically on the process of resettlement and efforts to create post-resettlement livelihoods in this previously pastoral community. I argue that, contrary to the official representation of Tibetan herders as ‘passive’ recipients of development aid and intervention, herders in Yulshul (Chi.: Yushu) have actively engaged, whether through peaceful resistance within the framework of the state system or public defiance in the streets, in shaping the processes and outcomes of sustainable development interventions and their impact on local subsistence capacities. At the same time, despite the diverse interfaces of strategies and counter-strategies, the planned state interventions have had severe and adverse effects on local subsistence-based lifestyles. The questions thus raised in this chapter are: How do these diverse actors in Sanjiangyuan in general and Yulshul in particular experience, strategize, resist, negotiate, and, above all, deploy development in the context of planned development interventions? What are the wider implications of such encounters on pastoral livelihoods and on the relationship between local Tibetans and the Chinese state? Rather than focusing on the macro-level policy rationale of conservation and grassland degradation in Sanjiangyuan dealt with elsewhere (Nyima 2010; see also Cencetti, ch. 6 in this volume), this chapter specifically explores grassroots interventions and the responses of herders in the ‘actor interface’, mainly that between officials and herders. The advantage of the ‘actor interface’ approach, according to Long and Liu (2009), is that it provides access to the self-organizing process of human agency and life-worlds of individual actors in determining mutual relationships between actors. It is, in this respect, useful for elucidating how the relationship between Tibetan herders and local state officials has been shaped and strategized in the wake of planned interventions. Furthermore, this chapter will show that there has in fact been an increase in the modes of interface, which I call ‘diversification of interfaces’. In what follows I first provide an introduction to the sustainable development discourse in Sanjiangyuan and outline the case of
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resettlement in Gyewa. This will be followed by mapping the diversification of modes of interaction between state agents and local herdsmen, specifically with regard to pastoral subsistence capacity. Finally, I shall discuss the impact of official interventions on the ecologically protected area Sanjiangyuan, which has led to the emergence of a variety of new grassroots actors and forms of resistance.

The issue of effectively conserving biodiversity in the process of development has been intensely discussed in recent conservation and development studies. The debate is primarily confined to two conservation–development models, namely the modernist protectionist ‘fortress conservation’ model and the ‘postmodern’ community-based participatory model. The general pattern is that the community-based approach takes precedence in the wake of the failure of the protectionist approach in a constructive yet critical debate, and vice versa (Fletcher 2010). Early critiques targeted the modernist discursive context of ‘external’ actors – that is, national and international institutions – and the way development practice was being articulated, including the top-down and technocratic styles of engagement (Escobar 1999; Ferguson 1999; Randeria 2003; Scott 1999). Later critiques mainly concentrated on the ideological perception of development and conservation, that is, the modernist perception of nature as separate and distinct from its indigenous inhabitants and their knowledge of nature. In both sets of criticism, power relations embedded in institutions, knowledge, and discourse play a central role in the interface between the intervening forces and the impacted actors when defining conservation and development (Campbell 2005; De Vries 2007; Ferguson 1994, 1999; Mazzullo 2005; Smith 2007). At the same time, resistance to state development projects and programmes has been an important theme in studies of contention politics in rural China (O’Brien and Li 2006). Of particular relevance in terms of local resistance to planned sustainable development intervention in contemporary Tibet is, therefore, not only Scottian forms of everyday cultural resistance (in contrast to socio-political movements) (Scott 1985), but also the concept of ‘rightful resistance’ of O’Brien and Li (2006), which provides a middle ground to the idea of resistance in rural China. According to O’Brien and Li, rightful resistance has been understood as resistance or counter-discourse based on the rights and norms of the Party-state in the wake of addressing local grievances. I argue that a similar form of resistance, in
addition to the two conventional forms, exists and is prevalent in Yulshul, where this study has been carried out.

With the combination of ‘environmentality’¹ and the critique of modernist development as the point of departure, this chapter enquires into the implementation of PG as a sustainable development practice, its goals, and its effects on pastoral livelihoods – particularly in relation to subsistence capacity (Fischer 2008). More specifically, it explores the practice of development as a state strategy in contemporary Tibet. Apart from conservation, the policy objective also comprises the redesigning of new pastoral communities in Sanjiangyuan under the overall development philosophy of the ‘harmonious society’ proposed by the incumbent president Hu Jintao. The inclusion of an ecological dimension in the official development discourse has given birth to the concept of ‘harmonious development’ (Chi.: hexie fazhan), which aims to create so-called human–human (Chi.: ren yu ren) and human–nature (Chi.: ren yu ziran) harmony. Official fora as well as officially sponsored academic reports in China have prescribed what they call ‘the road to harmonious development’ (Lu 2011; Palmer et al. 2012), despite a somewhat vague definition of the concept per se. In Sanjiangyuan, the idea has widely been used in official documents emerging from local-level policy implementation. For example, the tuimuban, a national-level working group, has described the PG implementation as follows:

The construction of an ecological compensation mechanism is in accordance with the ecological culture strategy proposed by the Seventeenth Party Congress. It is also in line with the development needs of a prosperous society. More importantly, it is in agreement with the goal of constructing a socialist and harmonious society through scientific development. (Tuimuban 2007: 1)²

The local government has thus aimed to create harmony with nature as well as within society through this conservation and development intervention. In other words, harmonious development in Sanjiangyuan, unlike a purely conservation-based approach, is designed to harmoniously bring about economic growth, ecological protection, and social stability. The official figure for grassland degradation in Sanjiangyuan

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¹ Environmentality, according to Agrawal (2005), denotes the creation of new environmentally oriented subjects through technologies of self and power.

² All translations from Chinese and Tibetan into English are the author’s own.
is more than 90 per cent,\(^3\) aggravated by overgrazing and global warming and resulting in increased drought, desertification, and soil erosion. Located at an average altitude of 4,300 metres above sea level in southern Qinghai, Sanjiangyuan covers an area of 363,100 square kilometres, constituting 43 per cent of Qinghai Province. Sanjiangyuan covers 16 counties, one township, and one municipality scattered throughout the Yulshul and Golok Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures, as well as in the Malho, Tsholho Tibetan, and Mongolian Autonomous Prefectures in the Kham and Amdo regions. As a newly created ‘protected area’ (Chi.: bao hu qu), Sanjiangyuan is not, however, an administrative entity. Its 662,000 inhabitants, of which 573,000 are Tibetan herders (Sanjiangyuan Bangongshe 2007: 18), account for a total of 22 million sheep equivalent units (SU).\(^4\) The Yulshul Prefecture studied in this chapter was one of the first prefectures to implement the PG policy in Qinghai Province. This prefecture comprises 267,000 square kilometres and constitutes 73 per cent of Sanjiangyuan and 37 per cent of Qinghai Province (Tuimuban 2007). The sources of all three of the great rivers – the Yangtze, the Yellow, and the Mekong – are located within Yulshul prefecture. Three years prior to the implementation of PG, the Qinghai provincial government had selected an area of 152,300 square kilometres and designated it the Sanjiangyuan Nature Reserve.

Tibetan pastoralism has been studied by scholars in China focusing mainly on grassland degradation, regrassing, and biodiversity.\(^5\) In contrast, Western-based scholars have primarily dealt with socio-economic issues in relation to state development interventions or macro-level discourses, including changes to subsistence practices, household income, and job opportunities.\(^6\) Scholars generally agree that the traditional subsistence economy based on land and livestock provides Tibetan herders with a basic income to survive and to make employment decisions. The

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3. Official Chinese data have often been criticized as unreliable when used in academic work outside China. In this chapter I use official data primarily to reconstruct official arguments and rationales rather than to prove the reliability or validity of any hypothesis. Thus, such criticisms have little relevance for this particular analysis.

4. In this system of ‘sheep equivalent units’ (SU), 1 yak = 5 sheep; 1 horse = 4 sheep.

5. Studies on Tibetan pastoralism in China include, among others, Chen (2008); Deng and Liang (2003); Hou and Shi (2002); Wang and Zheng (1999); Zhang et al. (2004).

6. Examples of studies by Western-based scholars are Costello (2008); Ding and Neilson (2004); Fischer (2008); Goldstein et al. (2010); Gruschke (2008); Miller (2000); Yeung and Shen (2004).
On the Fringes of the Harmonious Society

notion of subsistence capacity is relevant here because it measures the non-conventional and non-monetary wealth of rural Tibetan households. Andrew Fischer (2008) argues that while subsistence capacity is difficult to capture using conventional economic measurements, it provides a measure of the material independence necessary to respond to rapid socio-economic change, and is therefore an important tool for evaluating rural Tibetans’ ability to subsist on household production (Fischer 2008; Goldstein et al. 2010). Rural Tibetan households, according to Fischer, aim to maintain a combination of land and livestock assets at a level sufficient to meet minimum subsistence needs. Likewise, drawing on Fischer’s conclusions on subsistence capacity, Andreas Gruschke (2008) argues that while herders in Yulshul prefer to maintain their traditional subsistence economy, they tend to augment their own livelihood opportunities by harvesting and selling caterpillar fungus and investing in education. Thus, as the present chapter corroborates, although state development interventions have a major impact on the herders’ subsistence capacity, Tibetans are not deprived of agency.

The resettlement community that I present here is Gyewa, a pastoral township (Tib.: ‘bro g ba), which is different from the semi-nomadic settlements (Tib.: sa ma ‘bro g) found elsewhere in Tibet.7 Gyewa was an inhabited valley before the local government turned it into the largest ‘model’ resettlement community in the prefecture. The herders have been resettled here from Rawa (also a fictitious name), a township located approximately 75 kilometres from the prefecture centre of Kyegu. I met these resettled herders over the course of three and a half months of fieldwork conducted in Yulshul and Karze Tibetan prefectures in 2007, and have continued communicating with them to the present day. Being a Khampa Tibetan myself, I speak the local dialect of Yulshul. I am also fluent in Chinese, which was particularly useful when interviewing local Han officials. The downside of being a native Tibetan was that in my encounters with the agents of the state I had to downplay my background as a Tibetan living in the West. Fortunately, whenever I introduced myself as a student from the University of Oslo, it was assumed that I was a Tibetan studying abroad, and not someone living outside Tibet for political reasons. I believe that this ‘misunderstanding’

7. Pseudonyms are used throughout this chapter both for the settlement and for the individuals I have spoken to.
worked in my favour and helped to some extent to evade the political sensitivities involved, although I still had to stay alert to avoid surveillance as I moved in and out of the community. For the herders, the fact that I was living abroad often awakened their curiosity in Tibetans in exile and the Dalai Lama. All in all, I conducted structured interviews with 25 pastoral households in Gyewa, and had in addition more than 50 informal conversations. Moreover, I conducted in-depth interviews over time with eight local intellectuals, five NGO staff members, and ten local officials, including village-level officials.

**Sustainable development discourse in Sanjiangyuan**

With 7.5 billion yuan for the protection of the forests, wetlands, and wild animals of the grasslands, the PG was the second largest central government investment on the Tibetan Plateau, second only to the Qinghai–Tibet railway (China Tibet Information 2004). Prefecture governments established new offices in the Bureaus of Agriculture in almost all counties in Sanjiangyuan, which then formed workstations in every pastoral village committee (Chi.: muweihui), the lowest rung of the state administrative structure. To monitor the conservation work according to a specific restoration plan for Sanjiangyuan, a province-based agency, the Sanjiangyuan Bangongshe, was established in 2005. The central government invested funds to protect the nature reserve and limited the provincial authority over what became known as the ‘water tower of China’ (Chi.: zhonghua shuita), a huge water reservoir, by declaring it to be ‘protected by law’. The central government’s funding had been allocated for the purposes of replanting, grassland fencing, regrassing programmes, and resettlement (Li 2005), but only a small fraction of the budget was in fact used for resettlement, despite the fact that as many as 50,000 herders had been relocated by 2009 (Ren 2009).

The Sanjiangyuan Nature Reserve was divided into a core zone, a buffer zone, and an experimental zone, and then further sub-divided into 18 conservation areas irrespective of winter and summer pastures. In contrast to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), the implementation of the PG in Qinghai particularly emphasized the policy of ecological migration, which is normally implemented where serious ecological conditions threaten human survival (Xie 2010). However, grassland degradation in Qinghai, including Sanjiangyuan, has not been reported
to be any worse than in the TAR; in fact, if anything, the situation is less critical. According to the policy plan in Sanjiangyuan, approximately two-thirds of the herders came under the ‘restriction of livestock based on pasture’ (Chi.: yicao dingchu) programme, while resettlement had only affected one-fourth of all herders and one-third of the total livestock as of 2007. At the same time, one-sixth of the pasturage was slated to be returned to grasslands (Chen 2008: 110). While some scholars (Deng and Liang 2003; Zhang et al. 2004) supported the policy, critics (Wang 2006) have accused the Qinghai government of misinterpreting the central government’s policy for pastoral resettlement. One provincial official with whom I talked dismissed the criticism, saying, ‘If we misinterpreted the programme, we did so under the careful instruction of the central government’. Even so, a number of Western scholars have criticized the official rationale – that overgrazing has led to degradation – as based on faulty assumptions and illogical conclusions (Goldstein 1996; Harris 2010; Miller 2000).

The central government of the PRC has operated with a ‘Marxist’ developmentalist perspective that depicts pastoralism as a primitive form of human development and views settling herders as a form of progress. The current resettlement pattern (Chi.: banqian/shengtai yimin) is different from the settlements (Chi.: dingju) for relocated Tibetan herders established in the course of earlier schemes that had been carried out in conjunction with the privatization of pastoral land since the late 1980s. According to my findings in Yulshul, these previous resettlement schemes did not require Tibetan herders to give up pastoral practice altogether; they could move into modern houses and have a strictly regulated number of livestock grazing on the summer pastures. This is still the main policy practice in the TAR. In contrast, according to the new policies, herders are supposed to give up pastoral practice altogether and relocate to towns. Hundreds of resettlement communities for collective migration have been constructed in the nearby towns across Sanjiangyuan, but herders are also allowed to move individually to the place of their choice as long as they vacate the grasslands. The rationale

8. On the validity of the official explanation for degradation, see Nyima 2010.
9. Resettlement has been divided into three types: self-determined (Chi.: zizhu banqian), which refers to free resettlement and individual relocation into towns without being part of a collective resettlement programme; organized resettlement (zhengti banqian) refers to collective relocations such as the one to Gyewa; and scattered resettlement (lisan banqian).
behind ‘sustainable development’ interventions is based on the ecological goal of restoring the once ‘pristine nature’, but also on ‘developing’ the traditional, remote, and backward community of herders, a goal that is linked to social harmony and stability. The planned intervention is therefore described as a ‘win−win’ (Chi.: shuangying) strategy (Wang 2009a). Official discourse describing the socio-economic and political objectives of state-planned development in Sanjiangyuan mirrors the discourse on the overall development of Tibet after its incorporation into the PRC, in which modernity had to be imposed on an isolated and backward Tibet, as the following excerpt illustrates:

In the past people from inland China did not have access to Sanjiangyuan due to its remoteness, while people from Sanjiangyuan rarely went out of their homeland. This self-imposed isolation was thus the root cause of its underdevelopment, thereby affecting ethnic unity and social stability. Development [in this case] is to break open such isolation, raise pastoralist income, and speed up socio-economic improvement. Given its strategic location at the crossroads of the Tibetan regions of the Tibet Autonomous Region, Sichuan, Gansu, and Qinghai, Sanjiangyuan plays an important role in achieving ethnic harmony, social stability, and national security. (Cao 2007: 33)

The Tibetan regions are the least urbanized in China, with an urbanization rate of between 18 and 20 per cent, compared to China’s overall national average of 35 per cent (Gele et al. 2006). The central government wanted to speed up urbanization and marketization, which it considers the combined key to ‘restoring’ the grasslands and exercising effective control. ‘Urbanization’ (Chi.: chengzhenhua) means constructing compact settlements with modern houses in and around market towns, but it also entails an ‘administrative urbanization’ (Yeh and Henderson 2008) aimed at strengthening local government institutions. Whether one agrees with the development discourse or not, development itself is defined by a single intervening actor – the state – and the pastoral resettlement policy has been enforced with far-reaching consequences for pastoral subsistence capacity, as will be shown below. On the one hand, herders have been perceived as passive recipients of state development schemes in a dichotomized relationship of developer versus underdeveloped. On the other hand, the state mission of sustainable development has been portrayed as both scientific and rational. It is articulated primarily within a discourse
of regulating the behaviour of the herders, who are presumed to have ‘destroyed’ the grassland ecology through overgrazing and overpopulation. At the same time, being situated at a strategic location in terms of both natural resources and political control, Sanjiangyuan has thus been an important target for state sustainable development discourse regardless of what that means in actual practice.

**Restoring pastures to grasslands in Yulshul Prefecture**

According to the central plans, Sanjiangyuan is supposed to reduce by one-third its total number of herders and livestock, and more than one-third of the total pasturage must be returned to grasslands (Chen 2008). In the first three years after the policy was implemented in 2004, Yulshul prefecture had returned a total of 34.24 million *mu* of pasture to grassland,\(^{10}\) which represented 19.6 per cent of the total usable grassland area of the prefecture. Approximately 20,000 herders (6.7 per cent of the total population) and 1.66 million SU of livestock had been removed from the pastures as of 2007 (Yulshul Prefecture Government 2007). The total number of livestock within the prefecture has been officially reported as 2.7 million head, while the reduction as stated above is given in terms of SU (sheep units), which makes it all the more confusing.

According to the proposed plan of the Yulshul Prefecture government, a total of 270 million yuan has been allocated annually to compensate resettled herders in 20 resettlement communities during the 10-year project period. The annual compensation fund includes 500 yuan per *mu* of pasture, and between 400 and 800 yuan per SU, depending on the market price.\(^{11}\) In addition, a one-time allowance of 15,000 yuan was to be allocated to cover water, electricity, fuel, and transportation costs, and another 30,000 yuan was supposed to be allocated to cover living expenses such as the cost of meat, cooking oil, flour, rice, and vegetables. According to the Yulshul Prefecture government project proposal in 2009, 31,084 herders had been designated for resettlement in the prefecture alone (ibid.), which amounted to a little more than 60 per cent of the total number of resettled herders officially reported for the entire region of Sanjiangyuan by the end of 2009 (Xinhua 2009).

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\(^{10}\) 1 *mu* = 0.000666 square kilometres.

\(^{11}\) As of August 2007, 7.5 yuan = US$1.
The Gyewa resettlement comprises 229 households and 848 herders (Yulshul County Government 2005), who were the first pastoral group from a series of resettlement plans from Rawa Township in Yulshul County. As noted above, the prefecture government had promised the resettled herders 15,000 yuan (approximately $2,000) per household per year for ten years to cover living expenses, including water and energy costs in the new settlement. Herders who held a grassland-use certificate received an additional 6,000 yuan per year, while those without such a certificate received an additional 3,000 yuan.12 The county agricultural department distributed the payments to households, which constituted the primary unit for compensation purposes regardless of the number of household members. The actual amount of compensation that herders received in hand is a different matter that I will return to later. The duration of the project was fixed at ten years, after which the herders in theory could return to their grassland homes if they chose to do so.

Usable grasslands in Rawa amounted to 95.6 per cent of the total area of the township in 2002, and the number of livestock was only 107,000 SU, far below the ‘carrying capacity’ of 195,500 SU, according to official sources (Yulshul County Government 2005). As is illustrated in Table 5.1, the figures contradict the official assumptions that there is a posi-

Table 5.1: Pastoral conditions in Rawa Township before and after the implementation of the PG in 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total grass-land in mu (sq. km.)</th>
<th>Livestock in SU</th>
<th>Total households</th>
<th>Av. livestock per household</th>
<th>Popula-</th>
<th>Av. area of land per person (mu)</th>
<th>Net income per person (yuan)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>3,612,500 (2,303)</td>
<td>140,000</td>
<td>1,267</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>6,223</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>3,612,500 (2,303)</td>
<td>102,708</td>
<td>1,740</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>8,533</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2,790,200 (1,858)</td>
<td>72,708</td>
<td>1,085</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>6,533</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sources*: Yushu zhouzhi (2005: 89); Yulshul County Government (2005: 1).

12. The certificate was issued around 2001 as legal recognition of individual household pastures when the collective land was individualized. In practice, however, the lack of a certificate did not jeopardize the actual use of the pasture; it only mattered when compensation was distributed. The certificate was supposed to be valid for 50 years when it was issued in 2001, but was invalidated for the resettled herders after the PG was implemented two years later.
tive correlation between population size and livestock number and that grassland degradation is due to overstocking beyond capacity. As far as population in Rawa is concerned, there was an increase between 1996 and 2002, mainly due to migration and natural growth. After the PG and resettlement programmes were implemented in 2002, their impact was obvious from both population and livestock decline. In terms of official statistical representation, there was also a visible economic gap between the herders and urban residents. Although the average per capita net income for herders more than doubled from 659 yuan in 1996 to 1,520 yuan in 2002 (Yushu Zhouzhi 2005; Yulshul Prefecture Government 2009), the average rural net income, which includes farmers and traders in addition to herders, was still only 1,335 yuan (Qinghai Yearbook 2002), whereas the average urban net income was 6,950 yuan in Yulshul (Qinghai Yearbook 2003). On the basis of these figures, officials argue that rural herders should be transformed into town residents.

There were a total of 1,740 households in Rawa in 2002, including 1,085 with grassland certificates and 655 without. The government planned to limit the livestock of 1,080 households according to ‘the availability of pasture’. Furthermore, the plan called for 662 households to be resettled, of which 505 households had already relocated. Table 5.2 shows the figures for the implementation plan in Rawa, Yulshul. Of the 229 households resettled from Rawa to Gyewa, only 91 held grassland certificates at the time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total area pasture</th>
<th>Restoration</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Resettlement</th>
<th>Total livestock</th>
<th>Reduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3,455,000 mu</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>8,533</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>102,708 SU</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Thus far I have presented some facts and figures concerning pastoralism in Rawa. I shall now take a chronological look at the planned intervention on the ground, starting with the grassroots encounters between local officials and herders.

Officials from the State Council all the way down to the local government carried out the policy intervention in Sanjiangyuan (Luo 2003). According to my interlocutors, a delegation of prefecture and county
government officials primarily from the *tuimuban*, a working group on the policy implementation headed by the county leader, visited Rawa Township in 2003. The group outlined the plan, detailing the array of advantages of moving herders to the town. The pastoral resettlements were frequently covered in the media, and were interpreted as the arrival of a long-awaited development (Chen 2009), a radical ‘modernization’ campaign. The Yulshul County government report of 2005, referring to the relocation of ‘herders to town’ (*mumin jincheng*), also portrayed Gyewa as an instance of successfully coordinated rural-to-urban development. Nonetheless, when the visiting delegation asked the herders in Rawa how many would choose to resettle, the response was largely negative. There were only ten households willing to resettle, and those were declared ‘model’ households. One male informant, whose family was among them, regretted this choice in retrospect. ‘In the beginning, we were so ignorant and illiterate both in Tibetan and Chinese’, he said. ‘We barely knew what was about to happen except that we had to resettle to find a better life in the town. We thought it was good for us.’ In a similar vein, another herder described the government officials’ visit to Rawa, noting that it was they who first introduced him to the idea of turning herders into town residents:

The idea of being left without livestock and moved from our ancestral home was not even dreamt of until the officials came to implement their policy. We were ‘ordered’ [Tib. *bka’ rgya gtong song*] to leave our home for a brighter future than we had enjoyed previously. What could we do and say? We did not dare go against the will of the government. Neither did we understand much about the real intentions of the policy, since we could not read or write. We were told about the many positive sides of the new life, such as new housing, good money, good jobs, better access to schools, to the town market, to medical services, and so on.

During the first meetings the abrupt policy implementation had initially generated strong scepticism and uncertainty across the pastoral community, as reflected in the low approval rate. When the majority of the pastoral households rejected the plan in defence of their traditional way of life, local officials intensified their campaign and tactically ‘persuaded’ the herders with a mixture of promises and threats. Rumours were also spread within the community to the effect that it was the model households that were portrayed to have benefited immensely.
At the same time, the government policy was metaphorically likened to a king’s command – it was perceived as too powerful to resist or reverse. Lack of trust characterized the relationship between officials and herders, particularly the older generation. The memory of violence and upheavals that the older generation narrated was a reminder of the unpredictability of government policies. Many of these elders had, back in the 1950s and 1960s, joined the resistance movement against the Chinese annexation of Tibet. Moreover, they were much more place-bound than their younger counterparts, who were receptive to new ideas and experiences, including moving to a ‘modern’ town.

In the face of the reluctance to accept the government plan, the officials adopted a ‘stick and carrot’ strategy in order to get the herders’ fingerprint signatures in support of the plan. The herders were told that the ‘benevolent’ treatment in the form of the aforementioned promises might not be available if they had to be removed by force. The strategy was effective and created a sense of urgency in the minds of those who had yet to decide what to do. In the end, 219 households agreed to relocate, and the government subsequently contracted the remaining households to ‘look after’ the restricted pastures. Although they had no concrete ideas as to how the government could fulfil its promises, there was a strong belief among the officials I interviewed that the herders would gradually adapt to the market conditions and learn to make ends meet in the town. In interviews, local officials also described the implementation as ‘dialogue-based’, insisting that they took the herders’ interests into account. However, when asked why he first opposed the project but later accepted it, a herder in his early forties retorted, ‘The government promised us this and promised us that if we would live in the new community. I thought that the education for our kids, job opportunities, and financial compensation we were supposed to receive sounded very nice. I agreed to move because of these things, but also because I had few options left, given the fact that I had only a few animals and little land. Nevertheless, I still knew very little about how those promises would be fulfilled.’ In accepting the overall resettlement plan, herders like him had hoped that something good might come of it. At the same time, there were resettled herders who, in order to influence the outcome of the PG intervention, adopted diverse strategies that were shaped by factors such as quantity of livestock, wealth, age, and kinship.
The new life: From subsistence to state dependence

The reaction of herders was detrimental to the realization of the stated goal expressed in terms of livestock reduction. Medium-income and wealthier households resisted the plan because it was to their economic advantage not to be resettled. Given the high prices of pastoral products such as meat and butter, these herders had a vested economic interest in maintaining their traditional livelihood, not to mention other reasons. As a counter-strategy, in some pastoral households, young people between the ages of 20 and 40 resettled, while their parents or close relatives remained on the grasslands to continue raising some of their livestock. In this regard, those remaining behind were able to supply meat and butter for consumption to those who resettled in the town home. In other words, some herders concealed their livestock through this kinship relation. It is difficult to say how prevalent this strategy was within the resettlement community of Gyewa because it was practised in secret, but it has also been observed by Cencetti (ch. 6 in this volume).

Despite such livestock-maintaining strategies on the part of the herders, the local official work group in Rawa reported having reduced the total number of livestock by 30,200 SU (approximately one-third of the original 102,708 SU) by 2005, only two years after the implementation.

In the official discourse, new houses were an important symbol of modernity in Tibetan pastoral regions (see also Cencetti, this volume). Two hundred and ten houses of 60 square metres and 9 houses of 80 square metres each were built in Gyewa. Each household had to pay 15,000 yuan for what the officials described as ‘construction fees’ for its new house. This surprised the herders, as it meant that they did not receive any compensation for the first few years (the compensation being automatically deducted to pay for the construction fees). Each house had room divisions with no specific space designated for kitchen, bathroom, or toilet. There was only one public toilet in the middle of the settlement, near a basketball court. A two-story public security tower was erected for surveillance at a strategic location overlooking the community. The high-walled building stood out in sharp contrast to the other houses in terms of both quality and size. The school that had

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13. On the basis of my own fieldwork data on livestock in Rawa, I distinguish between poor households (those that owned 10–100 SU), medium-income households (those with 100–300 SU), and rich households (more than 300 SU).
been promised for the children had yet to be built. Before making the move, the herders had viewed the resettlement programme as both an economic and an educational opportunity, and it was especially the latter that incited them to relocate. According to the official register there were 130 school-age children within the community, 98 per cent of whom were enrolled in school, mostly in Kyegu town (Yulshul County Government 2005: 6). Nevertheless, during fieldwork I frequently observed children of a variety of ages playing in the playground in the resettlement area even during school hours. It is, however, difficult to conclusively verify or discredit the official data.

When asked what they thought about the new houses, one respondent said, ‘They are nice, but we are herders, and are not used to living in this kind of compact settlement. We still prefer our traditional home’, he said, referring to their nomadic black tents. Government officials nevertheless boasted of the development and design in their report about Gyewa: ‘The houses have been scientifically constructed; [they are] economically low-cost, environmentally friendly, culturally Tibetan, and seismically resistant’ (Yulshul County Government 2005: 17). However, when a 7.1 magnitude earthquake struck in April 2010, I was told that 90 per cent of the houses in Gyewa were damaged, 98 herders lost their lives, and 130 were injured.

Several counter-narratives about the PG intervention circulated among the herders, even though they had agreed to resettle. Questions were raised regarding the intention of the government: Perhaps the real reason behind the collective relocation was to make way for the mining companies? Maybe the government moved the herders simply to keep them under better control? Or was the true reason for resettlement the fact that corrupt local officials were after their livestock and land? In addition to this distrust, a sense of uprootedness was palpable, especially as livelihood pressure was on the rise. After more than a year without compensation they had used up the money made from selling their livestock and, in most cases also being unemployed, the herders ended up struggling to make ends meet.

The herders I interviewed in Gyewa waxed nostalgic whenever they were asked to recount the differences between their former way of life in Rawa and their new lives in the settlement. The separation from pasture and livestock had almost brought an end to their traditional subsistence
In the 1990s cheap wool imported from the United States and Australia drove down prices for locally produced wool, diminishing the subsistence capacity of herders throughout the rural areas (Fischer 2008; Gruschke 2008; Miller 2000). In Raw, however, the falling prices did not affect herders’ livelihoods as severely as it did elsewhere, as wool was not the main commodity in the township. In addition to the sale of caterpillar fungus, the dominant sources of income included meat, butter, cheese, and yoghurt, and those commodities had maintained a rising price trajectory for decades. By the time of my fieldwork, not only had the traditional pastoral way of life come to an end for those herders who had been turned into town residents, but their subsistence capacity and real income had diminished, and most of the resettled herders were unemployed. One herder in his forties narrated his life prior to and following resettlement as follows:

When we were in our pastoral home, we had around 60 yaks, in addition to sheep and other livestock. We had [enough] meat and butter to eat, and milk and yoghurt to drink. In spite of the hard labour, our life was happy and comfortable (Tib.: *skyid po yag po*). Most of what we needed on a daily basis was self-produced. We also sold meat, butter, cheese, yoghurt, wool, and skins, and collected caterpillar fungus in the summer. Our total annual income reached approximately 8,000 yuan, including 3,000 yuan that was livestock related and around 5,000 yuan from the caterpillar fungus. The resettlement has completely turned our lives upside down.

His household had owned approximately 200 SU, which would place him in the medium-income category according to my own estimates (see note 13), and wealthier than the average household according Gruschke’s estimates. Average household income before and after the resettlement in Gyewa, based on my own interview data, is given in Table 5.3 (the average household size in Gyewa was four members, normally a young couple with one to three children). Table 5.3 does not reveal much difference between before- and after-resettlement income, in part because it does not reflect the fact that people living in the settlement now had to buy many basic necessities that they used to produce for themselves. Previously, the average income from the sale of animal products and caterpillar fungus

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was approximately 7,500 yuan (above and beyond household consumption). After resettlement, the income from caterpillar fungus and state compensation (if it was paid at all) could reach either 6,500 or 9,500 yuan, depending on whether one possessed a grassland certificate or not. However, expenditures for food constituted a significant proportion of the living costs for the average household in Gyewa. In other words, expenses had increased significantly, while the household income remained roughly the same, all against a backdrop of rising inflation.

According to a survey conducted in 2004 on living costs for resettled herders in Maduo (Matod), a neighbouring county in Golok Prefecture, the total expenses for food, fuel, and clothes per year per herder amounted to 4,959 yuan (Chen 2008). This figure comprises 12 per cent for fuel, 67 per cent for food, and 21 per cent for clothing (ibid.). The total cost per household was at least 8,000 yuan per year. The above data did not include expenses for housing, medical services, education, or cultural and religious activities, all of which normally constitute a significant part of household spending (Liu 2010). Educational expenses for one child were around 400 yuan annually, including the cost of books, supplies, and extra-curricular activities. In Gyewa, subsistence items and products, which had previously been taken for granted, now became a substantial living cost. Cow dung is a typical example: when they lived as herders on the grasslands, dung was available in abundance as a free cooking fuel; however, after resettlement, herders have to buy it for approximately 200–300 yuan per month. Thus, the increased cost of living, coupled with the government’s failure to compensate herders for the loss of pastoral subsistence, creates new pressures on households.

### Table 5.3: Estimated average household cash income before and after resettlement (in yuan)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income source</th>
<th>Before resettlement</th>
<th>After resettlement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sale of animal products</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caterpillar fungus</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State compensation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,000 or 6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>6,500 or 9,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Interview data, 2007. Please note that the average household cash income in this table has been calculated on the assumption that the herders would receive state compensation in time, without deducting the 15,000 yuan ‘construction fees’ for the newly acquired houses.
Like relocated farmers elsewhere in China (Zhao 2005), the majority of the herders in my survey were unemployed in the sense that they did not have steady jobs at the time of the interview. They had to take *xiaogong* jobs, that is, low-paid, part-time, temporary jobs often found in the private service sector in town. The main source of income, however, was the collection and sale of caterpillar fungus during the summer. The access rights to collect caterpillar fungus, a valuable Chinese medicinal plant, on their previous pastures had been maintained even after the relocation. The herders I interviewed combined the gathering and sale of caterpillar fungus in the summer with their search for work in the urban labour market during the rest of the year. Seeking job opportunities became a core concern for many herders. In competition with their urban counterparts, particularly Han Chinese, the resettled herders faced structural disadvantages in terms of language skills, educational qualifications, work experience, and social networks. Moreover, with the illiteracy rate at approximately 60 per cent, many were unable to write in Tibetan, let alone communicate in Chinese. Women apparently faced ‘double’ discrimination, both as herders and as women, and their unemployment numbers were particularly high. In the first few years of resettlement, between 2004 and 2006, the local government set up training courses in a few car-repair, handicrafts, and construction workshops funded by foreign NGOs. Some participants were temporarily recruited after completing the courses, but soon became unemployed again. Local official reports as well as government informants often pointed to these programmes as indicators of government support. When asked why many of these skilled workers were still not employed even two years after completing a training course, a county official said that the failure was due to the herders’ ‘backward mentality’, and added that ‘they are lazy and uninterested in work. The government has been very keen to bring them to the urban labour market, but even those who have been employed do not get along with their employers.’

In addition to local government and public enterprise support for employment training, a foreign NGO funded short-term training programmes, including a Chinese language course. When I was there in 2007, no training was taking place, and I was told that it was hopeless to find jobs through employment training anyway. The training was either too short to learn anything or, the herders lamented, there was little
chance of getting a good job through those channels. Moreover, given the high subsistence capacity of the traditional pastoral community, the majority of the herders I interviewed tended to be quite selective about the types of jobs they were willing to accept, especially in the beginning. This tendency is confirmed by Fischer (2008) and Yeh (2007), who observe that rural Tibetans shun low-paid petty jobs because of the high subsistence capacity associated with the pastoral lifestyle. In Yulshul, however, this capacity is rapidly diminishing as more and more herders resettle and become dependent on state subsidies, regardless of whether they are provided or not.

**Counter-strategies**

In Yulshul, as Tibetan herders constantly struggle to shape the outcome of the planned interventions on their livelihood, they have crossed the boundaries of conventional discourse. The relocated herders do not perceive development as a one-sided, exclusively top-down intervention, and they are questioning the nature of development imposed upon them from above. When I probed into the meaning of development, one middle-aged herder responded:

> Generally speaking, I don’t know much about economics, but I do know for sure that this is not development. I do not quite understand the logic behind this. Our lives have not been made any better. Promises have not been kept and we have been left empty-handed. We are not allowed to talk about our grievances to the visiting officials. The local officials on the other hand only present well-off families to the visiting leaders, which only account for about fifteen households.

Several households lived under dire economic conditions in the new settlement. One grave case was that of a middle-aged father of three whose wife had been hospitalized for almost three months and then died. The family had spent most of their income from the sale of their livestock to pay her medical expenses, and the family was now in great debt. When I visited them, the house was almost empty of furniture, the three small children were hungry, and the father was unable to provide them with three meals a day. There were other families who had also ended up in economic hardship, unable to fulfil the dream of becoming prosperous once they settled in town. Life was already difficult in the new settlement after being uprooted from pasture and livestock.
The herders blamed the government for their hardship. However, the main task of the government tuimuban office, as its leader saw it, was to ensure that the grassland restoration and resettlement work was carried out properly, while no attention was paid to creating post-resettlement opportunities for the herders. Since it was government promises that had lured the herders into the new settlement in the first place, the herders began to demand that the local government keep its promises and eliminate the extra cost of housing. The herders often expressed their grievances in the form of peaceful but defiant protests and public petitions. When these tactics were interpreted as threats to social stability and therefore silenced with heavy-handed force, local herders were forced to turn to other counter-strategies. In the summer of 2005, more than 200 representatives from Gyewa mobilized and marched to the prefecture headquarters to demand fair compensation and a stop to corruption. According to the herders I interviewed, village-level officials were sympathetic to the herders’ grievances, but the township leader was not. He rushed to the scene and reprimanded the protesters, and as a warning he angrily slapped one of the participants. Since this neither silenced them nor made them return to their homes, the township leader changed tactics. He promised them that he would convene a meeting as soon as they returned to their homes, and so they did. Contrary to his promise, however, the township leader did not show up for the meeting that day or the next. Instead, armed police raided the community the following night. Ten herders were identified as ringleaders and were arrested. They were released after a few days, having been interrogated and tortured. The local government, especially township officials, labelled the protests ‘socially destabilizing activities’, thereby justifying their harsh crackdown and subsequent police surveillance. The resettled herders were left with only two options: to defy the authorities in the form of protest or to engage in covert resistance.

Another dominant group of actors engaged in promulgating the local counter-discourse included village-level officials and local environmental activists in Yulshul, who made up the local elite. These elites have increasingly started to give voice to local discontent and resistance beyond the community and prefecture boundaries in order to participate in and influence national-level mainstream discourse (Liu 2009; Wang 2009b; Zhang 2011). They have also challenged in public fora the official explanation for grassland degradation and the rationale behind ‘sustainable development’
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initiatives, as well as the discourse of conservation and development. One obvious example of this was a seminar on Sanjiangyuan held in Beijing, which was widely reported on the Internet in China (Zhang 2011). There, one Party secretary from Ganda village of Yulshul pointed out the devastating effects of the PG policy on herders:

In the past the herders were scattered throughout the grasslands and protected their own pastures when they were in danger. No one could damage the grasslands because customary rules were strictly observed. After the resettlement, while the effects of the policy on the grasslands are still uncertain, the number of miners coming from elsewhere has increased dramatically. No one is there to prevent them from destroying the environment. Poachers have also returned. (Zhang 2011)

He was supported by Karma, a Party secretary from Tshotri village, who argued that the greatest ecological concern of the herders is the negative impact of mining activities and harvesting of caterpillar fungus on the grasslands. These Party secretaries are better informed than their counterparts within the community about government policy and state institutions, as well as about their own legal rights as citizens according to the Chinese constitution. The news media, as well as academic and activists’ conferences, have made it possible for the local elite to express local grievances in a language appropriated from official policy discourse. Moreover, the alliance between local village officials and herders has become critical in advancing local grievances.

In another strategic move, the herders in Yulshul turned to the central government and to environmental organizations for help when local action, including defiance, did not resolve the conflict of interests. Since households were moved to Gyewa, mining companies have started to establish themselves in Rawa, including on the ‘sacred’ mountain of the locality. A series of controlled explosions carried out by the mining operations in 2006 took place around the same time as some minor earthquakes in the vicinity, leading the herders to believe that these events were interconnected (Jiumei 2010). Government officials dismissed this as superstition. The herders also believed that mining activities increased the child mortality rate, and led to health hazards and ecological and cultural destruction. Since the local government supported the mining companies, the herders’ public protests against the
mining activities were silenced by force. During a violent clash in 2006, the police even opened fire on the protesters.

The herders from Rawa gave up on the idea of seeking justice via the local government. Instead, they joined forces with other herders and formed a group of representatives that travelled to Beijing in March 2010 to petition the State Council for intervention (Jiumei 2010). This took place one month prior to the earthquake in 2010. They appealed to the central government to intervene in what they called a ‘serious environmental crime’ being committed by profit-driven miners coming from outside their community. In their petition, they singled out one man in particular, a Han private investor from Shangdong. Basing their arguments on existing Chinese constitutional provisions for the protection of the environment, and mixing existing official discourse with local narratives of grievances, the petitioners argued against what they called the ‘destruction of our grasslands and cultural landscape’. Their complaint received some short-lived attention from the central government and on down the system to the provincial and prefecture governments, and even triggered the closure of two small mining companies. Even though the trip to Beijing did not have much of a tangible outcome in the sense of changing the course of mining-centred development, it nevertheless provoked the state to react, though on its own terms. Thus, by embracing the official discourse of degradation, the herders managed to create space for articulating their vision of development within the constraints of the system.

Conclusion
Two main results of the nationwide Pastures to Grasslands campaign have been described in depth in this chapter. First, the top-down and semi-forced pastoral resettlement has undermined the traditional subsistence lifestyle, replacing it with compensation in the form of state subsidies. This has resulted in the decline, if not the complete disappearance, of the herders’ subsistence capacity and the loss of their traditional way of life. Second, the interventions have replaced the relative independence of the herders’ traditional livelihood with a complex web of dependency on the Chinese state. These are but two side effects of state policies, whether intended or not, aimed ostensibly at creating social harmony and stability. It reminds us of James Ferguson’s (1994)
analysis of the instrumental effects of development, which include both the institutional effects of the expansion of bureaucratic state power and the ideological effects of the depoliticization of both poverty and the state. In this instance, disappearance of subsistence capacity and dependence of the herders on the state is the major instrumental effect of the current development intervention. While the stated goals are conservation and social transformation, actualization of effective control has been the unspoken side effect of the fortress-based concept of nature conservation. Such effects have been somewhat depoliticized in the official discourse. As Ferguson (1994: 254) rightly concludes, ‘[I]t may be what is most important about a “development” project is not so much what it fails to do but what it does do’. In Yulshul in particular and Sanjiangyuan in general, development intervention in the name of ‘sustainable development’ has become an effective government strategy for bringing about state power over these remote pastoral communities. Such power is achieved through expansion of the Party-state structure and disintegration of subsistent pastoral communities due to state development interventions.

In addition to describing these extensive structural changes to pastoral livelihoods and the subsistence capacity of herders, which has also been done by Fischer (2008) and Gruschke (2008), this chapter has investigated the process of resettlement and the dilemma of post-resettlement livelihoods by bringing the perspectives and voices of diverse local actors into the analysis. The findings have shown that, contrary to the reification of Tibetans as the passive objects of Chinese state development, local herders have managed to creatively and strategically manipulate the planned interventions despite the constrained circumstances. Consequently, there has been a diversification of interfaces and forms of resistances. Let me end with some details on the actor interface, following Long’s (2001) argument that these interfaces are the ‘battlefields of knowledge’ – the complex arenas where the interests and values of differently positioned actors such as herders and local officials are contested in disharmony.

In Yulshul, the diversification of interfaces and rightful resistance occurs in three main institutional arenas that I categorize as micro-, intermediate-, and macro-level interfaces. The micro-level interface and resistance is the encounter at the local level in which herders choose
or are forced to accept or reject the planned development interventions that enter their life-worlds, or remain silent in the face of these intrusions. This interaction takes place within the village and prefecture institutions, though under conditions of constrained power relations.

This interface encounter involves physical interaction, which includes concrete strategies and counter-strategies of development actors, whether government officials or local Tibetan herders, in the context of the implementation of the PG intervention. These are imbued with suspicion, deception, threat, persuasion, dreams, and disappointment, but are still in a state of negotiation. We recognized this when the tuimuban officials met the herders to persuade them to accept resettlement, and again after the relocation when the herders voiced their grievances. Nevertheless, when this interface interaction is no longer effective or functional, the herders move on to the second level of interface. This intermediate-level interface is more discursive, and often takes place at environmental and sustainable development conferences in the presence of a broader audience. In this public arena, local elites have often represented the herders and their grievances before government officials and policy makers. Local actors tend to embrace the official language of sustainable development, which results in an interdiscursive appropriation of official discourse.

When these two interfaces do not satisfy the grievances of the herders, they turn to the final resistance interface, which links them to the State Council, the utmost authority of the Chinese state. This interface involves seeking help from the State Council to address the grievances that the local government is unable to remedy. The State Council, however, uses the same official top-down channels through the provincial and local governments when making a symbolic inquiry into these issues. Such an inquiry has little impact on the status quo on the ground. When these institutional interfaces and rightful resistance are unable to produce the desired outcome in addressing local grievances, that is, to provide leverage to pastoral knowledge and voice, as is often the case, public defiance and peaceful protest have become the alternative strategies of choice. Local government officials, for their part, view these responses as ‘unlawful’ and ‘socially disruptive’, even labelling them as ‘separatist’ activities, and therefore often resort to repressive means. At the same time, central and provincial government development funds
have been poured into the region in order to create stability, achieve sustainable development, and meet conservation goals. In reality, however, the resettlement strategy has failed to deliver social stability, despite more effective state control over the previously scattered communities. Similar findings have also been reported elsewhere in Sanjiangyuan by Cencetti (ch. 6, this volume).

The majority of the herders that I interviewed in Yulshul initially viewed the sustainable development intervention as a continuation of past deception and injustice. Accompanied by a series of government promises and forceful tactics, the intervention has been carried out in spite of widespread scepticism and opposition. The deeper conflict, however, resurfaced in the aftermath of the resettlement. Pressures arising from urban living expenses increase when everything has to be bought in cash, and the herders start to realize the real value of the compensation they receive and to appreciate the economic value of their previous subsistence lifestyle, which they have lost. On the other hand, frustration over the government’s inability to fulfil its promises in terms of helping the herders establish a post-resettlement livelihood has turned into public defiance, which has been silenced abruptly through the deployment of sheer disciplinary power.

There is an apparent correlation between the failure of rightful resistance interfaces within the state system and defiant forms of resistance. The failure in the official–herder interface has laid the groundwork for further aggravation of public opposition, which has been increasingly radicalized. Defiant protests in the form of self-immolations, which numbered more than one hundred cases at the time of the writing of this chapter, have dominated the academic and popular discourse about contemporary Tibet in the West (McGranahan and Litzinger 2012). The question of what leads self-immolators to choose such an extreme form of protest often arises within this context of state interventions and local responses. One answer lies precisely in the way interface encounters between state officials and herders play out. As the case in Yulshul suggests, the encounter takes place in the vicious cycle of intervention, instability, and the process of forceful ‘harmonization’. In this regard, harmony is a scarce commodity. The massively funded sustainable development interventions have resulted in effective control over pastoral communities, but at the cost of genuine harmony between
the herders and state agents. As a policy mechanism, the PG campaign has inherently produced a great deal of disharmony and instability, although it has generated economic growth due to the intensification of development interventions such as urbanization and road construction. Thus, the goal of harmonious development is far from being realized within the framework of this inherently disharmony-producing mode of development practice.

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CHAPTER SIX

New settlements on the Tibetan Plateau of Amdo-Qinghai: Spatialized power devices

Elisa Cencetti

Introduction
In the past decade new settlements for Tibetan herders have mushroomed throughout the Amdo-Qinghai region in the eastern part of the Tibetan Plateau.¹ Identical numbered houses aligned in a chessboard grid surrounded by grasslands have become a common sight in this region's landscape. These new settlements serve different purposes for the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) – poverty alleviation, infrastructural and socio-economic development, environmental protection, and ideally also social stability – which all lead to the same result: the relocation of Tibetan herders previously living scattered over the grasslands. According to an official Chinese source (Xinhua 2012), the central government has provided more than 200,000 herders with houses in new settlements in Qinghai Province since 2009, and planned to create similar housing for an additional 50,000 herders by the end of 2012.

New settlements for Tibetan herders have been created as part of the Sanjiangyuan (Tib.: gtsang gsum mgo khungs, also discussed by Nyima in ch. 5 of this volume), which represents a provincial-level reflection of the national aims of the Open Up the West campaign (Tib.: nub rgyud

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¹ The Tibetan regions can be divided into three cultural units: Amdo (a mdo), Utsang (dbus gtsang), and Kham (khams). The territories of Amdo are split between the PRC's provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, and Sichuan. Although most new settlements are located in the western regions of the PRC, which have been only minimally affected by the socio-economic boom seen in the eastern provinces over the last three decades, there are examples of new settlements located in eastern China that are based on ecological and socio-economic policies similar to those described in this chapter (Asian Development Bank 1995, 2008; Croll 1999; He et al. 2009; Heggelund 2004; International Rivers Network 2003).
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gsar spel chen mo; Chi.: xibu da kaifa) introduced in 2000. Moreover, the new settlements respond to the objectives settled by the political ideology of the ‘harmonious society’ (Tib.: ‘cham mthun spyi tshogs; Chi.: hexie shehui), which has been ‘promoted since 2005 as the new way of thinking of the PRC by the administration under Premier Wen Jiabao and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) General Secretary and President of the PRC Hu Jintao’ (Choukroune and Garapon 2007).

The Open Up the West campaign has aimed to reduce the socio-economic disparities between the eastern and western provinces of the PRC through the development of industry, infrastructure, tourism, and services in provinces inhabited by mostly non-Han populations (Goodman 2004). Accompanying this campaign, the provincial government of Qinghai set up the Headwaters of the Three Rivers Nature Reserve, which covers the large area of the headwaters of the Yellow, Yangtze, and Mekong rivers (Foggin 2005). The stated aim of this nature reserve is environmental protection because, according to official Chinese assessments, the grasslands of the Tibetan Plateau are ‘degraded’ and therefore must be protected. This objective is, of course, also motivated by economic considerations. The preservation of the sources of these rivers is connected to the economy of the eastern and southeastern provinces of the PRC, through which these rivers flow (Harris 2010; Yeh 2005). Moreover, the nature reserve promotes tourism that in turn encourages the development of infrastructure and services in Amdo-Qinghai. The nature reserve is, I contend, furthermore closely linked with social stability, promoted through the implementation of

2. This has been treated in several works (e.g. Dan 2002; Han et al. 2008; Harris 2010; Ma 2001; Ma J. 2001; Tu et al. 2008), and the ‘degradation’ of the Tibetan Plateau has proven to be a controversial topic. The causes and the extent of the environmental problems of this region are nonetheless still little studied. In the area where I conducted most of my fieldwork, Tibetans usually employed two terms to describe the environmental problems of the grasslands. They used the word brlag, meaning ‘something that has been corrupted’, thus extending the meaning of the word ‘degraded’. They also employed the expression btshog, which usually means ‘dirty’. By using this word to discuss the officially declared environmental problems of the grasslands, they lent it the connotation of ‘polluted’ or ‘degraded’, which is a recent interpretation according to Tibetan interlocutors. According to them, the word ‘pollution’ did not exist until recently. It has been created from the Chinese word wuran specifically to discuss the environmental problems of the Tibetan Plateau. In this chapter, I put quotation marks around the word ‘degraded’ because, with the exception of the Chinese authorities, none of my interlocutors used it. Instead, when Tibetan herders discussed the environmental problems of the grasslands, they always pointed out specific and concrete situations (Cencetti 2010).
‘ecological migrations’ (Tib.: skye khaps gnas spor; Chi.: shengtai yimin) and ‘converting pastures to grasslands’ (Tib.: ’brog ’dor rtswa ’debs; Chi.: tuimu huancao) programmes (Richard 2005; Yeh 2005; see also Nyima, ch. 5 in this volume). According to the logic of these programmes, the ‘degraded’ grasslands need to be emptied of both livestock and people in order to be properly protected (Foggin 2005). The inhabitants of the grasslands that were judged ‘degraded’ by Chinese authorities were thus forced to undertake ‘ecological migrations’ and move into the new settlements. Moreover, the official discourse promoting relocation also asserts that the herders’ living conditions will be greatly improved in the new settlements, as the government promised to provide not only houses, but also hospitals and schools for the new settlers. In many cases, however, these have turned out to be empty promises, as verified by my own fieldwork experience, which reveals a large discrepancy between the official discourse and lived experience.3

This chapter focuses on these new settlements situated on the fringes of China’s ‘harmonious society’, both geographically and conceptually. Rather than reproducing the master narrative of a Chinese state building a ‘harmonious society’ through the development of economy, technology, and a society based on a ‘scientific outlook’ (Tib.: tshan rig ’phel rgyas; Chi.: kexue fazhan) (Boutonnet 2009; Delury 2008; Wo-Lap Lam 2007), this chapter suggests that the settlements are state-driven attempts to ‘harmonize’ this area – in other words, to make sure the target population, the Tibetan herders, conform to the official policy directives. The central argument is that the state strives to align this region and its inhabitants with the rest of the country by using spatial strategies of arranging people into special areas.

In what follows I shall neither analyse the Chinese government’s policies nor reproduce a ‘mythologized’ nomadic stereotype of the traditional life of Tibetan herders. Rather, I shall focus directly on the new settlements as spatial entities. In the first section I compare them with relocation programmes implemented in other parts of the world.

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3. I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in several Tibetan autonomous districts in Qinghai Province over the course of 14 months in 2009–2010. I visited many Tibetan settlements and spent several months in one settlement. The data and information collected during this period are principally based on discussions with Tibetan herders who had already been relocated to new settlements. I also interviewed several Tibetan officials and some Tibetan herders still living on the grasslands.
and at different times. Identifying the common denominators makes it easier to visualize how planned settlements function as a device of state power. I will demonstrate how the political dimensions of these plans are often hidden behind environmental and socio-economic development discourses and policies. In the next section I shall return to the new settlements of Amdo-Qinghai. A closer look at the needs that these settlements are intended to meet and the logic behind their construction reveals that the organization of living space is closely linked to power. I will argue that the characteristics of the new settlements on the Tibetan Plateau can be seen as modulations of a recurring power device aimed at territorial control and population surveillance, though I do not claim that the spatial organization by itself is sufficient to establish surveillance and control or, indeed, to achieve the ultimate goals of social stability and order.4

Finally, I will analyse the actual effects of the new settlements in the context of Amdo-Qinghai, where national minority policies, economic development plans, and ecological targets overlap. I explore how spatial organization, aimed at creating a ‘new human being’ as envisioned by the dominant political ideology, can reconfigure human living space accordingly. The actual effects produced by the relocation of the people for whom these settlements are built, however, are usually quite different from what was planned. People, as a destabilizing variable, interfere with and modify the living space designed for them. At the same time, people’s habits and customs become transformed in the new settlements, as do their production systems and needs. The new settlements become sites of constant interaction between this new and foreign environment designed to meet certain political criteria and the people living in it, who negotiate and sometimes manage to interfere with these devices.

Disciplined people in docile villages: Historical and theoretical reflections on relocation

What is essential is, in fact, to gather this population that is everywhere and anywhere; it is essential to make it distrainable. When we hold it, we

4. The perspective presented in this chapter is my analysis of the new settlements. When I shared it with my informants during fieldwork, they usually refrained from expressing an opinion until after we had spent several months together. As discussing such a topic is dangerous and the herders’ opinions of this chapter’s topic are confidential, I will not report them here.
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will thus be able to do many things which, at the moment, are impossible for us; it will allow us to capture its spirit after we have captured its body.
– Captain Charles Richard

Settlements for relocated Tibetan herders constitute a completely new phenomenon in the region of Amdo-Qinghai. It would nonetheless be misleading to consider them unique, and could lead to misunderstanding the political motivations behind them. Relocation schemes were launched in China as early as the 1950s and 1960s (Bonnin 2004; Chen 1996), and in Inner Mongolia herders have been resettled in a manner similar to those in the Amdo-Qinghai region (Sneath 2000). Moreover, the Chinese government has also relocated Han farmers in the eastern regions of the country (Croll 1999; He et al. 2009; Zhang et al. 2008). Though the new Amdo-Qinghai settlements purportedly solve environmental and socio-economic problems, we nevertheless have to ask why the state has decided to address these problems in this particular way. The answer to this question, I argue, is related to the state’s efforts to strengthen its political control over this region, which is inhabited predominantly by Tibetans. In this section of the chapter, I will look at the politics behind the socio-economic and environmental discourses promoted in Amdo-Qinghai by comparing the new settlements to similar relocation projects elsewhere in the course of history. Furthermore, I suggest that urban theories, particularly the concept of ‘heterotopia’ (Foucault [1966] 2009), are useful for studying how these new living spaces collapse previous relationships between people, time, and space. In this section, I analyse these ‘heterotopias’ as attempts to transform people by changing their living environment, and I highlight the importance attributed to space as a means of establishing new political orders or different systems of power (Scott 1998).

The centuria division of the Roman Empire was an early experiment in the organization of land and population redistribution. The new territories conquered by the Roman army were divided into squares arranged in a grid pattern corresponding to plots assigned to colonists or inhabitants according to the quality of arable land (Chevallier 1961). This method of dividing conquered land rendered previous land divisi-

5. Étude sur l’insurrection du Dahra (1845–1846), in Bourdieu and Sayad (1964: 15). All translations in this chapter are mine.
sions invalid and ignored local practices. It was an efficient method for administering the conquered land and imposing a new order.

Comparable reorganizations of people and territory were also introduced in the Soviet Union, Algeria, and Tanzania. In the 1930s the Soviet Union introduced collective farms (*kolkhoz*; pl.: *kolkhozy*), where all farmers and nomadic herders were forced to settle (Scott 1998: 193–222). Earlier land divisions were replaced by these collective farms, which also aimed at facilitating government control over the territory. Moreover, the *kolkhozy* broke down traditional centres of informal socialization such as the market and the church, thereby rendering them irrelevant (Scott 1998: 214). Similarly, in Algeria the French army forced farmers to relocate to new villages between 1955 and 1962 (Bourdieu and Sayad 1964). The French government introduced a programme of territorial control and population surveillance in order to break down local resistance in rural areas, a strategy that also enabled them to distribute the land among the colonists (Bourdieu and Sayad 1964: 15–27). As a result, Algerian farmers who had lived scattered in remote areas lost their land, which was their source of income, and were resettled in new villages composed of identical houses arranged in a grid pattern. Similarly, between 1973 and 1976, the Tanzanian government resettled 5 million people who had lived scattered throughout the countryside. To implement socio-economic development policies, they were forced to move to planned villages and, as in the above examples of the Roman Empire, the Soviet Union, and Algeria, they were resettled in villages composed of identical houses and aligned in a grid pattern (Scott 1998: 223–61).

This list of different regimes at different times employing similar methods of organizing and controlling land and people could be much longer; my aim here is simply to highlight the similarities between these spatial strategies and their relationship to power. Having quoted some historical parallels, let us now turn to some theoretical reflections on the living space of humans to gain a more complete understanding of how these settlements can function as power devices.

Le Corbusier’s (1946) vision of town plans structured human living space into ‘dwelling tools’ that organize the activities of the inhabitants and define them according to their social class and occupation. Moreover, the town should satisfy its inhabitants’ needs as determined
by the values shared by the totality of the social body. Le Corbusier assumed that the living space should not only meet the practical needs of its inhabitants, but should also generate new feelings and values. As all inhabitants supposedly share the same needs, feelings, and values, city planners and, ultimately, the states expect this kind of human living space to create a new person in harmony with the totality of her or his society and surrounding environment. This conception of the human living space as a tool for modifying or generating the values and customs of its inhabitants has served many political theories and been the foundation of many utopias (Bray 2005; Scott 1998). In the new settlements, I contend, these visions take shape as ‘heterotopias’.

The state needs to control and survey its inhabitants. Human living space, I argue, plays a significant role in the state’s attempt to make human beings manageable and predictable. This is also evident in the form of these housing environments, which should reflect the content, the human being. Scott (1998) argues that, for any system of power to be operational, the environment and its inhabitants must be visible to the state administration. Creating a synoptic vision within the state domain can ensure this. Foucault (1975) reasons that the organization of human space should generate order and should discipline people so that they facilitate the administrative tasks of the state. The prison’s panoptical organization of space, Foucault explains, can be used to describe a certain type of spatialized power relations specific to modern states. Through discipline, the state watches over and controls individuals in a ‘soft and diffuse’ way (Foucault 1975: 206). The discipline works from within the body of the individual, which becomes the ‘root of his own subjection’ (Foucault 1975: 204). This enables the state to exert deeper control over individuals because the discipline operates at the level of the smallest unit of the social body: the individual. By assigning ‘to each individual his or her place’ (Foucault 1975: 146), the disciplined space of the ‘panopticon’ uses and transforms the space in order to exert the state’s power.

Both Le Corbusier’s visions of the city’s transformative powers over its inhabitants and Foucault’s problematization of how state power works from within the self-disciplined individual are key to my central contention that the new settlements are power devices. From an empirical point of view, the layout of these new settlements reminds one of ar-
chitectural plans for towns and prisons. I am not suggesting that the new settlements on the Tibetan Plateau are prisons. I am simply highlighting the commonality in the power device used, which in these examples changes only in terms of the degree of influence over people: the fact that the power device could be ‘soft and diffuse’ does not mean that it does not exist. Why have these different systems of power resorted to the same grid pattern of identical, aligned dwellings when designing the settlements in which to relocate people? I propose that living space in these instances is the state’s power device: while living space is regulated by the state, it is also supposed to regulate the inhabitants.

Furthermore, since all these villages have been created ex novo, these places for relocating people do not have any ‘history’ of landmarks, routes, or meeting places. The absence of shared lived experience and history make these spaces hollow. Thus, the state could better control people by inscribing into these ‘empty’ spaces the values and principles that it wants to generate in people. These new values ideally lead to the production of a new type of human being moulded in accordance with the criteria and political ideals endorsed by the state, for example, socialist values in the case of the collective farms in the Soviet Union, or the ideal of a ‘harmonious society’ in the case of the new settlements in Amdo-Qinghai. The dominant system of power attempts to provide new landmarks, routes, and meeting places for the inhabitants to harmonize them with the state’s agenda of surveillance and territorial control (Foucault 2004: 3–30). By making a tabula rasa of the past, these places also reshape their inhabitants and their social relationships, starting from the smallest unit, the individual. All these ordered spaces serve not only the aim of spatially reproducing abstract ideals of society, but also of social engineering and control.

The new settlements and architectural utopias listed above all serve to facilitate state control of people and territory. This need to control becomes particularly strong when the state has to manage nomadic people or others living scattered over remote and vast territories.6 If the state is as sufficiently centralized and strong as the PRC, it is able to implement power devices to control and survey its inhabitants and territory. New

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6. The nomadic lifestyle, with its different system of production and exploitation of resources, poses a threat to sedentary states because the methods used to enforce legitimate power, such as conscription and taxes, have to be calibrated along different parameters (Barfield 1993; Deleuze and Guattari 1980; Scott 2009).
settlements that make people visible to the administration can enable the state to secure order and transform society to optimize production.

The official discourse the Chinese state uses to promote and justify the implementation of the new settlements is reminiscent of the utopian visions aimed at transforming society through the provision of an appropriately ordered living environment. The stated intention behind the new settlements in fact reflects Le Corbusier’s vision ‘of facilitating the living conditions, of ensuring inhabitants physical and moral health, of promoting the maintenance of the human species by offering the necessary conditions for perfect education’ (Le Corbusier 1946: 59). These settlements are expected to promote socio-economic development and improve the living conditions of Tibetan herders by supplying better dwellings and services. The plan of the new settlements promises that the houses will be provided with running water and electricity, and have convenient access to schools and clinics. With their official aim of environmental protection, the new settlements also correspond to another aspect of Le Corbusier’s ideal city: they ‘fulfil some conditions and establish useful relationships between the cosmic milieu and the biologic human phenomenon’ (Le Corbusier 1946: 59).

The similarities between these utopian visions and the official discourse of the Chinese state become clearer when one looks at the current political discourse of the Chinese leadership. The new settlements, I argue, are part of the PRC government’s current political project to construct the ‘harmonious society’. Although the term ‘harmonious’ in Chinese political writings taps into ancient tenets of Confucianism (Billioud 2007; Delury 2008), as a political term it is nonetheless ambiguous because the methods used to reach this ‘harmony’ and even the goal itself are not clearly formulated. The term ‘harmony’ can also mean the absence of conflict, thus a consensus that ensures social stability. This in effect implies a society where there is no more need to control and survey people because they have been disciplined to the point of consent. Considered from the perspective of a ‘state-making’ agenda (Tilly 1985), this would mean that the citizens of the PRC, including national minorities, recognize the legitimacy of the dominant system of power, including state violence and enforced policies.

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‘Harmonious society’ may also relate to morality when it is linked to the Confucian approach, which advocates a personal search for ‘harmony’ within oneself and the rest of the social body through study and respect of hierarchies (Delury 2008). The Foucauldian application of the ‘panopticon’ as ‘a general principle of “political anatomy” in which the object and the aim are not the relationships of sovereignty but the relationships of discipline’ (Foucault 1975: 210) is thus a useful tool for rethinking the implicit aims linking the ‘harmonious society’ ideology with the spatial organization of the new settlements on the Tibetan Plateau.

The local impacts of ecological and development policies
Having explained the significance of relocation policies in terms of a spatial power device, I now turn to examining the consequences of this policy implementation, which has transformed grassland management and Tibetan herders’ practices and habits.

The ‘ecological migrations’ and the creation of new settlements have historical antecedents. Over the last 30 years Chinese authorities have implemented a number of economic and political policies with important territorial consequences. The introduction of the ‘household responsibility system’ meant that, since the 1980s, formerly collectively managed livestock and production tools have been divided among herding families and have become the responsibility of individual families. In Qinghai, this policy also led to the division of grasslands (Goldstein 1996; see also Nyima, this volume). The introduction of fencing in the 1990s further promoted the fragmentation of grasslands and their management by individual households. The Chinese state restructured the administration of territories and peoples throughout the entire country, separating out and giving legal ‘visibility’ to the smallest unit – the household – which had previously been subsumed in communes. Now the household became directly linked to the administrative organization of the state. The new policies introduced in the 1980s and 1990s directly focused on households.

In Qinghai in the 1990s, the division of grasslands among the households of Tibetan herders was followed by the implementation of the si-peitao (Tib.: cha ‘grig bzhi) poverty reduction programme (Foggin 2008; Yeh 2005), which encouraged herders to build houses for themselves and shelters for the livestock on their pastures. If they wanted financial aid allocated by this programme, they had to fence in their pastures.
and use at least part of them to grow fodder. This programme further promoted the development of small rangeland properties managed by single households (Banks 2000; Bauer 2005). The land management plan thus followed the PRC’s development strategies of the 1980s and 1990s encouraging the development of the socialist market economy.

When the Chinese government implemented the ‘ecological migrations’ and the new settlements at the beginning of the 2000s, the Tibetan herders on the Amdo-Qinghai plateau had just finished building houses and shelters and fencing their pastures according to the previous sipeitao programme. The resistance that the local governments encountered in implementing these new policies is reflected in the countless differences in the manner and strategies adopted to realize them in the different districts and prefectures of Qinghai. The local authorities were aware that the implementation of such policies was problematic, as it implied that the herders would have to leave their livestock and the pastures that they had just finished fencing, thereby losing their main source of income. In some districts the relocation was only partially introduced and the herders were free to choose whether to move or not; in other cases, not all of a household’s members moved into the new settlements. There are, however, districts in which all the members of a household had to relocate to new settlements. Yet in others areas, herders relocated, but nonetheless continued herding their livestock on their grasslands and often returned to their grasslands to harvest caterpillar fungus (Tib.: dbyar rtswa dgun ’bu; Chi.: dongchongxiacao) during the summer.

In many areas of Qinghai, the government authorities told the herders that the new settlements were only a temporary measure aimed at restoring ‘degraded’ grasslands. In other districts, the government promised better living conditions and pastures for grazing livestock close to the new settlements. The herders often bought their houses in these settlements thinking that they were seizing an advantageous opportunity handed to them by the state. In fact, many of them sold some or all of their livestock.
to come up with the necessary cash to buy a house at what seemed like a convenient price. Moreover, they mistakenly thought that they could use these new houses as a second home that was closer to the townships than their house on the grasslands. Only later did they understand that if they did not live permanently in the new settlement and moved back to the grasslands, the state would appropriate their property, and they would lose all the money they had invested in it.

In my main field site, relocation in new settlements was still going on at the time of my research. According to my interlocutors, when local leaders – who are mostly native Tibetans of the region – told them to relocate, they also encouraged them not to sell all their livestock to buy a house in the new settlements. Local leaders in fact suggested that herd- ers sell only half of their livestock and keep grazing the other half. Some Tibetan officials confirmed to me that they could not ask the herd- ers to sell all their livestock because without it they would not have had any sources of income whatsoever. They also argued that the herd- ers would never have accepted this condition anyway. Therefore, the herd- ers who relocated to the new settlements, as well as the local officials in charge of policy implementation, ignored the official policy according to which all livestock had to be sold in order to empty the grasslands and allow them to recover, which could take anywhere from three years to eternity. In fact, herd- ers repeatedly stressed that they moved to the new settlements with the expectation of certain benefits that turned out to be non-existent. Some herd- ers moved because the local leaders assured them that they could graze their livestock around the new settlement, or that they would receive training and be employed in new jobs. Most of my interlocutors in my principal field site claimed that they moved to the new settlement because the local authorities assured them that the move was temporary. Another important reason herd- ers agreed to relocate was to be closer to their children, many of whom had to attend boarding schools in the townships. These boarding schools were often characterized by poor living conditions, and children could only return home once every couple of weeks. The herd- ers moved to the new set- tlement because the local authorities promised them that there would be schools there. Another complication stemmed from lack of sufficient information about the conditions of relocation. As herd- ers did not know that purchasing a house in the new settlement meant that all the mem-
bers of the household had to relocate, they often split the family in two parts: the members of the household who were able to work remained on the grasslands herding livestock, while the others moved with the children to the new settlement (a strategy that has also been observed in Kham-Qinghai by Nyima in ch. 5 of this volume).

However, according to the new educational law implemented in 2009 in Qinghai Province, a pilot programme was launched in Tsholo (Tib.: mtsho lho; Chi.: Hainan) Prefecture that stipulated that all school-age children should attend primary schools located in the townships. The result of this policy was that all village schools, including those in the new settlements, had to close down, and the children had to move into township boarding schools. Many herders felt that local officials had tricked them, not only because they had been misled to believe that they could stay close to their children, but also because they incorrectly believed that they could maintain a double residence pattern – in other words, continue living on their pastureland and own a new house in the settlement. Only after arriving in the new settlement did they discover that if they wished to keep the new house, at least a part of the household had to permanently live there in order to prove to the Chinese authorities that they had actually given up residence on the grasslands. Many relocated herders found this situation unacceptable. Many of those herders who had not sold all their livestock moved back to the grasslands. Others split their households in two, leaving the oldest couple of the family or a woman with pre-school children in the house in the new settlement, while the rest of the family remained on the grasslands.

The policy of ‘ecological migrations’ could not be implemented fully because of herders’ resistance to selling their livestock and relocating in the new settlements. The local government of the district in which my main field site was located was challenged both by relocated herders who chose to move back to the grasslands and herders who refused to move from their pastureland in the first place. The latest intervention initiated by the local government came in the fall of 2010 and was simply an extension of the previous ‘ecological migrations’ policy. According to this new plan, all herders, even those that had refused to relocate previously, were to be forced to move to the new settlements. A new kind of ‘collectivization’ was intended to compel herders to pool their livestock into one large herd, as they had done during the period of collectivization up
to the 1980s. Only one household should live on the grassland grazing this ‘collective’ herd, while all the other households should move into the new settlements. This programme met with strong opposition among herders, who categorically refused to recollectivize their livestock. To the best of my knowledge, the implementation of this collectivization plan is still waiting to be realized.

The endless search by local governments for suitable ways to implement the policies and plans decided by the central government shows the level of resistance and the compromises with which any political plan must cope. The gap between the formulation of political and economic visions at the highest governmental levels and their practical implementation in the local context are aptly indicated by the long years separating the introduction of a new plan and its actual realization, as well as by the strategies employed by local authorities to adapt these policies to local conditions to make them more palatable. Local authorities and their representatives are constantly obliged to negotiate policy execution with local people. However, this does not mean that these policies will be reformulated *in loco* or that they will never be applied. Policies are partially adapted according to the local context, but in the process local people have to accommodate and accept them.

**Tibetan herders challenging the state’s power device**

The space created by the new settlements is a useful tool for the administration. In the new settlements each household owns one house, which is identical to the other houses and is identified by a number written in big characters on one of its walls. When a household moves into a new settlement, it does not have the right to choose its own building. Rather, the local authorities assign a house to each household. They then register it, indicating the name of the household head, the number of people in the household, their region of origin, and the age, sex, and educational level of each household member. Additionally, the amount of livestock and land owned by the household, as well as the size of the pastureland relieved from grazing, are also noted. For the Chinese state, registering the Tibetan herders moving into the new settlements makes it easier to control and order them. But what really happened in practice when the Tibetan herders moved into the new settlements? How did the state device actually operate and how did people respond to it?
In the new settlement where I lived for several months, the situation was quite different from the picture painted in official documents. The relocation of the herders in this district began in 2007 when the settlement was under construction. When I was living there in 2009, construction was still going on, with many houses empty and awaiting new herding households to move in. Herders belonging to one kinship group usually bought their houses on the same street because the authorities assigned accommodation in the same neighbourhood to households coming from the same region. Consequently, the overlapping of family and territorial links remained preserved in the new settlement. One concrete consequence of this spatial distribution was that people usually spent their days in the streets where their close kin and previous grassland neighbours lived. This way of distributing people within the settlement reduced the threat that political relations would be transformed once people relocated, and the local government could more easily install a new settlement leader and CCP secretary to whom relocated herders could address their grievances concerning government institutions.

In this particular settlement several households actually bought more than one house, taking advantage of the attractive prices offered only to herders coming from the regions included in the ‘ecological migrations’ plan. Some herders ostensibly – although not in fact – split their household into two households so that they could buy two houses in the new settlement. One of the two new households kept grazing its livestock on the grasslands, while the other moved into one of the houses. They could thus lease the other house to Tibetans coming from towns who did not qualify to buy property in the settlement. This meant that the herders’ households received a state subsidy while gaining an additional source of income: the rent. The result was that the new settlement as a device for order and control was in practice not very efficient because the registration of the new settlement households was often incomplete or incorrect. Using the pretext of being two separate households residing in two new houses, the herders often managed to get two subsidies allocated by the state as compensation for the loss of herding income and as a subsidy to buy coal during the winter season. Moreover, the

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10. In the area where I conducted most of my fieldwork, the cost of renting one room in the nearby township was between 70 yuan and 100 yuan per month in 2009 and 2010. The cost of buying a house in the new settlement was 7000 yuan.
herders also managed to maintain family and regional unity within the settlement layout. For a family or for a group of households coming from the same region, the possibility of moving into the same part of the settlement also meant that they would remain neighbours and that their houses would share a courtyard wall. Two households sharing a courtyard wall often decided to tear it down in order to let the members of the two household units pass easily from one courtyard to the other.

Since the majority of the herders in my main field site still owned livestock, they often returned to their pasturelands for quite long periods. This practice of herders temporarily moving back to the grasslands despite the fact that they had officially settled down in the new settlements was quite common in the Qinghai area. In some settlements founded prior to the one I lived in, the practice of moving back to the grasslands during the summer period was quasi-official in the sense that the herders were allowed to go back to the grasslands to harvest caterpillar fungus. Some herders would move with their children back to their pastures at the beginning of the school summer vacation on this pretext. Many herders who had permanently relocated to the new settlement where I lived returned to their pasturelands also during the New Year festival. This practice was illegal, but the local authorities accepted it for the time being. Another informal practice of the herders in this particular settlement was to use the courtyard of their house as a barn for animals. A few months after the relocation of the first herders in the new settlement, the local government conducted agricultural training for relocated herders, teaching them the basic techniques of farming. At the end of this training the local authorities encouraged herders to cultivate their courtyards. The herders were given seeds and financial aid to build greenhouses. Many herders participated in this training, but a few months later most of them abandoned the idea of cultivating their courtyards. Instead they bought animals and started to breed them in the courtyards and in the surrounding grasslands.

One last example of herders’ ‘interference’ with the plans for the new settlements has to do with the lack of what I call ‘shared history’ in these newly constructed living spaces. The new settlements were usually devoid of meeting places. There were no markets, squares, or any other public spaces in which people could meet and socialize. In the settlement where I lived, an informal practice was established among
the inhabitants, particularly among older people. In the afternoon, they would climb to the top of the little hill behind the settlement and spend the afternoon sitting together, chatting, discussing, and looking after young children. People thus created a meeting place where they informally got together and discussed settlement problems and other communal issues, actually evading official surveillance.

The above are examples of a much longer list of ‘tactics’ (De Certeau 1990: 50–68) Tibetan herders engaged in to transform the spatial restrictions generated by the new settlements. These few examples nonetheless highlight the way in which these plans, built on political ideologies, must accommodate and adapt to the responses and needs of local inhabitants, who were clearly troubled by the ideal envisioned in the original plans. In pragmatic ways people targeted by and subjected to administrative measures interfere with and modify the programmes that have been ostensibly designed to serve their well-being and happiness, but which simultaneously function as a means of tighter social control.

The state’s power devices challenging Tibetan herders’ practices and customs

The new settlement rules, as shown above, were often modified and even subverted once the herders moved in. People transformed their houses physically and adapted the restrictions of the new settlements to their needs, juggling between legal and illegal frames. Nevertheless, the new settlements restricted Tibetan herders and had an impact on their established practices. In what follows I will give two examples of such changes taking place after the herders had relocated.

As has been mentioned above, for most herders relocation meant selling most or all of their livestock. The loss of livestock implied that herders’ households now had access to fewer resources than before. As livestock had previously fulfilled almost all of a household’s basic needs, including meat, milk, cheese, dung for fire, and wool, the loss of livestock meant that a household had to buy all these expensive products on the market. Despite the fact that the Chinese state compensated relocated herders for the loss of livestock income for a period of ten years, a household that moved into a new settlement had less cash than before because it had no more livestock resources. Many of the herders, however, did not know that these subsidies were for a limited time only,
and assumed that they would receive these subsidies in perpetuity. In any case, the subsidies were not sufficient to maintain a household, and the herders had to look for additional sources of income. They searched for employment, but because they were inexperienced, lacked skills other than herding, and often did not know Chinese, they rarely found employment. If they did succeed in finding a job, it was typically on construction sites.11

My interlocutors also pointed out that, in addition to the new need to buy products that they used to produce for themselves, the households now also developed new consumer behaviour. This was stimulated by their close proximity to the township and the discovery of new products such as kitchen appliances and electric tools, which progressively came to be seen as necessities. Sometimes they also claimed that the proximity to the market simply generated a consumerist mentality that did not exist when they lived on the grasslands. Now they had to find the money to buy products that they would not have bought if they were still living on the grasslands.

These examples show that relocation is a complex process that has actually revolutionized Tibetan herders’ lifestyles socially, politically, and economically. Thus, to assert that the new settlements are innocuous is disingenuous. The new settlements are power devices which, although they are still not working as intended, have already proven sufficient to engender new constraints, new needs, and new customs among the new settlers.

Conclusion

The new settlements cropping up all over the Tibetan Plateau respond to the principal aims of the ‘harmonious society’ ideology as promoted by the central Chinese leadership since 2005: economic development, amelioration of living conditions, scientific and technological develop-

11. With the Open Up the West campaign, investment in the construction sector in these rural areas grew enormously, and enterprises from the eastern regions of the PRC flooded into this sector (Qinghai sheng tongji ju 2002, 2006, 2008). Nevertheless, local people could obtain only non-specialized wage employment because the enterprises brought most of the specialized workers they needed. Thus, Tibetan herders looking for employment could not compete with the experienced workers coming from the east. The employment problem for relocated herders is an important issue that has been treated elsewhere (Cencetti 2012). On the issue of employment and new kinds of income-generating activities in Tibetan areas, see also Fischer (2008); Goldstein et al. (2008).
ment, and environmental protection. Social stability is also addressed, as the spatial layout of these settlements facilitates the control of inhabitants. Although the establishment of these settlements is a recent challenge that Tibetan herders must face, it is not a novel phenomenon when compared with similar modernization projects in other parts of the world. The main aim of this chapter has been to analyse this strategy of spatializing power in grid-patterned settlements. It has been shown that the attempt to control populations by ordering their living space is a recurrent strategy employed by many states. Political ideals find their empirical realization in planned villages, which are power devices for exercising and renewing state control and surveillance over territory and people, as the examples of the Roman *centuria* divisions, the Soviet *kolkhozy*, and the Tanzanian and Algerian villages have illustrated.

These states believed that the transformation of people by instilling the politically correct mindset could be achieved by changing their living environment, which would also lead to strengthening social order and control. Ideally, people living in these special spaces should also transform their customs and habits to meet the challenges of their new environment. We have seen that the herders moving into the new settlements reflect upon how they have changed many of their practices, and the emergence of new household needs is further confirmation of this. Nevertheless, this chapter has also revealed the strategies employed by the herders to appropriate and adapt these settlements to their needs. In this way, they actually challenge the state-imposed idea of a ‘harmonious society’. Having moved into their new houses, they have introduced numerous informal practices – interactions, negotiations, and adjustments, many of which are illegal – that simultaneously serve to evade supervision and social control by state institutions. Many Tibetan herders have resisted state-planned relocation, but even those who have relocated have interfered with and disrupted the plans and policies as they continue to struggle for their own livelihood and to satisfy their social needs.

In order to realize the plans of the new settlements, the local government must deal with herders who have resisted relocation or who have reversed their relocation. These examples remind us of Scott’s (1998) insights on how strategies used by a state to organize human living space have often failed in the long run. Nonetheless, although the herders’
practices covertly challenge state policies, they do not generate any actual power that would enable the herders to explicitly influence the political agenda set by the centre or to engage in open forms of resistance. At best they may slow down and delay the implementation of certain projects designed to control and order the herders. It is to be expected that the Chinese government will eventually apply other strategies and approaches to achieve its aims, aims that are unlikely to be fundamentally changed by the needs or actions of the settlement inhabitants.

The new settlements of Amdo-Qinghai, like the villages in other regions of the world that I have described in this chapter, have a chance of becoming effectively operational once they are linked to economic transformations. These most recent ones are power devices that are actually achieving the goals of transforming people’s habits and customs, creating new needs, and enforcing constraints.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Harmonious or homogeneous? Language, education and social mobility in rural Uyghur society

Chris Hann

Introduction
The violence which claimed almost 200 lives on 5 July 2009 took place in downtown districts of Ürümchi, the dynamic metropolis which is the capital of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), where Uyghurs form less than 15 per cent of an urban population now well in excess of two million. However, state officials were quick to claim that the main Uyghur perpetrators were for the most part not registered urban residents at all. Rather, they were officially classified as rural inhabitants of densely populated oases in southern Xinjiang, where Uyghurs still greatly outnumber Han. These regions are underdeveloped and have not benefited significantly from the Open Up the West campaign (Chi.: xibu da kaifa), launched in 1999. By widening disparities between social groups and increasing both inter- and intraregional inequalities, policy initiatives ostensibly intended to promote equality have accentuated the perception on the part of many Uyghurs that they are second-class citizens in the region that is supposed to be their homeland. The immediate triggers of protest in July 2009 have been expertly analysed by James Millward (2009). My aim in this chapter is to outline the changing structural conditions which constitute the deeper causes of that tragedy.¹

¹. This chapter is the product of long-term research carried out jointly with Ildikó Bellér-Hann since the 1980s. Our work in the Qumul (Hami) oasis between 2006 and 2009 was made possible by a cooperation agreement with Xinjiang University, in the framework of the project ‘Kinship and Social Support in China and Vietnam’, supported by the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology. I am especially grateful to Arslan Abdulla and Rahlâ
I emphasize the changing political economy of the region and pay particular attention to the determinants of social life in the countryside, which is where the majority of Uyghurs live. The death of Mao Zedong was followed by radically new policies throughout China, which in the XUAR led initially to a significant liberalization in the domain of culture as well as that of economy. However, in the new century, the Open Up the West campaign has highlighted tensions and contradictions between these domains which have led eventually to increasingly desperate protests and violent rioting. I approach the theoretical premises of the campaign in terms of a distinctive socialist variant of modernization and nation building. As elsewhere, the role of education is decisive in shaping labour market outcomes and social identities more generally. Consequently, in the main empirical sections of the chapter I consider schooling, and specifically language policies, which reflect dual impulses stemming on the one hand from the desiderata of ethnic minority management and on the other from the imperatives of political economy.

Since ancient times, education in China has functioned as a ‘safety valve’, offering able students paths of social mobility and bringing benefits to their families. The opportunities may have been largely illusory in imperial times, but they have become more concrete and realistic under socialism. The tremendous expansion of the state apparatus accentuated the significance of the examination system and the inflation of diplomas that is well known in most cases of non-socialist modernization (Dore 1976). This played out in distinctive ways among the larger minorities, who were endowed in the 1950s with the institutions they needed to consolidate a strong ethnic identity, based on a new standardization of their languages and cultural histories. In the educational contract established under Mao before the onset of the Cultural Revolution, successful passage through the new system of Uyghur schools and some form of higher education brought a guarantee of lifetime employment. Education was detached from Islam and tightly linked to the secular state (in the countryside, school buildings are typically located very close to the administrative and political offices). The Cultural Revolution brought a decade of disruption, but it was followed by a reaffirmation of the earlier contract. However, the later consolidation of economic

Dawut in Ürümchi and to Sămät Āsra and Busarem Imin in Qumul, although they bear no responsibility for the analysis which follows.
reforms has shattered the previous expectation that higher education would assure a job in the state sector. Affirmative action policies have been greatly cut back and, at least ostensibly, jobs nowadays go to those who best fulfil the criteria, irrespective of their ethnicity. The demise of the educational contract struck between the state and the Uyghur minority in the Maoist era has direct consequences for the realization of a ‘harmonious society’ in the new century. There is general agreement that both the state and the private sector need highly qualified graduates, but the recruitment of employees in a region such as the XUAR is controversial.

The most contentious educational policy in recent decades is the ‘new bilingual teaching mode’ (Ma 2009: 209–10) in Uyghur schools. The justification for policies which, in effect, constitute the direct opposite of bilingual education, since the language of instruction in almost every lesson is now modern standard Mandarin (Chi.: putonghua) of the majority, is that these measures are essential to raise the quality of Uyghur graduates at every level of the system. It is held that only in this way will they be able to compete for jobs and integrate into the new market-dominated economic system. I shall review some of the recent secondary literature on these policies and supplement the analysis with brief impressions from the field, before returning to the theoretical concerns in conclusion. Ma’s (2003, 2007, 2009) defence of what we might call bilingual education with Chinese characteristics can be compared with the influential model of homogenized nationalized modernity developed by Ernest Gellner (1983) at the other end of Eurasia. Whereas Europe eventually opted for nation-state solutions, the Uyghurs provide a test case for China’s efforts to forge a multiethnic polity capable of reconciling breakneck economic growth with political stability and cultural diversity.

**The low-level equilibrium trap in rural Xinjiang**

The rural economy of the sedentary Turkic-speaking farmers of the Tarim Basin did not change greatly following the incorporation of their region into the Qing state in the eighteenth century. Irrigated agriculture oriented primarily towards subsistence persisted throughout the political vicissitudes of the pre-socialist decades, when most inhabitants were more conscious of belonging to a particular oasis than to an Uyghur
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ethnic group. The new collective identity was effectively disseminated only after the socialist ‘Liberation’.

Uyghur peasants lived through the first three socialist decades in broadly the same ways that the rural population suffered throughout China. The XUAR did not endure catastrophic famine, but many peasants experienced hunger and malnutrition during the Great Leap Forward and again in the early years of the Cultural Revolution. During these years, many mosques were destroyed, closed, or desecrated. Since households no longer disposed of any surplus, even clandestine perpetuation of rituals in the private sphere was effectively precluded. Limited investments in the agricultural sector benefited primarily the new bingtuan, where most employees were Han. Many Han immigrants to Xinjiang in the framework of the ‘assistance programmes’ of the 1950s and 1960s were relatively well educated. They occupied correspondingly important positions in the state-dominated economy as well as in the political and administrative hierarchies. Uyghurs declined as a proportion of the total population of XUAR, despite being the titular nationality of the region since its establishment in 1955. However, there was little manifestation of interethnic conflict, and the Uyghur population increased rapidly in absolute numbers. Thanks to the new institutions of ethnic minority management, they too were well represented in virtually all socialist institutions. Even though power was in the hands of the Han, many Uyghurs were allocated cadre positions through preferential quota regulations. They lived with their families alongside Han in modern apartments at the work-units of the expanding towns and cities. Many sent some, or even all, of their children to regular Han schools, not because they did not value their Uyghur identity but so that their children should learn better Mandarin than the parents, and thus enjoy enhanced career chances. These Uyghur children were classified as minkaohan, in contrast to the great majority who attended Uyghur schools, the minkaomin.

These developments in the urban sector had little effect on the countryside. The re-establishment in the early 1980s of the household as

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2. The bingtuan is officially known in English as the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps. It has military origins in the Qing colonial era and, independent of local and regional government organs, is often said to constitute a ‘state within the state’. Economically, it farms a high proportion of the best land available in the XUAR. It was responsible for approximately 20 per cent of total regional income in the early 1980s and, following a recent upswing, is expected to attain that level again by 2020. See Cliff (2009) for a recent overview.
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the key unit of production and consumption, based on egalitarian land distribution in the form of long-term leases, was universally welcomed by Uyghur peasants. This relaxation led to significant improvements in productivity. Surpluses were used to fund the reconstruction of mosques and the revival of domestic rituals. Uyghur peasants look back positively on the 1980s as a decade of relative freedom (Uy.: arkinlik) in almost all domains, from household production to religious practice and secular forms of cultural expression.

In retrospect this interlude was short lived. By the time Ildikó Bellér-Hann and I carried out fieldwork in villages on the periphery of Kashgar in 1996, the ‘peasant condition’ had already worsened considerably (Bellér-Hann 1997). This was not a reversal to the chaos and hunger of the Maoist decades. On the contrary, the household remained the key unit of production and consumption, and living standards continued to rise, at least according to statistical indicators. So why did Uyghur peasants have a problem, and why were Han power holders unable to sympathize, or even to acknowledge any legitimate cause for complaint? Grievances and misunderstandings were multitudinous. The new birth control policies were regarded by Uyghurs as an intolerable interference in the private sphere. However, the Han felt that, since Uyghurs were allowed to have more children than they were, the minority had no grounds for dissatisfaction. Similar discord was found in the economic sphere. Many Kashgar peasants resented the compulsory prescription to grow cotton on part of their plots. They also objected to the state’s imposition of new seed types and methods of farming their subsistence crops. Han officials, for their part, expected Uyghur peasants to be grateful that their benevolent state was providing them with technical solutions to raise their productivity and, above all via cotton, with the means to earn some cash and thereby participate as consumers in the country’s rapidly expanding market economy (Hann and Bellér-Hann 1999).

Uyghur peasants wanted to share in the new experience of the ‘socialist commodity economy’. Some of those we knew in the villages around Kashgar were grateful for the assistance they received in developing sideline activities to generate cash (Bellér-Hann 1998). But there was also a feeling that, no matter how hard they worked, and even if they cut out ritual expenditure altogether, sustained accumulation was out of the question. Even the opportunities for short-term wage-labour em-
ployment open to rural Uyghurs were limited in comparison with those open to the urban population, and especially urban Han. During these years, new waves of Han immigrants entered Xinjiang. Unlike their predecessors in the 1950s and 1960s, those who arrived in the 1990s were more uniformly of poor peasant origin and they lacked qualifications. Yet they were more mobile and more employable than their Uyghur peasant counterparts, in part because they spoke Mandarin, and in part because of their willingness to work for low wages under conditions that Uyghurs were not prepared to accept. By this time, the household registration system (Chi.: hukou) was no longer strictly enforced in the dynamic provinces of the eastern seaboard; but in Xinjiang it was still difficult for Uyghur youth to leave their villages and seek their fortunes on the urban labour market, especially if they lacked relatives in the city and had only poor command of Mandarin.

The outcome was a distinctive Uyghur variant of the ‘low level equilibrium trap’ (Nelson 1956). According to this economist’s classical, quasi-Malthusian analysis of enduring underdevelopment, in the absence of opportunities to invest, small increases in income per capita are typically frittered away through population growth, and living standards stagnate. In China, thanks to the devolution of farm management to the household from 1979 onwards, few rural families had to worry about survival as they had in the Maoist period. However, in spite of the draconian interventions to reduce population growth, in the absence of significant possibilities for investment it was still difficult for the majority of peasants to accumulate even the basic mod cons increasingly taken for granted in the cities. For many millions of Han peasants, the solution was to join the ‘floating population’ in the booming new industrial centres of the east, or indeed to seek one’s fortune in western regions such as Xinjiang. But this ‘exit’ option was hardly available to peasants with little or no competence in the country’s lingua franca. The best the rural Uyghurs could do, with the paternalistic help of the authorities, was strive to achieve modest improvements in productivity and perhaps generate a little supplementary cash income from the plots allocated to them on an egalitarian basis.

3. The details of readjustment seem to have varied regionally. In Qumul in eastern Xinjiang in 2006–7, we found that changes were made annually; in Kashgar in the 1990s the household’s allocation was more rigid and no adjustments were made for births and deaths. This increased the pressure on certain families, especially those with more than one son, to seek employment outside agriculture.
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This outcome was analogous to the processes of sterile intensification of established forms of production and ‘shared poverty’ identified by Clifford Geertz as ‘involution’ in Indonesia (Geertz 1963). In contrast to Indonesia, where basic productive tasks stretched over most of the year, due to ecological conditions in Xinjiang, for some nine months of each year most peasants had little or nothing to occupy themselves: the ārkinlik of the post-Mao years meant that they were also ‘free’ in a quite different sense, bikar, i.e. unoccupied, with time on their hands. It is hardly surprising that, in these circumstances, connecting the two kinds of freedom they now enjoyed, some Uyghurs looked enviously at the new models offered by the newly independent, ex-Soviet republics. Some preferred to seek inspiration in more rigorous, scripture-based Islamic teachings, which entered the Kashgar region, primarily from Pakistan along the Karakoram Highway, in precisely these years (Waite 2007).

I argue that this low-level equilibrium trap, in the context of a national economy enjoying a boom with no precedent in world history, is a prime cause of the negative spiral of violence over the last two decades, which culminated in the explosion of July 2009. At issue is not an absolute decline in rural living standards, but rather perceptions of widening differentials vis-à-vis the Han and frustrated expectations. For rural Uyghurs, the reforms of the 1980s were not followed by any genuine expansion of opportunities for them to act upon Deng Xiaoping’s encouragement to all Chinese citizens to enrich themselves. One critical element in this story is the domain of education and language policy, to which I turn below. First I want to look more closely at the authorities’ effort to address the emerging problems through the Open Up the West campaign and situate these policies in a wider theoretical perspective which suggests that political notions of harmony (Chi.: hexie), rhetorically deployed by the political leadership, are contradicted by new imperatives to promote homogeneity (Chi.: ningjuhua).

The Open Up the West campaign and the theory of industrial society

By the turn of the twenty-first century it had become abundantly clear that, while the Communist Party’s hold on power was secure, the country’s economy had undergone a radical change. Starting with a system of central planning in which state ownership dominated, Deng Xiaoping
had initiated significant decentralization, allowing vastly increased scope for the forces of the market, and somewhat less scope for the diversification of ownership. The rural sector was partially excluded from this process of socialist commercialization, notably in the sense that land itself was protected from commoditization. But in practice the countryside too was caught up in these momentous changes, primarily as a supplier of labour to the booming regions of the south-east. It was recognized that the new, market-oriented political economy entailed inequalities in multiple domains. Tackling regional inequalities inevitably meant addressing the evolved institutions of ethnic management, since the vast majority of China’s officially recognized minzu (nationalities, ethnic groups) lived in the west, far away from the special economic zones of the south-east. As noted in the previous section, an opening up to the market increased consciousness of relative deprivation among Uyghurs, especially in the south of the XUAR, who gave vent to their grievances in a series of violent incidents from 1990 onwards. In the wake of the repressive ‘strike hard’ campaign of 1996, the Open Up the West campaign was the state’s effort to come up with more constructive answers to these problems (Becquelin 2004; Holbig 2004; Ma 2003).

Far from targeting particular pockets of poverty and backwardness such as the oases of southern Xinjiang, the provisions of the Open Up the West campaign were rather indiscriminately applied to 71 per cent of China’s territory, an area containing 28 per cent of its population and producing 17 per cent of its GDP (Szadziewski 2007: 23). Assessments of its impact vary according to political perspectives. Foreign opinions, especially those of human rights activists sensitive to the predicament of the Uyghurs, tend to confirm the view of most Uyghurs that the benefits of the massive infrastructural investments which have taken place have accrued overwhelmingly to the Han. Many new jobs have been created, but Uyghurs are routinely overlooked, even for the most menial (Gilley 2001; Szadziewski, ch. 3 in this volume).

Ma (2003) provided a prescient early justification and analysis of the key issues. According to his exposition, the new policies were

4. Ma Rong is a US-trained expert on ethnicity who served for many years as director of the Institute for Sociology and Anthropology at Beijing University. He has undertaken numerous empirical projects in Tibet as well as Xinjiang. Contrasting interpretations are offered by Nicolas Becquelin (2004: 373ff), who points out that, for the first time, it was recognized that infrastructural improvements could penalize local minorities and generate
warranted to remedy the economic and social backwardness of the vast territories which had not benefited directly from Deng’s reforms and remained largely agricultural in their economic base. Moreover, Ma argued that the Maoist system of affirmative action had not served the long-term interests of the minorities which live alongside the Han in these regions. It was a mistake to admit minority students to college with lower examination scores, and to provide lifetime employment for them when they graduated, when their actual abilities did not warrant such appointments. One result of such policies was that a very high proportion of the population of the XUAR worked for the state (4.6 per cent in 2000, compared with 2.8 per cent nationally) (Ma 2003: 136). Another was the generally ‘low quality of the local labor force’ (Ma 2003: 125). These problems had to be addressed urgently since, in the new era of market competition, ‘talented individuals’ (it is clear that Ma has in mind well-qualified Han) would otherwise move away from the XUAR for better jobs in the eastern provinces. In the short term it might be necessary for the state to introduce temporary measures to safeguard minority interests, but Ma left no doubt as to the ‘permanent cure’ for Xinjiang’s labour market problems. The solution could only be the consistent implementation of universal standards on the basis of one common language, *putonghua*. In this paper, Ma Rong acknowledges that students should have the right ‘to choose the teaching language’ (140). But he is convinced that, as soon as the institutional impediments created in the Maoist decades are removed and labour market outcomes become transparent, Uyghurs and other minorities will see for themselves the pragmatic advantages of opting for Mandarin. At the end of his plea for homogenization (Chi.: *ningjuhua*), Ma Rong ventures an analogy with the abandoning of racial segregation in classrooms in the United States (2003: 143, fn. 8).

This invocation of African-American experiences in the United States is instructive. Other comparative possibilities are set out in Ernest Gellner’s model of a generic industrial society, which he argues must necessarily take the form of the nation-state (Gellner 1983). According to Gellner, this is so because the modern industrial state needs to provide a high level of training in a single linguistic medium (which he terms

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ethnic tensions; this was now considered a price worth paying to overcome the entrenched inefficiencies of the old system.
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‘high culture’) in order to satisfy the functional efficiency requirements of its complex labour markets. He developed his model of ‘modular man’ almost incidentally in the course of advancing his theory of nationalism, which he outlined historically as the collapse of agrarian-based empires. Gellner illustrated his ideas with reference to the emergence of more or less homogeneous nation-states in Europe from within empires such as those of the Habsburgs (caricatured as ‘Ruritania’) and the Ottomans. He did not pay close attention to the Chinese case.

Gellner’s theory emphasized the importance of secular educational institutions as the guarantee of high levels of social mobility. The underlying dilemmas are inherent in all efforts to take seriously the Enlightenment’s promise of a société ouverte aux talents. Through its economic reforms, China is in effect for the first time creating a single domestic market congruent with its political boundaries. In the mid-eighteenth century, no less a commentator than Adam Smith was tremendously impressed by the size and ‘natural’ qualities of China’s flourishing market economy; but the domestic economy that he admired did not yet include the vast territories recently conquered by Qing armies (Hann 2011). Unification of the economy in the twenty-first century requires the final disintegration of all special administrative arrangements for governing the peripheral territories (Liu 2010). The XUAR’s system of nesting minzu jurisdictions was a complex socialist successor to earlier imperial institutions (Xinjiang was not drawn into the regular machinery of the Qing state until 1884, and its exceptional position persisted during the political chaos of the first half of the twentieth century). But is it possible to replicate the Gellnerian congruence of polity, culture, and economy in a state that is so much larger than all the European nation-states combined? In Gellner’s philosophy of history, the more or less peaceful coexistence of ethnicities and religions is the normal condition of agrarian empires. In contrast to this pluralist harmony, homogeneity based on one language and a unified educational system is the brutal necessity for the modern industrial economies whose task it is to eliminate those empires. The question is whether China can rewrite these laws of historical development by accomplishing both harmony and homogeneity at the same time.
Education, language, and social mobility

Although their models of modernization differ, it is easy to see that Ernest Gellner and Ma Rong share common premises. Ma’s emphasis on the pre-eminence of putonghua as an ‘instructional language’ (2009: 189) is a concrete realization of Gellner’s invocation of a unique ‘high culture’. They agree on the central role of education and language in mediating alternative models of political economy and ethnic diversity management.

Like the Soviet Union, socialist China extended affirmative action policies beyond the poorer sections of the dominant ethnic group. Like the Soviet Union, it did so inconsistently, and policies reflected political fluctuations. Overall, the institutions of the first generation of socialism were highly successful in disseminating a modern Uyghur identity, in town and countryside alike. They were successful in creating an Uyghur middle class of cadres willing to work for and alongside Han power holders, even though their abilities in putonghua were often very limited. They lived alongside each other in modern urban housing, even though social interaction remained limited and intermarriage extremely rare. Socialists were dismissive of feudal hierarchies and genuinely committed to opening up new channels of mobility, both among the Han and among the minorities, where cadre selection was a high priority from the beginning. In addition to the specialized schools set up to train Party and government cadres, all graduates of higher education institutions were assured of a secure job in the state sector (Uy.: khizmät). Uyghurs who graduated from Chinese language schools, the minkaohan, were especially well-placed to occupy these positions, but minkaomin were also rewarded for their diligence. However, upward mobility into this new Uyghur class was not equally available to all. The authorities did little to compensate for unequal endowments between town and countryside. The great majority of rural youth had little exposure to putonghua and

5. It is generally agreed that ‘assimilationist’ pressures were strong during the decade of the Cultural Revolution, when many new schools offering education in the newly standardized Uyghur language were closed. The confusion was epitomized by repeated script changes: initial experimentation with Cyrillic and then Latin to replace the traditional Arabic alphabet was followed by a return to a modified version of the Arabic script in 1984 (Beller-Hann 1991). For a good survey of the long-term interplay between Chinese, Muslim, and ‘local modernist’ educational paradigms in Xinjiang, see Hoffmann (2010). For further Western discussion of the links between language policies and national politics, see also Benson (2004); Dwyer (2005); Gladney (2004); and Schluessel (2007, 2009).
remained effectively excluded and subject to severe handicaps in all segments of the labour market.

In retrospect, the 1980s was a decade of transition between the older political economy of Mao and the more emphatically market-oriented political economy of the post-Deng era. In terms of ethnic minority management and education, earlier policies were initially stabilized and consolidated. The 1982 Constitution allayed fears of assimilation by guaranteeing nationalities the freedom to cultivate their native language, literature, and culture. Throughout China, the expansion of the market has been accompanied by a revival of Confucian ideals, exemplified in the adaptation of the slogan ‘harmonious society’ and concretized in the college entrance examinations. Especially for poor rural families, higher education is still commonly perceived as a social support strategy for the kin group (Obendiek 2011).

Reform era policies in the XUAR in the 1980s reaffirmed the earlier principles of affirmative action, and excellent students in the countryside were enabled to follow paths previously largely restricted to urban minkaohan. This typically happened through subsidies to enable the child to move to a dormitory in the county town (or to live with urban relatives) after completing junior high school. Although this was still an Uyghur school, during his or her senior high school years the rural student would be exposed on a regular basis to putonghua, usually for the first time, and carefully prepared for the college entrance exams. Uyghurs could still gain admission to good institutions with lower scores than their Han counterparts.

Since about 1998, in the XUAR as in other parts of China, the college degree no longer guarantees a government job for life as it did in earlier decades. Despite the deep anger in the first years when college graduates were left without jobs, education has not entirely lost its kudos. The desire for educational qualifications remains high, in part due to the new ideological emphasis on quality (suzhi) of human resources (Kipnis 2011). As Obendiek (2011) found in neighbouring Gansu Province, in the XUAR too, many rural families continue to see a higher degree as the best hope of escaping the stagnation of the countryside. There has therefore been no shortage of candidates for places in new schemes to select and subsidize those who study well. The best known of these schemes, introduced in 2000 and later expanded, is the ‘Xinjiang Class’
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(Grose 2010). This involves the recruitment of Uyghurs, mostly from poor, rural backgrounds, to special classes in large cities of ‘inner China’ where they are expected to benefit from intimate association with local Han students. According to Grose’s data, the students from Xinjiang seldom intermingle as planned but keep very much to themselves and speak almost exclusively Uyghur outside the classroom. Some of their encounters with the Han serve only to intensify their ethnic pride and determination to work for their homeland in their later careers.

These responses resemble those found among many minkaohan. The attitudes of other Uyghurs towards these fluent Mandarin speakers are ambivalent. Most parents are keen to send their children (not necessarily all of them) to a school that has obvious advantages: lower real costs, thanks to subsidies, and better Mandarin language skills for the labour market. But, contrary to the impressions gleaned by Ma (2009), in my experience this does not mean that these Uyghurs internalize the pan-Chinese values they are meant to embrace. Even those cadres who live alongside Han in urban housing estates and adopt some of their habits, such as alcohol consumption, seldom lose their identity as ‘cultural Muslims’, proud of their ethno-national identity as Uyghurs. Enrolling one’s children in minkaohan schools, or in the ‘new bilingual teaching mode’, which approximates to the same result, augmented by Uyghur language lessons, represents reluctant acquiescence in a new educational contract which they privately detest.

If the acquisition of basic competence in Mandarin often poses awkward choices for urban Uyghurs, the situation for those who remain in the countryside is definitely worse. In many regions of the south, the only Han residents in the entire township are a few policemen. Senior Han cadres generally live in the city and travel out irregularly to their rural offices. Putonghua is taught in schools, but it is never heard on the playground. Most households watch only the Uyghur television channels. In everyday life, it is likely that villagers hear less putonghua than their parents and grandparents were exposed to through the campaigns of the Maoist era.

Recognizing linguistic competence to be a fundamental prerequisite for entering the labour market and participation in society more generally, the authorities have responded to outbreaks of tension in the XUAR over the last two decades by reaffirming the principle of bilingual
education. As Arienne Dwyer (2005) stresses, this has never implied parity between Mandarin and Uyghur.\(^6\) There is almost no incentive for the Han to learn the language of the region’s titular nationality, and few do so (no more than 5 per cent according to Schluessel 2009: 397). Uyghurs, however, are increasingly obliged to have virtually all their formal education through the medium of putonghua. Following a series of declarations dating back to 1985 and reinforced by the regional government in 2004, by 2007 27 per cent of all minority students in the XUAR were being taught according to the new methods (Zhang 2011: 164). The figure has risen sharply since. Not only large Uyghur language schools in the cities but even remote rural primary schools have been required to modify their curricula and substitute putonghua as the main language of instruction.\(^7\) Uyghur teachers lacking proficiency in putonghua have been obliged to take intensive courses. Whenever possible, putonghua itself is taught by native speakers; where no Han teachers can reasonably be expected to live in the villages, they are bused in from urban settlements. In some regions, notably Kashgar, meal subsidies are a factor in encouraging parents to enrol their children for two years of pre-school immersion in putonghua institutions.

Uyghur indignation at these policies has been emphatic at every level, from kindergarten to Xinjiang University. We do not as yet have many detailed empirical studies of their impact, but the positive gloss of Ma (2009) is not borne out by other authors. After summarizing numerous projects to raise educational standards (including replication of the ‘Xinjiang class’ experiments within the XUAR), Jiangwei Zhang (2011) reports that there is still a serious shortage of teachers, that many nominally ‘bilingual teachers’ are incompetent, and that as a result of the ‘inadequate environment’ there is no ‘quality education’ (2011: 173). Regional inequalities within Xinjiang persist, for example, the propor-

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6. Bilingual education in China has been the object of many academic studies, some of which combine analyses of minority languages with quite different forms of bilingual education in the era of reform socialism that prioritize English. See Feng (2007) for a collection of studies, including several based on Tibetan data. See also Feng and Sunuodula (2009) for an attempt to develop a comprehensive conceptual framework and interesting data from southern Xinjiang; the authors point out that Uyghurs are extremely motivated to learn English and tend to learn it more easily than their Han peers; however, due to the more fundamental problems of the XUAR, opportunities for Uyghur pupils to study English are extremely limited.

7. In practice, many Uyghur teachers teaching Uyghur classes continue to use the Uyghur language, even when the textbooks they are obliged to use are now exclusively Mandarin.
tion of pupils proceeding to senior high school in the densely populated Uyghur rural districts of the south is only half the figure for the XUAR as a whole. As a result, these pupils ‘end up entering the society with no career skills, becoming easy targets for various hostile forces’ (Zhang 2011: 172).8

In her recent fieldwork in Kashgar, Anaytulla (2009) lists numerous problems at every level between pre-school and senior high school. Many derive from the deficiencies of the teachers, both Han and Uyghur, while some are related to inadequate pedagogical materials for effective bilingual teaching. After detailing these problems, the author proceeds to make a strong case for the continued importance of the mother tongue as ‘the carrier of culture’. She concludes that putonghua is unchallenged as the lingua franca, but argues that there is a ‘scientific justification’ for maintaining the role of the mother tongue in learning additional languages. Besides, the ideals of the harmonious society should be taken seriously: ‘And it cannot be denied that protection of minority languages and cultures – so as to carry forward China’s cultural diversity – must not be overlooked where the harmonious development of the state and society and the overall progress of humanity are concerned’ (Anaytulla 2009: 48).

In his thoughtful assessment of the ‘bilingual education’ policies, Eric Schluessel goes further. He argues that to immerse Uyghur pupils into putonghua as is now officially recommended and practised is severely detrimental to overall educational quality. Selectionist schemes like the ‘Xinjiang class’ and similar initiatives to intensify the recruitment of rural Uyghurs to Mandarin schools within Xinjiang may prove counterproductive by conveying to Uyghur pupils the message that their native tongue somehow lacks the range or depth to facilitate instruction, not only in the sciences but right across the curriculum. Schluessel shows that it is in large measure due to the successful dissemination of a collective Uyghur identity in earlier decades that the policies labelled ‘bilingual education’ are now perceived as Han chauvinism and rejected.

8. Other contributions to this conference volume indicate that the ominous phrase ‘hostile forces’ refers primarily to Islam. It is alleged that Hizbut-Tahrir is gaining strength in secret cells at tertiary institutions, and that younger pupils are being ‘poisoned’ through their participation at ‘private underground scripture schools’ (Liu 2011: 148, 156). By contrast, Schluessel (2009) sees in the expanding – and entirely legal – private sector of recent years powerful continuities which reaffirm the importance of mother-tongue education for the Uyghur intelligentsia since its formation in the pre-socialist era.
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Of course, some parents do question if it is still worthwhile to push their children to study hard under these conditions. As noted above, a college degree no longer assures a public sector job, and this appears to be true irrespective of one’s proficiency in putonghua. On the labour market, Uyghurs frequently maintain that a native Han lacking a higher degree is preferred to an Uyghur who has one, even if the latter is equally competent in Mandarin (see also Szadziewski, ch. 3 in this volume). In other words, the emphasis upon homogenization through education and the common language turns out to be a chimera, because the minority is still perceived as inferior and will experience discrimination in any case. In Ürümchi, it has been shown that much recruitment depends on hometown networks. Uyghurs cannot compete effectively with Han immigrants but are restricted to low-skill, low-prestige segments (Hopper and Webber 2009). As long as these patterns persist, schemes such as the Open Up the West campaign and all the effort to promote bilingual education fail to address the root causes of Uyghur relative deprivation and frustrated expectations. Ma Rong himself (2003) stipulated that labour market outcomes were the ‘sole criterion’ in justifying the policies of bilingual education and homogenization. A decade later, the evidence suggests not only that the policies have proved unworkable, but that, even if they could be implemented, they would not succeed in providing a level playing field for minority and majority ethnic groups in the XUAR.

The oasis of Qumul

Intraregional diversity within the XUAR is considerable and no sub-region can be regarded as representative. Fieldwork observations over the course of nine months in rural communities in the eastern oasis of Qumul from 2006 to 2009 were primarily directed towards ‘social support and kinship’. Despite the presence of several large bingtuans and new private farms with a Han labour force, the rural population of Qumul County remains predominantly Uyghur. A high proportion of these Uyghurs enjoys easy access to the modern city (by local buses or

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9. See note 1, above. It was commonly noted that educational expenses did not have the secure payoff they had had in earlier years, but the proportion of pupils proceeding to higher education seems to have increased. It has become easier to obtain scholarships and subsidies, especially for study outside the XUAR.
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by bicycle) but, although Qumul is a prosperous, expanding city, it is by no means easy to find work, even in the informal sector. Uyghurs, nowadays less than 20 per cent of the total population in this prefecture, complain that they are pre-empted by a limitless supply of cheap labour from the inland provinces. Meanwhile, village schools have been closed, and almost all children in the proximity of the city now receive all of their schooling here in the medium of *putonghua*. When I suggested that the old distinction between *minkaomin* and *minkaohan* was thus rapidly being rendered superfluous, most Uyghurs were quick to disagree. It was still desirable to be educated in the company of one’s own ethnic group, by teachers who belonged to that group, even if they were compelled to speak *putonghua* during lessons. There even seemed to be a pattern of transferring pupils from a Han school to an Uyghur school for the last years of secondary education, in spite of the fact that this reduced one’s chances of learning good English and proceeding to higher education outside the XUAR.10

Economic and educational options are much more restricted in the more remote settlements which traditionally rely on a mixed economy. Some families in upland villages have become prosperous through building up large flocks. However, limited pasture in the eastern Tian Shan range has already led to degradation. Most households in Tian Shan Township hold only a small stock of animals, mainly sheep and goats, which are sent collectively to the high pasture in the summer. These flocks are an important reserve and source of cash for special occasions, such as meeting the costs of a wedding or a new house, but, as with sideline production in 1990s Kashgar, they do not open paths to entrepreneurial accumulation for more than a few. Here, too, for much of the year a high proportion of the rural population is effectively unemployed (Uy.: *bikar*). The term is used frequently by unmarried men, many of whom earn additional money for their households through seasonal wage labour on the large farms of the oasis and through casual work for the state, such as tree planting alongside the state highway (Hann 2009). When not engaged in such activities or looking after the flocks, these young men are obliged to work on the plots of their households under

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10. Parents proceeding in this way typically justified their decisions with reference to the different temperament (Uy.: *mijäz*) of Uyghurs (see Beller-Hann 2002: 72–4).
the control of their fathers. Patriarchal control over labour often persists after marriage and the nominal establishment of a separate household.

Although education was not a central focus of this recent research, I visited numerous schools and discussed the issues raised in previous sections with administrators, teachers, and parents. The school network in Tian Shan Township was steadily diminishing as the state closed schools where the number of pupils no longer reached double figures. Only five village schools remained in 2009. This was in part due to the general decline in fertility, but also to population resettlement schemes which had created new communities based on irrigated cultivation nearer the city, and to the fact that some chose to send their children to live with relatives in the city in order to attend Chinese-language primary schools. A large new complex combining elementary school with junior high school had been constructed at the township centre. It had boarding facilities for 80 pupils from the more remote settlements, and the total number of pupils was just over 200. Most teachers and support staff returned to the city, 55 kilometres distant, by bus in the middle of the afternoon. Some neighbouring mountainous townships had lost their schools altogether. Their children were now educated in large new schools on the plain or in the city itself, where, in the absence of family members, they lived in dormitories. Teachers were overwhelmingly Uyghur, though with the introduction of bilingual education the number of Han was gradually increasing. Starting in 2009, a Han teacher was bused out daily from the oasis centre to help improve Mandarin teaching in Tian Shan Township. All schools are subject to strict political controls: although it is standard in Uyghur schools in Qumul and increasingly in the countryside as well for the school director to be an ethnic Uyghur, in the city the Party secretary is a Han. In Tian Shan Township, 14 members of the total teaching staff of 43 were Party members.

11. Like other state officials, teachers had reason to be cautious in interacting with a foreigner. Some who gave me an official cold shoulder at the institution made up for it by opening up in private settings. Some teachers organized private schools and gave tuition in their homes during vacations. They were as dedicated and hardworking as any teachers I have met anywhere. I encountered a few, especially primary school teachers in the remoter villages, who made no secret of their religious convictions, though they could not visit the mosque while employed by the state (except on the official ‘national’ religious holidays). Such people decline to join the Communist Party, even if this costs them the possibility of promotion; when they retire, they often become active members of their local mosque community (jämait).

12. During a further short visit in 2013, after the drafting of this chapter, I was told of further changes. Children in the last three grades (senior high school) were no longer taught in the
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Pupils who had studied well and gone on to escape the peasant condition were greatly admired in their natal communities. If they end up with positions in the city bureaucracy, they may be called upon to assist fellow villagers as well as relatives; but the respect they enjoy transcends this instrumental dimension. One village in Tian Shan Township is well known as the home community of Tursun Yaqub, born into a peasant family around 1970. Tursun was selected for a place at an Uyghur senior high school near the oasis centre and proceeded, in the supportive atmosphere of the 1980s, to Xinjiang University. Further studies followed in Beijing and in Sweden, and he was eventually promoted to professor at Xinjiang University at an exceptionally young age. His book about his experiences as an Uyghur in a Scandinavian country with a distinguished history of scholarly work on Xinjiang became a bestseller among Uyghur intellectuals during our fieldwork. The author has become a role model throughout the county and the whole of the XUAR.

Let us look at this family more closely. The director of education in Tian Shan Township is Kārim Yaqub, the elder brother of Tursun. Kārim lives with his family in modern cadre accommodation in the centre of Qumul. Like other Uyghurs in prestigious governmental positions, he made it plain to me that he had no scope to formulate policy or to diverge significantly from guidelines specified in Ürümchi concerning implementation. The two younger siblings of Kārim and Tursun, a boy and a girl, have also obtained higher qualifications. A job could no longer be taken for granted by the time the younger boy, Hasan, graduated from veterinary college, but he was fortunate to obtain a position in the township. The sister, Ayshā, taught at a school in a new settlement on the plains, to which 20 families from their village had been relocated in order to give them better economic opportunities than were possible in the hills. All four siblings are now representatives of the ‘urban population’ (Uy.: shähär nopus), with no entitlement to land. Their widowed

township but in the oasis centre, where putonghua was the main language of instruction. Villagers were highly critical of the prison-like conditions in the urban dormitories. This boarding experience is quite different from that of boarding at the township centre, from where they could join their parents every weekend.

13. Large-scale investments in irrigation and basic infrastructure contributed to the popularity of this state initiative. Migrants used their new plots to cultivate cash crops, including cotton, grown here on a voluntary basis. They were allowed to retain their plots in their natal community, which they continued to cultivate for their subsistence requirements, despite the considerable distance between the two settlements.
mother still has an entitlement; she moves from one child to another, and likes to return to the village to open up the old house during the summer. Her own children visit only rarely, but in August she is a generous hostess to nephews, nieces, and grandchildren who travel up from the new settlement on the plain to help with the harvest.

While this family has been exceptionally mobile, socially and geographically, Tursun’s cousins, the four children of his father’s younger brother, have remained in the rural township. They are rural residents (Uy.: yäza nopus) and struggle with the low-level equilibrium trap. One daughter works locally as a teacher and has no land allowance. Another works alongside her peasant husband: they have more land, but little cash income. The two sons did not complete senior high school. The elder does what he can to generate additional income, for example, through offering his services as a butcher and purveyor of meals to Han cadres at township headquarters. He owns a motorbike, but, though well into his thirties, married, and living independently for more than a decade, he must obey his father and contribute to the labour force of the extended household at the peak periods of the agricultural cycle. A network of cousins outside the village is not sufficient to provide alternative options for a man who lacks formal qualifications.

Rural Uyghurs who rise on the basis of their qualifications to responsible posts in governmental or quasi-governmental organizations, especially in the fields of education and cultural heritage, were sometimes described as intellectuals (Uy.: ziyalī). The emergence of this group in the first socialist generation was important in mediating between dominant and minority communities. Tursun Yaqub is an archetypal ziyalī for Uyghurs in Qumul and the surrounding countryside. But it is hard to see how this pattern can be reproduced in the current generation: how can an Uyghur cultural intellectual retain any credibility among his own people if required to implement the current Han understanding of bilingualism?14

14. In terms of social prestige, the successful merchant was traditionally a rival to the intellectual; some parents in Qumul nowadays try to respond to the rise of the socialist market economy by establishing their sons in a commercial network, and teaching them Russian as a foreign language rather than the more common English, on the grounds that Russian is more useful in trade with ex-Soviet Central Asia. The major impediment to such strategies is that success in business depends not only on entrepreneurial acumen, but also on having appropriate political contacts.
Conclusion

In this chapter I have drawn on Ernest Gellner's model of the nation-state, which he understands as a modern form of polity unified by a single ‘high culture’, for which language is a sure proxy. According to Gellner, an industrial division of labour requires this homogeneity, which is produced and sustained above all by the state’s control over the educational system. This contrasts with the patchwork of languages, religions, and educational institutions typical of agrarian polities. I compared Gellner’s model, based on cases in western Eurasia, with the arguments put forward recently by Ma Rong to justify the intensified use of *putonghua* as the dominant explanatory language in classrooms in the XUAR. These authors agree that the provision of standardized education is a fundamental task of the modern state. They further agree that qualifications are the key to a meritocracy, a social division of labour which is *fair* because it offers paths of upward mobility even to the poor, if they are sufficiently talented and/or diligent.

This ideal is fraught with difficulties everywhere. In the XUAR the socialist authorities were successful in sweeping aside traditional Islamic educational institutions (*mäktäps* and *mädräsäs*). In spite of the chaos of the Maoist decades, literacy rates rose and this facilitated a new consciousness among Uyghurs as Uyghurs, the titular nationality of the entire region. For a few, the acquisition of *putonghua* skills, however limited, opened the door to careers as cadres or teachers. This middle class, primarily urban, helped to stabilize the entire system. In the first decade of reforms, the 1980s, it looked as if the loyalties of this class would be consolidated as Han power holders seemed ready to honour the constitutional commitment to promote minority languages and enable talented peasant children to become upwardly mobile through academic study.

In the last two decades this optimistic scenario has failed to materialize. Educational opportunities in the Uyghur language have been significantly constrained since the ‘strike hard’ campaign of the 1990s and the ‘war on terror’ of the 2000s. The adoption of the ‘new bilingual teaching mode’ is justified by the proponents of the Open Up the West campaign as the only way to raise the overall quality of the labour force and allow Uyghurs to compete with Han for the best jobs in both public and private sectors. But since this so-called bilingual policy involves
virtually no use of Uyghur as a medium of instruction, it is widely perceived by Uyghurs as a smokescreen for policies aimed at undermining the progress made in consolidating Uyghur national culture in the previous generation. Despite the scholarships available to the needy, a higher degree nowadays means significant financial outlay for a parent; since it no longer guarantees a job after graduation, even parents who can afford the investment now hesitate to make it and consider other options for their offspring. In the countryside the situation is especially dire. Some talented Uyghur youngsters are selected for special schools, and the proportion of boarders in larger settlements has risen sharply; but instead of being welcomed as an opportunity for social mobility, state educational provision is increasingly viewed with suspicion as the prime instrument of assimilation. Most rural youth remain prisoners of the low-level equilibrium trap; for cohorts with no memory of the hardships of the Maoist era. Relations with Han (especially with new colonists) may not have been more harmonious in earlier periods, but the crystallization of minority consciousness as the minzu with a privileged constitutional right to call the whole of Xinjiang its homeland raised the conflict to a new level.

Ernest Gellner drew his main examples from Eastern Europe, where the multiethnic Habsburg and Ottoman Empires collapsed at the end of the First World War, to be replaced (in the main) by new, much more homogeneous nation-states. The Russian Empire also collapsed at this time, but it mutated into another form of multiethnic polity, the Soviet Union. This survived until the last decade of the century, when its autonomous republics became independent nation-states. The People’s Republic of China inherited a multiethnic polity which acquired its modern cartography under the Qing. Socialist minority policies were influenced by the system already in place in the Soviet Union, but ‘autonomy’ in China did not entail the right to secede. In the reform era, power holders have set about accomplishing an unprecedented combination: full integration of the domestic market and cultural homogenization within the old imperial boundaries. Given the extraordinary penetrative power of the state and its ability to mobilize Han nationalist sentiment, together with the relatively small numbers of the minority population, the goals are not absurd. But the XUAR remains a vast territory, and ten million Uyghurs are not easy to integrate, let
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alone assimilate. The impediment to Gellnerian homogeneity is due in large measure to the successful consolidation of Uyghur identity in the institution building of the early Maoist era, when ethnic relations were – paradoxically – more harmonious than they are today. The evidence of recent decades suggests that the pursuit of the harmonious society, the overt goal of power holders, may be incompatible with the pursuit of the homogeneous society, the covert goal. One or the other objective will eventually have to be abandoned.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

Streets, slogans and screens: New paradigms for the defence of the Tibetan language

Françoise Robin

The challenge facing all systems is how schools can help minorities to gain access to a social and economic system that is dominated by the values of the majority while, at the same time, retaining their separate ethnic group cultures and identities.
– Rebecca Clothey (2005: 389)

Introduction

Until October 2010 protests in Tibet¹ almost never targeted language policies implemented by the Chinese state. Private conversations with educated Tibetans would often reveal a ‘linguistic anxiety’ (Bulag 2003) combined with a feeling of helplessness, but it took the public announcement of a new ten-year ‘bilingual’ education policy in Qinghai for language-related mass protests to begin in Qinghai Province, specifically in the Amdo-speaking areas. The implementation of a ‘bilingual’ policy in the present case refers to dual-language schooling whereby one language (Mandarin) strongly supersedes the vernacular one (Tibetan), to the point of sidelining it almost completely in terms of teaching volume (for earlier implementation of a similar policy in XUAR, see both Schluessel and Hann in this volume). Most of the slogans used in the protests reminded the authorities of the right to use Tibetan and the equality of rights among nationalities as stated in the PRC constitution, but some explicitly targeted the centre, reminding the authorities of

¹. Tibet here is to be understood in the broad sense of the Tibetan cultural sphere within China’s border, which is not restricted to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR).
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their frequently proclaimed goal of building a ‘harmonious society’: the slogan ‘Equality and harmony among nationalities’ (Tib.: mi rigs ’dra mnyam dang mthun sgri l dgos) was reported in the demonstrations in Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture on 20 October 2010, and ‘Progress for the Chinese [Zhonghua] culture’ (Tib.: Krung hwa’i shes rig dar spel) was seen in Beijing two days later, possibly paying lip service to the Chinese state-sponsored ideal of harmonious cohabitation of diverse cultures and ethnic groups in China, which is ultimately supposed to lead to a unique, melded Chinese culture.2

Moreover, these demonstrations have been accompanied by both online literary activity and grassroots activism. In this chapter I first provide a chronology of the protests, then shift to the poetic and literary discourses in defence of the Tibetan language that have appeared in the lively Tibetan blogosphere. The chapter then moves into a description of grassroots language projects initiated by Tibetans in the last few years, and concludes by asking if this threefold activism heralds a new type of Tibetan agency in China that can be interpreted as attempts to negotiate new conditions for a meaningful Tibetan citizenship in today’s China.

Language policies and students protests

On 12 September 2010 the outline of the ‘Qinghai Province mid- and long-term plan for educational reform and development (2010–2020)’ was made public by Wang Yubo, director of the Qinghai Department of Education. He declared that one of its main goals was for instructors to ‘adhere to mainly teaching with the state’s standard spoken and written language’ (CECC 2011: 337, note 118), that is, Mandarin. According to Rab ’byor, a Tibetan blogger in exile, Qiang Wei, the Qinghai Province party secretary and chairman of the Provincial People’s Congress, hence the most powerful person in Qinghai, concurred: it was ‘crucial for pupils from minority nationalities to receive an education in the common lan-

2. See http://www.khabdha.org/?p=12903 (Accessed 15 December 2012). Schluessel (this volume) shows that contemporary Uyghur intellectuals either subvert or ignore the concept of harmony. Harmony is thus rejected both by Uyghurs and Tibetans: for the latter, it is seen as ‘a coercive tool wielded as a legitimating device for the exercise of a sovereign power’ (Yeh, this volume), while for Uyghurs it is ‘a concept linking social and political priorities to essentialized Chinese cultural and therefore nationalist imperatives’ (Schluessel, ch. 12 in this volume). As Schluessel (ibid.) summarizes for Uyghurs, in a way that is also valid for Tibetans, ‘To speak of “harmony” as an Uyghur is to express a pan-Chinese identity and complicity and engagement with the state project to construct that identity’.
guage of the country’. Qiang added that local leaders should not harbour doubts about the announced policy. He urged local cadres to ‘conquer the erroneous thinking that if minority nationality students undergo an education based on the state’s common language [Mandarin] and script, it will hurt the feelings of the minority nationality masses, or affect the development of the minority nationality culture, or impact social stability’ (CECC 2011: 339, note 133). This revealed an obvious anticipation that some representatives of the minority nationalities targeted by this policy would be reluctant to accept it and might even resist it.

A brief reminder of the demographic situation of Qinghai is in order here. The population of Qinghai Province in 2010 totalled 5,630,000 inhabitants, of whom 53 per cent were Han Chinese. The remaining 47 per cent was made up of ‘minority nationalities’, Tibetans being the most numerous (21 per cent of the total population, or 1,400,000), followed by Hui (15 per cent). The rest of the minority population included Monguors (known as Tu in Chinese, 4 per cent), Salars and Mongols (less than 2 per cent each). Given that Han and Hui both write and speak Mandarin (or a Qinghai dialect of it), this policy mainly concerned Tibetans. While it is true that they represent only a fifth of the whole population of the province, they form substantial majority pockets in officially designated Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures (TAPs) in the southern and western regions of Qinghai. There they represent between 62 and 95 per cent of the total population. Since the liberalization period in the early 1980s, special educational provisions have made possible a network of prefectural, county and local ‘nationality’ schools where Tibetan is the principal language of instruction. Most of these

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5. With the exception of the Mtsho nub (Ch.: Haixi) Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, which has a strong Han presence, and the Mtsho byang (Ch.: Haibei) TAP, where Tibetans only account for 23 per cent of the population. As it happens, there were few demonstrations in these two prefectures.
6. Education for Tibetans living outside the TAR since the 1950s is a complex matter because of their distribution throughout several provinces, prefectures and counties, all of which have their own policies. The best survey to date is Kolås and Thowsen (2005) (see especially pp. 96–100, and more generally chapter 3, ‘The dilemmas of education in Tibetan areas’). See also Seeberg (2008) and Bangsbo (2008) for specific studies of primary schools in Qinghai and Gansu provinces, based on fieldwork done by the two authors in 2004. In spite of the difficulty to generalize, it can be said that, in these nationality schools (mostly located in Qinghai, but with a few in TAPs in Gansu and Sichuan), both Tibetan and Chinese are used as the languages of instruction, depending upon the subject taught, the ethnic origin of the
TAPs have benefited significantly from these policies, to the extent that such schools could in fact more aptly be called ‘Tibetan schools’. Most of today’s Tibetan editors, television and radio personnel, writers, poets, filmmakers, teachers, translators, and many state employees spent their childhoods and teenage years in such institutions. They thus represent important loci of knowledge production and transmission for the Tibetan community, as they train a substantial proportion of the elite of Tibetan lay society. Schluessel and Hann (ch. 12 and ch. 7 in this volume) also note that the modern Uyghur intelligentsia was fostered by favourable state education policies in the 1980s. Their position in the Uyghur community and their role in building a collective ethnic consciousness closely resemble that of the newly educated stratum of Tibetans working in the fields of education and culture.

With these data in mind, it comes as no surprise that, soon after the announcement of the ten-year plan, Tibetan students and teachers from these nationality schools, TAPs and beyond took to the streets. Appeals and demonstrations first took place in October 2010, followed by a second wave of protests in late 2011 and another one in early 2012. These three movements will be briefly reviewed here.

In October 2010, a few weeks after the new policy was announced, somewhere between 103 and 300 primary and middle-school teachers7 gathered on the occasion of a “Tibetan language course reform training”8 in Reb gong (Ch.: Tongren) in the Rma lho (Ch.: Huangnan) TAP and signed a petition ‘calling on Qinghai officials to continue to treat Tibetan as the “language of instruction” in Tibetan schools’.9 Their
core argument was pedagogical: they claimed that Tibetan students were entitled to an education in their mother tongue because, coming predominantly from rural backgrounds, their limited knowledge of Chinese would hamper their learning if Chinese were the language of instruction. They hastened to add that they did not deny the importance of learning Chinese or, for that matter, English. Almost simultaneously (19–24 October 2010), twelve demonstrations were reported, ranging in size from 200 to 6,000 participants – mainly students, but also teachers from nationality schools in TAPs in Qinghai. Demonstrations were reported in Rma lho TAP (Reb gong, Rtse khog, Khri ka), Mtsho lho TAP (Chab cha, Rtsi sgor thang), Mgo log TAP (Rta’u) and Mtsho nub Tibetan and Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture (Them chen). The movement stretched into Sichuan (Rnga ba TAP), and reached as far as Beijing (Central University for Nationalities). The most frequent demand made by demonstrators was equality of languages in the PRC, and they sometimes linked that demand with the goal of creating a harmonious society, the current motto of the Chinese state, arguing that a truly harmonious multinational society must give equal rights, including language rights, to all its citizens.

Seasoned and retired Tibetan cadres, educators and officials who had served in the Chinese government and thus enjoyed legitimacy with both the Chinese state and the Tibetan demonstrators also voiced their discontent. Their appeal, sent on 24 October, ignored the topics of pedagogy, cultural sensitivity and equality among nationalities. It chose instead to underscore the illegal character of the reforms, displaying a


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solid grounding in Chinese legal affairs. The announced policy, they argued, contravened several official texts: the PRC Constitution, the National Education Plan, article 20 of the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law (REAL, 1984, revised in 2001), and the Law for the State’s Commonly Used Languages (no documentation on this last law was available to me at the time of writing). They thus minimized the ethnic dimension of their appeal, turning their argument into a matter of legal principle, thereby surfing on the legalist wave favoured currently in China both by the Chinese authorities and civil rights movements. They also avoided begging for exceptional treatment in the name of the uniqueness of Tibetan culture, which they certainly knew might turn out to be counterproductive in the present era. Calling to ‘immediately stop the enforcement of the illegal provision for using Chinese as the only language for teaching’ (quoted in CECC 2011: 215), they sent their appeal to relevant bodies at the state, provincial and prefectural levels. On the national level, four of the five governmental bodies to which they sent the appeal deal with nationalities issues, revealing how highly politicized the issue is. Provincial authorities were also alerted, all in the political realm. Prefectural-level authorities were contacted too, including local departments of education. To the best of my knowledge, no reply from these bodies has been made public.

The authorities’ handling of the protests was gentle at first. The People’s Armed Police (PAP) were not systematically deployed and protests were usually allowed, although some students were ordered to stay within their school compounds and a few arrests were report-

12. Article 36 of the REAL clearly states that, with regard to language used in education in autonomous areas, ‘autonomous agencies in ethnic autonomous areas decide on educational plans in these areas, on the establishment of various kinds of schools at different levels, and on their educational system, forms, curricula, the language used in instruction and enrolment procedures’ (quoted from Uyghur Human Rights Project 2007: 2). See Uyghur Human Rights (2007) for a summary of the legal framework protecting education in minority languages in China and for specifics of the discrepancy between theory and practice with regard to Uyghur-medium education since 2002. Many parallels can be drawn between the crisis currently unfolding in Qinghai and the situation in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, especially in connection with the ‘bilingual education’ policy implementation, as can be seen in Hann’s and Schuessel’s contributions to this volume.

13. The Communist Party United Front Work Department (UFWD), the National People’s Congress Religious Committee, the State Ethnic Affairs Commission and the Ethnic Affairs Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). The Ministry of Education was the fifth recipient of the appeal at the national level.

14. The list of bodies contacted can be found in CECC (2011: 338, note 139).
ed. Authorities in charge of education even began by acknowledging the protestors’ grievances. For example, the director of the Qinghai Department of Education, Wang Yubo, spoke on 22 October of ‘misunderstanding’ on the part of the students (CECC 2011: 215). He added that, if the announced policy did not meet the students’ or their parents’ expectations, it would not be implemented forcefully, and that he was ready to suggest additional expenditures on minority-language education. He also guaranteed that teachers with a low level of Chinese would not lose their positions.

That same day, however, political authorities favoured a different stance: Gao Yunlong, vice-chairman of the Qinghai People’s Government, asserted that languages other than Mandarin were fine for domestic use, but Mandarin was the one language appropriate for ‘public places’ (CECC 2011: 215), a state of affairs that language and education specialists say is ‘not a healthy state for any language’ (Grant 1988: 159). A few days later (27 October), it was announced that this policy was designed not only for the benefit of the minority nationalities (fluency in the dominant language being crucial for each individual’s future), but also for the benefit of the majority and the PRC, linking linguistic unity with ‘national and ethnic unity’ (CECC 2011: 215). In other words, authorities clearly established a link between, on the one hand, a multi-language schooling system catering to minority nationalities and, on the other hand, the temptation


16. See http://www.khabdha.org/?p=12914. A shift to compulsory Chinese-medium education in 2002 in the XUAR meant that Uyghur teachers with a low level of Chinese could not retain their positions, according to Uyghur Human Rights Project 2007: 7–8. Hann (ch. 7 in this volume) does not confirm this, but explains that, in the wake of the bilingual education scheme, ‘many Uyghur teachers have been obliged to take intensive Mandarin courses. Where no Han can reasonably be expected to live in the villages, they are bussed in from urban settlements.’

17. Ronald Schwartz, in his seminal studies of Tibetan protests, has aptly written that ‘assertions of Tibetan national identity are always perceived as challenges to the Communist political system, and predictably this sets in motion the mechanisms of Party control’ (Schwartz 2004: 189). The rationale of the educators and students might have been quickly interpreted as hiding a nationalist or, at least, an ethnic identity agenda.
of separatism. After one year had passed without dissent, 500 teachers and 5,000 students took advantage of the 11th Qinghai Provincial Assembly in late December 2011 to protest simultaneously in different locations in Qinghai (Rma lho TAP, Mgo log TAP, Yul shul TAP, Mtsho lho TAP), showing a degree of coordination. They demanded a revision (Tib. bskyar gso) of the 2010 education policy and a stop to Chinese-medium education for Tibetans, which apparently had been implemented in the second semester of 2011 in some nationality high schools in Qinghai. They argued that it had resulted in a 30 to 35 per cent decline in the grades of many Tibetan students. This is particularly problematic in the highly competitive Chinese school system, as poor grades are a serious hindrance to advancing to a higher class and can severely compromise a child’s future (see Hann, ch. 7 in this volume, for a similar situation in Xinjiang).

March 2012 saw the third round of language-related protests. The first demonstration took place on 14 March, with ‘around 700 students of the Rebkong County National Middle School’ ripping apart their new schoolbooks (politics, history, geography, mathematics, biology, chemistry and physics) when they discovered they were in Chinese instead of Tibetan. Again, local authorities first reacted with relative leniency: ‘The vice-director of the County Education Bureau visited the school and explained that the Chinese language textbooks were issued, as Tibetan textbooks could not be printed on time.’ But students were not convinced: between 14 and 18 March, new protests erupted in Rma lho TAP and Mtsho lho TAP.

18. For two diverging linguists’ views on this question, see Fishman (1986) and Esman (1992).
21. Ibid.
STREETS, SLOGANS AND SCREENS

Poems, songs, shows and websites celebrating the Tibetan language

It has been argued that Tibetan literature is a ‘proxy public forum’ (Hartley and Schiaffini-Vedani 2008: xvi), an apt characterization of the literary activity that accompanied the 2008 Tibetan unrest and the immolation wave in 2011–2012, when the Tibetan blogosphere carefully commented upon recent political developments mainly through cryptic protest poetic writings. This is also true in the case of this language protest movement: a number of poems and songs extolling the Tibetan alphabet started appearing in 2010 on Tibetan websites within Tibet, and this trend was still going on at the time of writing (autumn 2012).

The poetic contributions that I was able to gather broach three main themes: first is the anthropomorphization of the Tibetan alphabet, equating it with human body parts, in other words, with essential physical and mental components of Tibetans themselves. The second favoured theme is the assertion that the Tibetan alphabet is the essential tool for the development and the glory of Tibet’s civilization, showing at the same time a pride in Tibetan cultural achievements and stressing the uniqueness of the Tibetan civilization. Schluessel (ch. 12 in this volume) shows that this equation between the survival of a language and of an ethnic group is shared by Uyghur public intellectuals, who posit that ‘the Uyghur nation and its fate are inextricably linked to the institutions of language’. Poems make it clear that these achievements and this uniqueness are anchored in and dependent upon the fate of the Tibetan language. A third favourite topic is the increasing celebration of the alphabet’s alleged inventor, Thon mi Sambhota. In the interests of space, here I shall only deal with the first two of these themes.

The song ‘Ka, kha, ga, nga, my life force’ exemplifies both themes. Ka, kha, ga, and nga are the first four letters of the Tibetan alphabet. Each of the poem’s quatrains begins with letters of the Tibetan alphabet, in alphabetical order. It was written for Tibetan children of Rma chen (Ch.: Maqin, Mgo log TAP) and posted online on 27 January 2012:

Ka, kha, ga, nga, my life force;
Ca, cha, ja, nya, the life force of a nationality.
You are a garland of vowels,
And the lamp that dispels darkness.

23. See Robin (2012a) for a survey of how the Tibetan blogosphere reacted to the immolations between October 2011 and May 2012.
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Ta, tha, da, na, rays of light emanating from a pearl;
Pa, pha, ba, ma, keys to modes of reasoning.
You form the layout of Tibetan faces,
And the basis of all treatises.

Tsa, tsha, dza, wa, dreams of childhood;
Zha, za, ‘a, ya, necklace of flowers.
You are the pride and joy of my heart,
And the advice of my mum.

Ra, la, sha, sa, wisdom of my inner mind;
Ha and a, the school’s secrets.
You are the flames of grammar,
And the life force of our nationality.

The 30 consonants are excellent and pure food;
I, u, e, o is the melody of grammar.
You are the beautiful set of letters,
You encompass all my mind.24

‘I am the Tibetan alphabet’ 25 another poetic celebration of the Tibetan alphabet, was posted online on 30 December 2011, a few days after the second wave of protests. Its author, Bong stag Ri lu, is a rather active blogger and Tibetan teacher who posts social comments, often in poetic format. Like the previous one, his poem equates the Tibetan alphabet with the Tibetan life force (Tib.: bla srog), but, being intended for adult readers, it leaves the realm of school and lullaby-like rhymes to tackle social issues. Its point of departure is the distorted shapes of Tibetan letters on commercial billboards. His remarks seem at first strangely reminiscent of Walter Benjamin’s about the transformation of the shape of writing in the modern commercial era: ‘Printing, having found in the book a refuge in which to lead an autonomous existence, is pitilessly dragged out onto the streets by advertisements and subjected to the brutal heteronomies of economic chaos. … Before a child of our time finds his way clear to opening a book, his eyes have been exposed to such a blizzard of changing, colourful, conflicting letters that the chances of his penetrating the archaic stillness of the book are slight’ (Benjamin [1928] 1997: 62). But it takes little effort to realize that Bong stag Ri lu’s poem in fact bears little similarity to Benjamin’s views. Bong stag Ri lu’s description of the maimed state

of the Tibetan script on these commercial signs is a veiled reference to the amputated status of the Tibetan language and, more globally, Tibetanness in the PRC. The poem ends with a reference to Thon mi Sam bhoti, the creator of the script, and the Tibetan emperor Srong btsan sgam po, who, according to Tibetan historiography, ordered the invention of the script in the seventh century. The poet asks with anguish if either of them would recognize the sorry state of their creation if they were to come back today. Bong stag Ri lu does not express himself as a historian of the evolution of the Tibetan script (which in 14 centuries of existence has evolved graphically to a certain degree), but he speaks as a perplexed Tibetan who sees Tibetan letters (read: Tibetan culture) massacred by careless and ignorant business owners who hang erroneous billboards over their doors (read: power holders, wealthy economic migrants, and possibly neglectful Tibetans who negate the value of the Tibetan script and prize wealth more than culture). Tibetan script is reduced to meaningless distorted drawings on billboards. Here is a translation of the poem:

I am the Tibetan alphabet.
The superscribed letters and the subscribed letter Ya
Are my limbs.
A business owner has cut them
And left me with a closed mouth and a torn nose
Below a few energetic Chinese characters.

I am the Tibetan script.
The single vertical line shad and the syllables
Are my brothers and sisters.
A business owner has halved them
In a wooden casket decorated in an iron frame.

I am in dire straits, alone.
I am the Tibetan script.
On the signs of shops and restaurants
I do not belong anymore to the realm of letters.
I am reduced to a mere drawing.
When they place me there, head cut and tail amputated,
How great is my suffering and pain!

Were my ancestor Srong btsan to arrive tomorrow,
Were Master Thon mi to arrive tomorrow,
Would they be able to recognize me?
I have good reasons to miss our place of refuge.
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The third instance of distress associated with the state of the Tibetan alphabet in these troubled times is the poem published online in June 2012, ‘Calling the alphabet from afar’, an intertextual reference to the famous invocation Calling the guru from afar (Tib.: Bla ma ’gyangs ’bod) by the luminary ’Jam mgon Kong sprul (1813–1899). This appeal for blessings and guidance is traditionally sent to one’s guru, but in the present text the lama is replaced by the alphabet as the place of refuge for today’s Tibetans. While in the nineteenth-century text the almighty lama is an infallible place of refuge, here the alphabet lies ‘scatter[ed] carelessly everywhere’, symbolizing its disempowerment and helplessness. Still, the author urges his or her fellow Tibetans not to lose hope and to hold on to the alphabet as a guarantee that Tibetans can stand on their own feet. The original poem in Tibetan is skilfully crafted, with the four lines of each stanza beginning with one of the first four letters of the alphabet (ka, kha, ga, nga) in succession:26

Consonants and vowels
Are the life force of the Land of Snow,
But their careless scattering everywhere
Inflicts pain in my heart.

Consonants and vowels
Are the warm blood of those of the snowy mountains.
Wherever we are, wherever we go,
We must take this life force into our own hands.

Prop up the beams and joists of Tibetan culture!
Stand straight like a stone, as [stable] as a pillar!
In all things, this writing system and this spoken language
Are the core nerve of our unremitting development.

Here too, echoing other poems, the simile between Tibetan letters and the Tibetan body is apparent: the alphabet of Tibet is the life force of Tibetans, its letters are their blood, and language is the condition for the development of a meaningful and wholesome Tibetan civilization. Conversely, the decline of the alphabet will entail a civilizational loss, possibly heralding the end of Tibet.

Another poem, ‘Song of the alphabet’ (Ka kha ga nga’i glu) by Mgar tshang Dar rgyas, describes the alphabet as ‘the quintessence of life

force’ (tshe srog gi nyin bcud). More originally, it refers to the letters of the Tibetan alphabet as the ‘thirty ministers that sharpen intelligence … the thirty tender monks full of loving kindness … the thirty unchanging, ever present mountains’, thereby summarizing the Tibetan psyche and environment in a reifying and self-glorifying manner.\textsuperscript{27} More poems could be quoted and offered for interpretation here, but these five pieces reflect faithfully most of these works’ content – the Tibetan alphabet is equated with Tibetans’ blood or body parts, and its use is a condition for ethnic and cultural survival, resilience and prosperity.

In addition to these poems, a few opinion pieces also appeared online, a novelty entailed by the development of websites in Tibetan devoted to news and commentary.\textsuperscript{28} Two of them were written by young intellectuals who had previously been arrested. The first one was written on 29 October 2010 (posted online in January 2011) by Melce, who works as an editor for the Tibetan section of the Gansu Nationalities Press and who was detained in October 2011 for reasons that still remain unclear to outside observers. In ‘Pray, give me my alphabet’ (Nga yi ka kha nga la sprod rogs kye), he condemns in the harshest terms the 2010–2020 reform in Qinghai for having as its ‘ultimate goal’ (or ‘meaning’, Tib.: dgongs don mthar thug) ‘nothing but actual and shameless cultural imperialism, bullying, oppression and insult’ (Tib.: mngon sum ’dzem med kyi rig gnas kyi btsan ’dzul dang brnyas bcos dang gnya’ gnon dang thub tshod). He laments the lack of logic and long-term policy planning, and argues that the new policy will ‘completely destroy the foundation and the results of the education [system] that has nurtured Tibet since what they call “Liberation”’. He is referring here to minority education policies in the 1980s which, according to Rebecca Clothey (2005: 395–396), used to be a ‘means by which China’s Communist Party leaders have sought to accommodate groups that have at times mobilized in opposition to or for separation from the Chinese state’. Melce, while praising this pluralist language policy, makes it clear that the survival and development of the Tibetan language on the public scene, after the Cultural Revolution, can be attributed to the ‘three Tibetan luminaries’ (i.e. Tshe tan zhabs drung, Dmu dge Bsam gtan and Dung


\textsuperscript{28} On this topic, see Robin (2012b).
dkar Blo bzang ’Phrin las) and the 10th Panchen Lama, thus defiantly denying the Chinese state any credit for this policy. Trying to make the Chinese authorities confront their own contradictions, he adds that the implementation of the 2010–2020 reform will reduce to ashes both the ‘noble deeds’ (such as the ‘democratic reforms’) and the ‘liberation of the hundreds of thousands of Tibetan serfs’, and would be tantamount to getting rid of the Chinese constitution and the REAL.

The second blogger is Zhogs ljang, who spent time in jail in April and May 2010 for his opinion pieces on the 2008 Tibetan uprising. His article on language policies was published later (July 2011) on the same website as Me lce’s. In ‘Piercing the flesh, piercing the bones’, Zhogs ljang begins by claiming that script and language may not be the ‘life force’ of all ethnic groups, but in the case of Tibetans, ethnic identity is undoubtedly and intrinsically linked to linguistic survival. After this rather long introduction, he argues that the worst point of the intended policy is the fact that authorities have not acknowledged its flaws. He concludes, little hiding his distaste for the current regime and enlarging the scope like Me lce had done, ‘That, by various tricks, [this situation] should be allowed to carry on and develop, is extremely frightening and it is a typical feature of autocratic states’. He then warns, ‘As Mr. Yu Jie has very accurately said, a government that treats its citizens like children is an infantile government. States lost in the darkness of today’s ignorance are now on the decrease, and those that are left will decline until they disappear.’

Such remarks lead us far from the metaphoric world of poetry, with their two authors choosing to directly challenge current policies and state rhetoric in politically laden comments. However, this kind of direct social commentary still represents a minority on the Internet, and the
general mood about the language policy among educated Tibetans may still be relatively fairly well assessed from reading poems online.

Tibetan-language-related grassroots organizations

In exile in the West, Lhakar (Tib: Lhag dkar), or ‘White Wednesday’, refers to a movement that focuses mainly on enhancing Tibetan identity through ‘all-Tibetan’ events. A typical Lhakar happening would consist of Tibetans gathering together for an evening to eat Tibetan food, wear Tibetan clothes, and to try to speak only Tibetan. It has developed as a tool to counter language and identity loss in exile. Without explicitly referring to them as relating to the ‘lhakar’ movements, Tibetans in Amdo and in Kham have also expanded grassroots initiatives in support of Tibetan language and education since 2008 and, even more intensively, since 2010. Of course, fieldwork is crucial to inquire into the origins, mode of operation and effectiveness of such projects, but, given the present circumstances and the difficulty of conducting on-site inquiries into such sensitive issues, I will present here initiatives that have been publicized in the Tibetan blogosphere, underlining the fact that the Tibetan blogosphere has really become an active tool for disseminating knowledge among Tibetans about private endeavours and opinions. I will look at three specific examples to illustrate the types of grassroots activities that Tibetans are conducting in defence of the Tibetan language: the setting up of a website dedicated to the Tibetan language; associations for the promotion of the Tibetan language; and Tibetan-language revival groups.

A website bearing the name Thon mi Sam bhota (www.thumi.net), the alleged founder of the Tibetan alphabet according to Tibetan historiography, was launched on 10 December 2011 by the Society for Cherishing and Protecting the Tibetan Language and Script (Tib: Bod skad yig gces skyong mthun tshogs). Although the group itself was founded in 2009, showing a pre-2010 interest in protecting the Tibetan language, the timing of the launching of the website in 2010 may not be innocuous, as the

32. See http://lhakardiaries.com/about/ for an explanation of the term, which is said to refer to the soul day of the current Dalai Lama.
33. See the website www.lhakar.org for examples.
34. The Chinese authorities are on constant alert for any form of cooperation or influence between Tibetans in Tibet and the exile society, which they interpret immediately as political resistance.
date is none other than the anniversary of the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Dalai Lama in 1989. The association presents itself as having three main aims:

(1) Making the Tibetan language more complete by, for example, suggesting neologisms for the many words that Tibetan lacks for contemporary topics. Many formal and informal lexicographic teams have already been established by groups and individuals in Tibet, in addition to more official undertakings, and this website is an online extension of these initiatives. It is a crucial tool in the present case, as it bridges geographical gaps between concerned Tibetans who live up to 1,500 km apart and have limited opportunities to meet and exchange ideas and views, not to mention the dialectal differences that hamper mutual understanding (on which, see point 2 below).

(2) Unifying the Tibetan language so that Tibetans from all three of the traditionally recognized Tibetan provinces can communicate easily. The necessity of a common language became a hot topic among Tibetans intellectuals as early as the 1980s, especially given the significant differences between the various Tibetan dialects. Establishing this common language is still a favourite topic in today’s discussions in Tibet.

(3) Enriching the Tibetan language by relying on the ancient tradition of translation and promoting translations of foreign books and talks into Tibetan, especially in ‘new contemporary fields’ (Tib.: deng rabs kyi rig gzhung gsar ba), which presumably means the ‘hard’ sciences.

Since its inception the website has been enriched with videos, conferences, opinion pieces, online books and reports of field activities. Films in the three main Tibetan dialects can be watched online, the hope being that they will foster mutual comprehension among all Tibetans of the Tibetan Plateau. A particularly interesting page for our present topic gives access to 11 music videos, all dealing with the ideal of

35. Tibetans traditionally divide Tibet into three provinces: Dbus gtsang, Khams and Amdo. While this division is not recognized by the Chinese state for administrative purposes, it still has resonance for Tibetans in China and abroad.
36. See, for instance, http://www.thumi.net/index.php/en/2011-07-04-16-51-14/2011-12-09-20-54-57/274-2012-06-02-11-37-31, which reports on the grassroots movement for the eradication of illiteracy, stating that it has spread all over Qinghai Province and has been met with enthusiasm by women. It quotes the example of a village in Brag dkar that organized a competition in which ten out of eleven winners were women.
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a ‘pure’ mother tongue (Tib.: pha skad gtsang ma). Among the evocative titles one can find ‘May the mother tongue live 10,000 years’ (Tib.: Pha skad gtsang ma khri lo shog) by Rtse smin sgrol; ‘Mother tongue, golden mother tongue’ (Tib.: Pha skad gser gyi pha skad) by Dga’ ldan; and ‘Pure mother tongue’ (Tib.: Pha skad gtsang ma) by the very popular singer Rig ‘dzin sgrol ma.37 Free downloadable books numbered three at the time of this writing (October 2012): Manual to Eliminate Illiteracy in Tibetan (Tib.: Bod yig rmongs sel slob deb), Further Learning for Students (Tib.: Slob ma’i gsab sbyong bslab deb), and A Concise History of the Birth and Death of Languages in the World – The Old Shepherd’s Cry (Tib.: ’Dzam gling skad yig gi skye ’chi’i lo rgyus bs dus pa lug rdzi r gan po’i ki sgra) by Mkhan po Tshul khrims blo gros (who is discussed in further detail later in this chapter).

Through a mixed content of films, videos, pictures, speeches and lengthy opinion pieces, this website can reach all segments of the public that have Internet access, catering to different tastes and generations: youngsters, elder Tibetans, a popular audience and the highly educated fringe of the population.

On the print scene, one should note the launching of a journal dedicated to the Tibetan language, which was announced on the popular Amdotibet.cn website in late August 2012. Called Pure Mother Tongue (Tib.: Pha skad gtsang ma), this four-page publication was launched by four young men from Mtsho lho TAP where, as was discussed earlier in chapter, many language-related protests and demonstrations occurred between 2010 and 2012. The front page of the first issue includes an excerpt from a speech by the charismatic Mkhan chen Tshul khrims blo gros, head of the Ser thar Buddhist institute. He enjoys a huge following among young Tibetans for his struggle for the elaboration of dictionaries and neologisms palatable to Tibetans from the three traditional provinces and for his speeches in favour of speaking a pure Tibetan and living like a Tibetan, themes that were first extolled by his now deceased master, the renowned Mkhan po ’Jigs med phun tshogs (1934–2003). The second page provides a bilingual word list with Tibetan words and their Chinese equivalents, as well as an introduction of the four editors of the journal (two of whom apparently were unable to study beyond

high school). The third page describes traditional Tibetan activities, and the final page is dedicated to poems. Love for one’s mother tongue and the link between its fate and that of Tibetan nationality is stressed several times in the introduction to the journal (available online), and ends with the exhortation: ‘Brothers! Don’t forget that our mother tongue is the flow of blood that rushes violently deep in our life force’, once again resorting to the physiological metaphor prevalent in poetry, as seen above.

A second kind of initiative involves setting up local associations to foster the awareness of the importance of keeping the Tibetan language alive and ‘pure’. On an informal level, it is quite common for groups of like-minded friends to swear to speak only Tibetan among themselves, a small fine being imposed on anyone who uses a Chinese term. Money collected in the end can serve to host a party for all members, or can be donated to a charity. This initiative has blossomed in many parts of the Tibetan Plateau, not only in Qinghai. The more formal type relies on local (although not always officially registered) organizations. They may aim more specifically at illiterate women or elders, at children in towns deprived of a nationality school, or at pre-schoolers. They are initiated by laypeople and clerics alike. Given their great number, listing such collective initiatives would be tedious, so I will describe here only a couple of them. The Association for the Protection of the Mother Tongue was formed in April 2011 and produces posters with neologisms so as to avoid the use of Chinese. Another example is the Association for Perpetuating One’s Mother Tongue (Tib.: Pha skad rgyud ’dzin tshogs pa), which was founded on New Year’s day 2012 by clerics, and includes five villages of the Reb gong area.

Another recently created Tibetan-language support group is the Association for Cherishing and Protecting the Mother Tongue (Tib.: Pha skad gces skyong mthun tshogs). Consisting of students, it has already

organized four ‘competitions for eloquence in a pure mother tongue’ (Tib.: *pha skad gtsang ma smra ba’i ’gran tshogs*). The second was held in an Amdo-speaking area of Sichuan Province (Mdzod dge County, Rnga ba TAP) in 2011, and the fourth one was to be held at the same location on the ninth day of the sixth Tibetan month in 2012. The rules for this fourth session were expounded in the call for participants:

It is important that participants from the four parts of ’Bring ba be present. ... When asked a question in Chinese [during the competition], one should reply in Tibetan.

One should explain the terms of some specific everyday items from agricultural and pastoral environments.

When answering, replies should last for twenty minutes.

First prize is 300 yuan, second prize is 250 yuan, and third prize is 200 yuan.

In addition to the competition, which rewards not only eloquent speakers of Tibetan (points 2 and 4 above), but also connoisseurs of rural Tibetan life (point 3), other events promoting the Tibetan language were planned, such as reciting Tibetan poems and singing popular local songs.

Lastly, language revival initiatives can be illustrated by the Hualong project. It is especially noteworthy as, contrary to the projects described above, it benefits from official support from a state-related administration, as we shall see. Hualong Hui (Chinese Muslim) County (in Mtsho shar Prefecture; Ch.: Haidong), Qinghai Province, was selected as the place for Tibetan-language revival activities by a collective of Tibetan teachers and students from the Qinghai Nationalities University (Tib.: *Mtsho sngon mi rigs slob grwa chen mo*; Ch.: *Qinghai Minzu Daxue*) and members of the Sengeshong Foundation (Tib.: *Seng ge gshong dge rtsa tshogs pa*). According to one report, although Tibetans in Hualong are numerous, their administrative inclusion in a Muslim autonomous county has resulted in Tibetan not being taught at the primary or secondary levels, and local Tibetans speaking a mixture of Chinese and Tibetan, with Chinese rapidly taking over Tibetan. Moreover, these Tibetans are

42. I could find no information about the first and third competitions. About the second, see http://blog.amdotibet.cn/ydtbt/archives/49610.aspx. About the fourth, see http://sang.dhor.com/blog_c.asp?id=8295&a=gangran (Both accessed 11 January 2013).

43. One yuan is approximately equal to US$0.15, so 300 yuan would be roughly $45.
disconnected from their cultural heritage. Taking advantage of summer and winter holidays, students educated in the Qinghai Nationalities University volunteer to go to these linguistically and culturally impoverished Tibetan areas to teach the Tibetan script and language during the day, and revive Tibetan culture through songs, poems and tales in the evening, all under the supervision of teachers from Xining University. Here again, modern technologies come in handy to support this initiative and disseminate its results. One summer session was filmed in 2012. The now completed documentary is entitled *The Valley of Heroes* (the literal translation of *Dpa’ lung*, the Tibetan version of Hualong). Featuring Tibetan language revival classes, it will be distributed for free and downloadable from the Internet. It aims at inspiring similar projects both among Tibetan language instructors and culturally and linguistically deprived Tibetans.

**Conclusion**

The PRC is self-defined in its constitution as ‘a multinational unitary state’. After supporting ethnic and linguistic diversity in the name of multinationality (‘nationality schools’ being one obvious example), the dominant political mood has shifted to the imperative of unity. This takes the form of a more assimilationist approach to nationality questions, whereby ethnic and linguistic differences are to be gradually erased in the face of perceived external threats leading to separatism. The declaration made in 2012 by Zhu Weiqun, deputy head of the Communist Party’s United Front Work Department – another heavily political governance body directly under the CCP’s authority and in charge of nationality policies – seems to confirm this trend. In an article published in the CCP’s paper *Study Times* on 13 February 2012, Zhu called for the end of ‘nationality’ labelling on identification cards (the core of the nationality definition) and for reforms in ‘political and educational systems to better promote “national cohesion”’. He explicitly mentioned that students in particular develop strong ethnic feelings because of the specific education that they receive in special schools, ruining their ‘sense of nationhood and Chinese nationalism. ...’

44. For a short first-person report in Tibetan, see [http://www.tibetcm.com/html/list_03/201203144219.html](http://www.tibetcm.com/html/list_03/201203144219.html).
45. See ‘Call to strike ethnic status from I.D. cards’, *South China Morning Post*, 15 February 2012.
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ethnic consciousness of students studying in [minority] schools was easily stimulated after some ethnic incidents occurred.46

It is tempting to establish a link between Zhu’s statement and the first two waves of language-related protests by Tibetans and, conversely, to see the March 2012 demonstrations (the third wave) as a reaction to the PRC’s more assimilationist move, clearly announced in Zhu’s declaration. A thorough analysis of the logics and dynamics of Tibetan protests in China since 2008 would require a much more thorough and detailed analysis than I have been able to offer here. Still, in the case of the 2010–2012 protests, what can be underscored is the novelty of the bone of contention: not the return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet, nor religious freedom, nor independence, but a Tibetan-medium education policy. It can be surmised that three factors contributed to the emergence of this new theme. First, the 2008 Tibetan demonstrations familiarized the younger generation with street protests: collective mourning movements and homages to Tibetan self-immolators in March 2012 in Reb Gong (the hotbed of the language protests) anchored street protests as a regular, if risky, mode of contention, and even occasionally provided protest opportunities.47 Second, the summer of 2010 saw a protest by Han Chinese in defence of the use of Cantonese on television. As the Tibetan blogger and activist Woeser noted at the time, ‘We “ethnic minorities” took notice of thousands of Cantonese people recently taking to the streets fighting for their language. … Uyghurs have posted numerous articles about this on the Internet; the blogs on TibetCul were also full of articles.’48 As fighting to protect one’s language in the

46. Ibid.


48. http://highpeakspureearth.blogspot.fr/2010/08/if-tibetans-took-to-streets-for-tibetan.html. These Guangdong protests in support of the use of the Cantonese language on TV programmes were triggered when ‘the local committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference ... urged authorities to ensure that Mandarin, which is spoken across the country, is used on Guangzhou TV’s main shows’ (http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jul/25/protesters-guangzhou-protect-cantonese).
PRC also occurred among the Han majority population, it appeared to be a rather safe topic of contestation for minorities, too. Third, the announcement of the ten-year education reform plan crystalized pent-up resentment toward Sino-centred policies on education and language. Robbie Barnett (2012) has persuasively argued that cultural anxiety is, more than economic or political concerns, one of the key factors that can account for the wave of self-immolations. He notes rightly that testimonies of self-immolators that have reached the outside world all express acute concern about the current state and the future of the Tibetan language or culture, while almost never mentioning independence.

Pro-Tibetan-medium education protests are a novelty and, as such, they benefit from new patterns of protest. ‘Armchair’ (online poems and opinions) protests and street demonstrations have been accompanied by ‘proactive’ language revitalization efforts anchored in a network of grassroots activities organized by Tibetans themselves, in which modern technologies play a great part. The new generation has grown up with the Internet, and it has taken part in the 2008 protests both in the streets and through telephone lines and computer screens. These young adults are increasingly politics-savvy, and they do not hesitate to comment on Chinese politics on the Internet and in opinion magazines. Finally, they engage in social work, with the support of Tibetan culture looming in the background. For instance, exactly at the time when the 2010–2020 education plan for Qinghai was announced, Melse, his wife and friends set up a Tibetan literacy class in Lanzhou (Gansu Province), catering to the children of Tibetan residents there who are deprived of any Tibetan language school, thus fulfilling what he feels is ‘our’ responsibility.

Does this involvement in social activism correspond to a new attitude and, ultimately, to a new agenda for the individual and the collective? As Zhogs ljang mentions in his July 2011 post, ‘We are a generation filled with hope for a civilized society. We must become a generation that is getting closer to the people and the grassroots [Tib.: gzhi rim mang tshogs]. Getting closer to the people and the grassroots is unmistakable proof of being a civilized society. Being estranged from the base is an unmistakable characteristic of autocracy.’ This statement may indicate an increased awareness in social responsibility at least on the part of the new Tibetan elite, which no longer quenches its thirst for change and

agency by writing cryptic poems celebrating Tibetanness or lamenting a wounded ethnic wholeness, or by taking part for a few hours in a demonstration. Me lce makes it clear in his piece ‘Pray, give me my alphabet’ (discussed above): ‘In this present time, when irresponsible devils have begun again to steal forcefully from us the beauty of our alphabet …, an irrepressible historic responsibility has fallen on our shoulders.’

It is of course too early to estimate the power of the combined effect of the protests, online literature, modern technology, grassroots activism and local engagement. We are obviously a long way away from a full-fledged civil society, with power and rights of advocacy, but the language movement is providing some active and concerned Tibetans with a sense of agency and actual opportunities to exercise it, to make their own lives and the collective life meaningful under the constraints of the educational policies of the PRC. Moreover, as has been written in the case of protests in the former Soviet Union, ‘[t]here are many oppositional protests that were hardly able to have a major effect. On the other hand, the political effects of oppositional action against authoritarian regimes are often indirect, which is to say not perceptible as the direct consequences of individual actions’ (Pollack and Weiloghs 2005: xi). In the case of language-related demonstrations, authorities relented at first, before returning to a more hardline approach. In the wider realm of education, how will Chinese authorities respond to the ‘pluralist dilemma’ (Clothey 2005: 391)? Will they soften their policies, making concessions to Tibetans’ demands for a Tibetan-language-based bilingual education? Will they remain intractable, retaining their belief in the link between bilingualism and separatism, thus reducing ‘bilingual’ education to a strong domination of Mandarin Chinese as the sole language used in the public sphere with a peppering of Tibetan reserved for domestic use, a condition that has been dubbed ‘colonial bilingualism’ (Memmi 1968)? If Xinjiang educational policies are any indication (see both Hann and Schluessel in this volume), the prospect of balanced bilingualism is still remote.

Moreover, Tibetan students resumed a fourth round of protests in early November 2012 after a series of self-immolations in Reb gong, with up to 5,000 demonstrators reported on one day. It took a decidedly political turn as students were reported shouting slogans calling

50. For pluralist strategies vs. assimilationist strategies, see Esman (1992: 382–392).
for freedom and human rights, as well as asking for the return of the Dalai Lama.\textsuperscript{51} Two weeks later, a ten-question survey with the title, ‘Ten ways of looking at the current situation in Mtsho lho Prefecture’ (Tib.: \textit{Mtsho lho khul gyi mig snga’i lta tshul ’dzin stangs bcu}) was prepared by the Mtsho lho Prefecture’s propaganda team and distributed to some students in Mtsho lho. Questions 4, 6, 7, and 8 asked, respectively, ‘Does bilingual education mean a decline in the spoken and written language of the nationalities?’ ‘What is the essence of self-immolation?’ ‘What is wrong with gathering to demonstrate illegally?’ and ‘Who is fomenting separatism and trouble?’ Such questionnaires are a form of state propaganda; the questions are rhetorical, intended not to gather opinions but rather to serve as a warning to people to toe the party line. According to the \textit{Tibet Times}, the main exile Tibetan newspaper, this questionnaire had been ready since April 2012 but was only distributed to students on 26 November 2012.\textsuperscript{52} As could have been expected from previous students’ reactions and from the ongoing radicalization of the Sino-Tibetan conflict, this leaflet infuriated Tibetan students further. When they gathered on the streets of Chab cha and burned the leaflet, armed forces responded by shooting into the crowd, injuring three students. In an even more recent turn of events, Radio Free Asia announced that organizers were forced to cancel several private Tibetan-language classes in January 2013.\textsuperscript{53} The question of bilingualism, it seems, has now left the realm of education proper and is firmly and openly associated with politics on both sides, leaving little leeway or hope for compromise or discussion.

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\textsuperscript{52} For details on the leaflet, see \url{http://www.tibettimes.net/news.php?showfooter=1&id=6965}.

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ON THE FRINGES OF THE HARMONIOUS SOCIETY


CHAPTER NINE

Tibet in China’s environmental movement

Emily T. Yeh

Harmony and Tibet as constitutive outside

Writing in a moment of ongoing self-immolations across the Tibetan Plateau, it is difficult to conceive of harmony as anything other than a coercive tool wielded as a legitimating device for the exercise of sovereign power. Indeed, the entanglement of ‘harmony’ with the sovereign right to take life was plainly evident in a November 2012 decree by officials in Huangnan Prefecture, Qinghai. Claiming that those who self-immolate damage ‘harmony and stability’, the decree ordered the immediate and permanent cancellation of all welfare benefits, disaster aid relief, and other forms of public benefits not only to self-immolators’ families, but also to anyone who dare visit the families to grieve with or offer donations to them. It also called for ‘forcefully crushing’ those who ‘incite self-immolation’ – a vague charge that casts a wide net – in order to maintain harmony and stability in the prefecture. A legal opinion a few weeks later introduced legislation in which those who ‘incite’ self-immolation would be charged with murder, again in defence of harmony qua state sovereignty.

This is a far cry from the definition of the ‘harmonious society’ that Hu Jintao offered in response to the challenges facing China in what became the defining discourse of the Hu–Wen administration. Addressing the CCP Party School in 2005, Hu defined a harmonious society as one that ‘is democratic and ruled by law, fair and just, trustworthy and fraternal, full of vitality, stable and orderly, and maintains harmony between man and nature’ (Chan 2009: 821). This gave some intellectuals cause for cautious optimism that the creation of a harmonious society would necessarily require the development of civil society. Chan (2009: 824), for example, notes that if, in line with the principles of people-first or ‘scientific development’, China were to adopt the Human Development
Index and Green GDP as part of the harmonious society, then ‘eventually, an environment that is more friendly to civil society will evolve, and that civil society will have a better chance of contributing to the development of a truly harmonious, and modern, Chinese society.’

However, the evidence of the Hu years suggests that, rather than leading to new developments in Western-style ‘civil society’, the harmonious society was instead interpreted and implemented primarily as a call for stability at all costs. Political repression and censorship increased significantly under the Hu administration. Instead of opening up, spaces for non-governmental organizations to act were shut down, and in minority areas, the harmonious society marked the conflation of expressions of cultural identity with unauthorized disruptions of stability. The harmonious society thus produced the very events it was supposed to prevent. Indeed, it was during the years in which this view of ‘harmony’ was central that China witnessed the unprecedented protests across the Tibetan Plateau in 2008, ethnic unrest in Xinjiang in 2009, and self-immolations across Tibet particularly since 2011.

Within the statist multicultural framework of the harmonious society, the status of Tibetans as the constitutive outside of the nation is reinforced. Although Tibetans are marginalized politically and culturally, Tibet is hardly marginal to the nation-state. Instead, with the nationalist backlash from the protests of 2008, the forcible inclusion of Tibetans in the Zhonghua nation-state is simultaneously an exclusion, as Tibet becomes the Other against which the majority defines itself. As a constitutive outside, Tibetans’ peripheral status on the ‘fringes’ forms the heart of the project of the harmonious society. Under the Hu–Wen administration, Tibetans and other minorities have been required to ‘harmoniously’ accept their sacrifice for the greater good of the PRC. Tibetan herders in the Sanjiangyuan area have been moved off the grasslands to towns in the name of the ecological security of the nation (Yeh 2009a; see also Nyima, ch. 5 in this volume). At the same time, Tibetan nature has become imagined as a source of physical and psychological well-being for visiting Chinese tourists, a place, in the words of one traveller writing on an Internet message board, for ‘casting away depression, beautifying my spirit, and actualizing self-improvement’. In other words, Tibet has become a kind of national natural resource available for the consumption of majority citizens (Yeh and Lama 2013).
This imaginative geography of Tibet as pure resource within the regime of the harmonious society was, I argue, not inevitable. I demonstrate this by focusing in this chapter on an earlier moment, the 1990s, when the Chinese environmental movement was beginning to develop. Although much has been written about China’s environmental movement, observers have generally failed to note that it was, from the start, constituted in relation to Tibet. In fact, the two earliest campaigns that galvanized Chinese college activists in the 1990s were both located in Tibetan areas: the campaign to save the snub-nosed monkey in Diqing, Yunnan, and the campaign against poaching of the Tibetan antelope in the Kekexili region of Qinghai. In exploring these campaigns, as well as early ‘Green Camps’ that brought Chinese student environmental activists to Tibetan areas, I argue that, far from being peripheral, Tibet was at the heart of the rise of China’s mainstream environmental movement in the 1990s. This earlier moment provides an example of Chinese and Tibetan cooperation and collaboration that contrasts significantly with the form of harmony imposed in the regime of the ‘harmonious society’. In this moment, Tibetans were constitutive of a mainstream Chinese movement, but not necessarily as an Other against which the majority defined itself. I argue that this earlier moment was much more ambiguous, with some representations and understandings of Tibetans as Other, but also other moments in which more collaborative relationships were formed between Tibetans and Chinese through reference to non-human nature and the environment. The environment was an object of collaboration that drew Tibetans and Chinese together into common projects while also allowing them to maintain their differences. As anthropologist Anna Tsing (2005) puts it, collaborations allow conversations across difference, opening up the possibility of the production of new interests and identities. That is, the earlier moment did not inevitably pave the way for the view of Tibet as pure sacrificial resource, but instead held an ambiguous and unrealized potential for a different configuration of interethnic and Tibetan–state relations. At the same time, the moment shows how Tibet was at the very centre, the point of origin, of China’s contemporary environmental activism.

1. I use ‘Tibet’ in this chapter to refer to culturally Tibetan areas of the PRC, not just to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR).
Friends of Nature
Rather than abstractions such as ‘interethnic harmony’, the story of this earlier moment is precisely the story of particular individuals and their relationships, both those between Han Chinese and Tibetans, and between their concern with the environment and their concern for Tibet. An obvious entry point into this story of contingent articulations is Friends of Nature, widely celebrated as the first environmental non-governmental organization (NGO) in China. Friends of Nature was officially registered in 1994 with the name Green Culture Institute of the International Academy of Chinese Culture. Its importance in the development of China’s environmental movement in the 1990s cannot be overstated. Among many other things, its early use of the Internet to mobilize around the protection of the Tibetan antelope contributed to the creation of environmentalist networks throughout the country, the formation of student environmental groups at universities, and to the use of the Internet as a key feature of Chinese environmental activist organizing. In addition, Friends of Nature acted as an incubator for many of China’s prominent environmentalists today, its members having gone on to establish at least ten NGOs (see Economy 2004; Schwartz 2004; Shapiro 2001, 2012; Turner and Lü 2006; Yang 2005, 2009; Yang and Calhoun 2007).

Friends of Nature’s most prominent founder was Liang Congjie, grandson of Liang Qichao, a prominent reformer in the late Qing and a revered figure in the history of modern China, and son of Liang Sicheng, a well-known architect who fought to preserve Beijing’s ancient city walls. This pedigree gave Liang Congjie a scope to manoeuvre not available to most people. Liang did not act alone, however; he founded the group with three other intellectuals, Yang Dongping, Liang Xiaoyan, and Wang Lixiong. Wang was by then already deeply interested in Tibet, having rafted down from near the source of the Yellow River through Amdo ten years earlier (Quesnel 2003). While working as the secretary of Friends of Nature, Wang spent two years living in Tibet, having rafted down from near the source of the Yellow River through Amdo ten years earlier (Quesnel 2003). While working as the secretary of Friends of Nature, Wang spent two years living in Tibet, wrote Sky Burial: The Destiny of Tibet, an attempt to understand the Tibetan situation in an unbiased manner, and investigated Han bigotry, religious

2. Friends of Nature is generally referred to as the oldest environmental NGO in China; it was certainly the first nationally prominent environmental NGO. There was, however, at least one earlier environmental organization, a bird protection association that was established in Liaoning in 1991.
policies, and efforts at securing state sovereignty in Tibet, among other issues. He remained active in environmental protection, participating in 2001 in the Wild Donkey Van, a mobile environmental education training tour through Tibetan areas of Qinghai. However, after publicly supporting Tenzin Delek Rinpoche and Lobsang Dhondrup, who were given death sentences after being charged with ‘terrorism’ and ‘separatism’ for allegedly planning a bomb attack, Wang Lixiong was forced through government pressure to resign from Friends of Nature. Wang went on to become ever more involved in writing about Tibetan culture and politics, particularly since his marriage to Tibetan poet and essayist Woeser. Indeed, he has become the most prominent Han intellectual writing in a dissident mode on Tibetan affairs. Like many others at the time, Wang became interested in both environmental protection and Tibetan culture through his travels in Tibetan areas. In co-founding Friends of Nature, he also quite literally played a major role in establishing China’s contemporary environmental movement, making the first of many connections between Tibet and the environmental movement that I explore throughout this chapter.

Friends of Nature was established with a focus on environmental education. Among its earliest activities were Green Forums on various environmental problems on Earth Day, local field trips and discussion groups for members in Beijing, and environmental publications for children and teenagers. Friends of Nature’s first real campaign, one that galvanized many students to become environmental activists, started in 1995 and concerned saving the Yunnan snub-nosed monkey in the Kham Tibetan area of Deqin in north-western Yunnan Province. Its next major campaign, over the subsequent two years, supported Tibetan efforts to prevent poaching of the Tibetan antelope in the Kekexili area at the heart of the Tibetan Plateau. Both campaigns forged numerous connections between Tibetans and budding Chinese environmentalists, motivating the latter to think about the relationship between Tibetan culture and environmental protection, a theme that over the next decade opened up a space for interethnic collaboration that thrived until the state’s response to the protests of 2008.

3. From Lithang, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche had been well respected for his work as an advocate for environmental conservation, and against mining and indiscriminate logging, before his arrest.
The snub-nosed monkey

Relying for food primarily on lichens, which can take ten to fifteen years to regenerate, the Yunnan snub-nosed monkey (*Rhinopithecus bieti*) is an endangered species numbering fewer than 1700 individuals today. Inhabiting coniferous forest between 3,000 and 4,500 metres above sea level in north-west Yunnan and its neighbouring areas in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), the monkey’s survival has been threatened by hunting,\(^4\) which was officially banned in 1975, and by loss and fragmentation of habitat due to logging, which has isolated the species into 13 patches of forest. Scientists knew very little about the snub-nosed monkey until the first behavioural investigation of the species in the Baimaxueshan Nature Reserve by wildlife biologists Long Yongcheng and American Craig Kirkpatrick, a three-year project that began in May 1992 and was sponsored by the World Wildlife Fund and the Kunming Zoology Institute.

The scientists were accompanied by photographer Xi Zhinong, who would soon become the catalyst of the snub-nosed monkey campaign. Hailing from nearby Dali, also in north-western Yunnan, Xi was working in architecture when he developed an interest in studying migratory birds and began to teach himself photography through a correspondence course. In 1989, he became a cameraman for Kunming Educational Television, and then the following year for Chinese Central Television’s (*CCTV*) *Animal World*, for which he filmed the slow loris. From there, he joined the Yunnan Forestry Department’s newly established film crew, and after being told by Long Yongchen that the Yunnan snub-nosed monkey had never been captured before on film, set about becoming the first to do so in September 1993.

Shortly after the research project ended in 1995, Xi Zhinong learned that Deqin County had sold rights to log a 100-square-kilometre swath of forest just outside the Baimaxueshan Nature Reserve, which was home to more than 200 snub-nosed monkeys. Although Long Yongchen also knew about the plan, he felt it would be impossible to stop the logging. Xi, however, actively argued against the plan, though to no avail, given the county and prefecture’s heavy dependence upon logging for its finances at the time. The head of the Forestry Department

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\(^4\) According to activists, the monkey was primarily hunted by outsiders and not by local Tibetans, given Tibetan religious prohibitions on hunting in the area.
from Kunming stated that they could stop logging if Xi could come up with eight million yuan. Xi Zhinong’s various appeals to the media went nowhere, a reflection of journalists’ fears that such a story would be too sensitive because it involved a Tibetan minority area.

At the time, Xi Zhinong already knew of the work of Tang Xiyang, a Beijing-based journalist and environmentalist. An intellectual denounced as a Rightist in 1957, Tang Xiyang was exonerated in 1980, the year he founded *Great Nature* magazine and began exploring China’s nature reserves. On one trip, he met American Marcia Marks, whom he later married and with whom he published *A Green World Tour* (1993), an account of their travels in nature reserves around the world that also served to introduce its readers to global environmentalism. The publication of the book coincided with the gathering interest in environmental issues in Beijing and elsewhere in China, as indicated by the almost simultaneous founding of Friends of Nature.

Xi Zhinong thought about lending his copy of *A Green World Tour* to the head of the Forestry Department in Kunming in a last desperate bid to change his mind about logging the forest that was precious habitat for the snub-nosed monkey. Before he was able to do so, however, another friend of his to whom he had lent his book wrote to Tang Xiyang under the pretense of requesting his own copy, and at the same time asked Tang for some assistance for Xi Zhinong in his struggle to protect the monkey. Already an influential figure in Beijing, Tang Xiyang called Xi Zhinong, suggesting Xi write a letter about the issue to Song Jian, then the director of the State Science and Technology Commission and chair of the State Environmental Protection Commission. Xi Zhinong followed his advice and wrote to Song Jian. Having a particular interest in the environment, Song Jian passed it on to the Ministry of Forestry and suggested an investigation. At the same time, Tang also passed Xi Zhinong’s letter to Liang Congjie, who made it the target of a campaign by Friends of Nature and who also passed the letter on to the media, generating attention both internationally and within China. Friends of Nature invited Xi Zhinong to Beijing at the end of 1995, where he gave talks to its members and to student groups at various university campuses (Wang 2000). Members wrote letters of support and petitioned the Chinese government to prevent the planned logging. Student environmental activists, including Wen Bo, who would later go on to found
Snow Alliance, one of only two environmental NGOs not run by ethnic Tibetans but dedicated to environmental issues in Tibetan areas, also organized a ‘save the snub-nosed monkey campaign’, which included a candlelight vigil and screenings of Xi Zhinong’s film about the monkeys. With this attention in Beijing, the media, previously reluctant to touch the issue, became quite involved. The news show Dongfang Shikong (‘Eastern Horizon’) featured Xi Zhinong on its third anniversary, and then, as he had been shut out of his position at the Yunnan Forestry Department, invited him to work with them.

As a result of all of this attention, as well as the interest from State Councilor Song Jian, the government launched an investigation in April 1996, resulting in an order to the local government to stop the logging and to compensate the loggers for loss of income for a three-year period. In 1998, however, Xi Zhinong was given a tip that logging was still continuing in secret despite the central government order. Reporters from Jiaodian Fangtan (‘Focus’), an investigative television series, went undercover to Deqin to film the logging. The show aired in August, one of three in a row about the logging of China’s remaining natural forests, and coincided with devastating flooding of the Yangtze River that summer, which caused more than 3,000 deaths and an estimated US$12 billion in property damages. Premier Zhu Rongji reportedly watched these programmes, including the one on continuing illegal logging in Deqin, and quickly declared the Natural Forest Protection Programme, a ten-year ban on commercial logging in the upper reaches of the Yangtze River and the middle and upper reaches of the Yellow River. This programme was the first of several massive environmental rehabilitation programmes that have led to the consolidation of China as an environmental state (Yeh 2009a). In Deqin, Yunnan, officials were publicly criticized and forced to watch the show, and the deputy head of the county lost his job (Economy 2004).

In the sense that it contributed in an important way to the eventual declaration of the Natural Forest Protection Programme and thus to the cessation of logging in Deqin and other places throughout the country, the campaign was successful. The snub-nosed monkey still lives in the forests of north-west Yunnan today, though it continues to be endangered. However, most observers agree that the larger accomplishment of the snub-nosed monkey campaign was not for the monkeys – after all,
logging continued illegally for two years after the campaign – but rather for the development of China’s environmental movement. Elizabeth Economy (2004: 151) writes, for example, that the campaign ‘transformed the landscape of environmental protection in China, galvanized the environmental protection movement and gave the activists a sense that they could indeed accomplish something through their efforts’. It is, I argue, not insignificant that the launching pad of this movement was the Tibetan Plateau. On the one hand, this helped to affirm the territorial belonging of Tibetan areas to the PRC, indeed reinforcing their integral status; on the other hand, it also fostered a sense of genuine interest, sympathy, and creative collaboration between Tibetans and mostly Han activists.

**The Green Camps and north-west Yunnan**

The snub-nosed monkey campaign led to the launching of Green Camps, nicknamed by some the ‘West Point for Chinese environmentalists’. These were summer nature expeditions by Beijing college students from 1996 to 2006 to frontier areas of China to experience nature and learn about environmental problems. Among these, four cohorts went to Tibetan areas: 1996 to north-west Yunnan; 1997 to the forests of Linzhi (Nyingtri) in the Tibet Autonomous Region; 2003 to the desertified grasslands of Ruoergai (Zorge) County in Sichuan’s Aba (Ngawa) Prefecture; and finally, in 2006, a reunion trip was organized back to north-west Yunnan. Of all of the Green Camps, the first two, in 1996 and 1997, both to Tibetan areas, were the most important in terms of launching the environmental careers of participants who went on to form their own NGOs and become prominent environmental activists. Their commitment was forged in part by the personally transformative experiences of the Green Camps, which cultivated a certain appreciation for ‘nature’ and also brought them into direct contact with rural Tibetans. Many of these early participants went on not only to work on environmental protection, but also to actively support collaborative projects with Tibetans in support of Tibetan culture and livelihoods.

The first Green Camp grew out of ongoing student efforts to mobilize around the snub-nosed monkey. By the spring of 1996, student environmental protection clubs in university campuses around Beijing had several hundred members each. Tang Xiyang decided to lead a
group of college students to north-west Yunnan to investigate the snub-nosed monkey situation and to save the monkey through environmental education for the students themselves and for others they could in turn educate. Together with Wen Bo and Yan Jun, students who had been active in organizing the snub-nosed monkey campaign in Beijing, Tang launched the first Green Camp, intending it to be ‘not an ordinary summer camp … but a pioneering undertaking in the conditions that actually existed in China’ (Lu 2003: 148; Tang and Marks 1999). From a large number of applicants, Tang selected a group of 21 students from 11 colleges and universities, including four graduate students. Together with ten journalists and several others, including Xi Zhiyong and snub-nosed monkey biologist Long Yongcheng, they set off for a month-long visit to Deqin County, just after the Ministry of Forestry ordered a halt to logging there.

As planned, the group investigated the logging situation. Among other things, they found that the county had not only heavily logged snub-nosed monkey habitat just outside the reserve, but had also been clear-cutting and had built a timber processing plant inside the nature reserve itself. They also discovered skins of endangered panthers and clouded leopards for sale at a state-owned store (US Embassy 1996). At least some members of the group had believed that the logging was a direct outcome of residents’ impoverishment. To their surprise, however, the students came to realize that local residents only used the forests for subsistence, whereas officials were the ones who were benefiting and in some cases becoming quite wealthy from timber revenues (Tang and Marks 1999: 158; Shen 1998). The students subsequently reported their findings to government officials, and also organized photo exhibitions, reports, and showed films that they made during their trip. They received a great deal of favourable press, with television shows, radio stations, newspapers, and magazines all offering extensive coverage.

More interesting from the perspective of Tibet is the way in which the camp members variously experienced the villages they visited. Some of their narratives fit squarely into an emerging discourse of the Tibetan frontier as an exotic paradise. For example, in environmental writer Shen Xiaohui’s account of the first Green Camp, Searching for Dreams on the Snow Mountain (1998), he describes Bu, Yubeng, and Minyong villages in Deqin County using the iconic symbol of paradise, Peach Blossom
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Spring (Taohuayuan), drawing on a fifth-century Chinese work whose name has become synonymous with utopia. Shen writes:

This little village along the banks of the Lancang, with only 20 to 30 households, is half hidden by the deep shadows of summer. ... The sun was very hot. Everything was as if it had magically been placed in a dreamland, so that you felt time was almost standing still. Infected with this atmosphere, I felt my head getting numb and I couldn’t keep my eyes open. I wanted to find a big walnut tree beneath which to lie down and take a nap for a thousand years. When I made my way out of the village in a haze, I came upon three young Tibetan men coming back from the outside. They were friendly and curiously looked at me, the person who had suddenly broken into their peaceful life. I asked them and learned that this place is called Bu village. (1998: 125)

Entering Minyong village, one finds it new and curious, but also familiar. Why does one have this feeling? I suddenly remembered the essay about Peach Blossom Spring by Tao Yan Ming: ‘The land is flat and open, the houses are beautiful, there are good fields and ponds….’ These few lines that people frequently refer to are very similar to what we see in front of our own eyes. (1998: 129)

Shen Xiaohui had been especially invited to accompany the first Green Camp trip to record the experiences and findings of the expedition. The images of timeless villages and magical reveries that he produced about these Tibetan villages both reflected and contributed to a moment in the 1990s when Chinese representations of Tibetans were moving away from the image of Tibetans as barbaric, dirty, violent, and superstitious, which dominated from the 1951 ‘liberation’ through the 1980s, and which were revived again with the nationalist backlash against Tibetans after 2008 (Yeh 2009b). In the 1990s, these were partially replaced by exoticized images of Tibetans as simple yet spiritual, as reservoirs of ancient wisdom, and of Tibet as a mysterious land with a special connection to nature, a process in which north-west Yunnan played a key role. As Oakes (2007: 255–56) argues, Peach Blossom Spring has been invoked to capture the utopic qualities of China’s frontiers, fostering a cultural sensibility that continues in the trope of Shangri-la, which Zhongdian County, in Diqing Prefecture, was famously renamed in 2002. Such romantic and oversimplified notions of Tibet led to many of the same dilemmas produced by a long history of similar representations.
of Tibetans in the West (Bishop 1989; Dodin and Räther 2001; Korom 1997; Lopez 1999). The myth of a Tibetan Shangri-la as a repository of spiritual vitality becomes the cutting edge of commodification in China, integrating Tibet into China through capitalism (Oakes 2007).

At the same time, however, the same processes have also produced ‘unforeseen outcomes as well as opening new spaces capable of challenging the center’s hegemony of frontier mythmaking’ (Oakes 2007: 259). Among these newly opened spaces is also a less commodified and romanticized view of Tibet, one that enabled Chinese–Tibetan cooperation on projects that align with the emergent interests of Tibetans. The most prominent among these was Chinese environmentalists’ participation in calling for a ban on mountaineering on Khawa Karbo, the peak that straddles the border between north-west Yunnan and the TAR, in deference to Tibetan cultural and religious practice (see Litzinger 2004). One of the eight most sacred mountains in Tibetan Buddhism, Khawa Karpo has never been climbed. To climb the peak would be to defile the mountain deity. Nevertheless, many attempts were made between 1987 and 2000, most famously in 1991 when a Sino-Japanese climbing expedition attempted to summit. Alerted to their presence, hundreds of Tibetans gathered at Feilai Temple across from the peak to protest the deity’s submission to the mountaineering team. The next day news came that 17 climbers had been killed in an avalanche (Litzinger 2004).

Chinese environmentalists initially learned of this issue in 1996, during the first Green Camp. This was in the context of news that another climbing team from Japan would be trying again to summit Khawa Karbo that November, making local Tibetans ‘very unhappy that a mountain-climbing team would be trying again to “claim victory” over their sacred mountain and sacred land’ (Shen 1998: 140). Local Tibetans tried to stop the climbers from crossing a bridge, but were forced by the People’s Armed Police to allow them to proceed because the team had been approved by the central government. Xi Zhinong, who was part of that first Green Camp, called Liang Congjie to explain the situation, and Liang in turn wrote a letter to the secretary general of the Chinese State Council. Shen (1998: 140–1) remarks that Xi Zhinong was not the only Green Camp member who became invested in Tibetan concerns about the mountain:

It was not just Xi Zhinong, but all the Green Camp members, fortunate enough to see Meili Xueshan [Khawa Karpo], who upon their return
to their own studies and work units, all had the same uncomfortable feeling and paid close attention to the news media about the climbing of the mountain. Guo Yurong said, ‘If I had not been to Deqin County … I would be like an ordinary person and on the side of the mountaineering team. … But now, like the Tibetans, I am afraid they will be able to successfully reach the summit.’

To the relief of local Tibetans as well as Green Camp members, the 1996 team encountered bad weather and decided to retreat.

The Japanese team’s permit expired, but towards the end of 1999, a Chinese team decided to attempt a summit from the west face. By this time, Xi Zhinong and Shi Lihong, a journalist and environmentalist who had participated in the first Green Camp trip, had married and moved to Zhongdian to establish their own NGO, the Green Plateau Institute, to work on community-based natural resource management and development in the area. Learning of the plan, Xi Zhinong pleaded against it out of respect for local people’s opposition to climbing on the sacred peak. Once again he wrote to Liang Congjie, who contacted the Minority Affairs Commission. After more publicity about the climb, it was eventually cancelled.

Sacred lands and the connection between Tibetan culture and nature preservation

It was out of the first Green Camp, then, that the notion of Tibetan sacred lands, and the more general concept that Tibetan culture is beneficial for environmental protection, became popularized among Chinese environmentalists. According to Shi Lihong, Chinese environmentalists’ involvement with the issue of climbing Khawa Karpo ‘led us to discover the sacred lands concept, and to discuss the fact that sacred lands is a religious concept with no legal backing’. This coincided with the arrival of The Nature Conservancy (TNC), which opened an office in Deqin County in 2000 as part of the Yunnan Great Rivers Project, which officially began in Yunnan in 1998. To begin establishing

5. Among other things, the Green Plateau Institute worked on projects to enable women in Deqin to sell their carpets, and worked with environmental architects to design local houses using less wood. However, they encountered a great deal of difficulty registering their NGO, as well as hostility from local officials, due to Xi Zhinong’s prior activism on illegal logging and saving the snub-nosed monkey (Economy 2004). As a result, they left in 2002 and went on to start Wild China Films, a Beijing-based studio devoted to making documentaries about rare species.
a Conservation Action Plan for Khawa Karpo, TNC held a large conference in October 2000 in which villagers, local and provincial government officials, domestic and international NGOs, and local religious leaders participated. Though the meeting was to be focused on conservation, the most important issue to local participants, identified as the greatest threat to their culture, came out strongly: how to ban mountaineering on Khawa Karpo. Consequently, the conference drafted and forwarded two letters to the vice-premier and various ministries to advocate a ban on mountaineering permits on Khawa Karpo and its neighbouring peaks (Economy 2004; Litzinger 2004; Moseley and Mullen in press, 2014). Ultimately successful, this ban was the outcome of collaboration between Tibetans and Chinese environmentalists, who agreed that the protection of nature had to not only make space for, but indeed rely upon, religious beliefs and practices of Tibetan people (Litzinger 2004).

Beyond the specific case of mountain climbing on Khawa Karpo, the first and second Green Camps opened the eyes of their participants to the relationship between Tibetan culture and environmental protection, a discourse that emerged as a distinct cultural formation in the late 1990s and early 2000s in China. Despite his romanticizing and problematically utopian descriptions of villages in Diqing, Shen Xiaohui (1998: 143) also states, in a formulation of the basis of many Han–Tibetan collaborative projects over the next decade, ‘This kind of propitiation of the mountain [Khawa Karpo] is actually a kind of traditional, simple environmental protection, which reflects the harmony between Tibetan people and nature, and is really an outstanding traditional culture’. Based on this experience, too, Tang Xiyang wrote in a letter to State Councilor Song Jian, ‘The local people are not backward, or a threatening and detrimental force to nature. Our interviews and our interactions with them showed us that their traditions, culture, religion, thinking, and way of life are adaptable and in a broad sense protective of nature’ (Tang and Marks 1999: 160).

These themes were developed further during the second Green Camp, which took place the following year in the forested areas of Linzhi (Nyingtri) Prefecture in southern TAR, with the theme, ‘respect for tradition, protecting virgin forests and biological diversity’. On the way, the group took the Qinghai–Tibet highway, paid a visit to the Sonam Dargye Nature Protection Station (see below), and then went on to Lhasa before
going to the south-eastern part of the TAR for their forest investigation. En route, they encountered Tibetan pilgrims prostrating themselves all the way to Lhasa, giving the group of college students fodder to debate the relative roles of religion and science in protecting the environment. As Tang described it, ‘Is this natural social phenomenon linked to a consciousness of nature conservation? That was a question every member of Green Camp was thinking about’ (Tang and Marks, 1999: 168–172). Though opinions were not uniform, Tang’s account suggests a growing conviction among the participants about the positive role that Tibetan culture and Buddhism play in protecting nature:

Ma Baojian, a student from Beijing University, said, ‘... in Tibet the relationship between human beings and nature is harmonious. ... Buddhism, as handed down in Tibet, has brought the Tibetan people a spiritual world in which they seek harmony ... between the heart and the outside world. I think this is why harmony between man and nature and man and man has been established and this has created conditions for preserving the ecology.’ (Ibid. 1999: 168–9)

Sheng Bing, a student from Qinghua ... [said] a Tibetan Buddhist considers [spring] the time when trees and grasses sprout and should not be trampled underfoot. Therefore the Tibetans abide strictly by the tradition of keeping off and protecting vegetation. (Ibid: 169)

Thus the Green Camp participants’ encounters with Tibet and Tibetans fostered their convictions about the potential for Tibetan culture to protect the environment. The years immediately following these Green Camps witnessed a proliferation of Chinese writing about the positive role of Tibetan culture in conserving the environment, as well as transnational projects, mediated by Chinese staff, that sought to mobilize sacred lands concepts and Buddhist authorities for biodiversity conservation (Hathaway 2010; Liu 2009; Xu 2000; Xu et al. 2006). Ecologists and biologists also became interested in the potential of Tibetan cultural-religious practices to benefit biodiversity, and conducted numerous studies to rigorously analyse the benefits that Tibetan sacred lands practices have had for vegetation conditions and species diversity (Anderson et al. 2005; Luo et al. 2009; Nan 2001; Shen et al. 2012). The idea that Tibetan culture is beneficial for the environment, and that the Tibetan relationship to nature might offer insights from which the Chinese public can benefit, was significant given that it was
such a dramatic departure from the long-standing belief that Tibetans are backward, inferior, and can only be improved by becoming more like the Han Chinese.

As a result of the convergence of transnational, Chinese, and Tibetan interests in the potential of Tibetan culture for environmental protection, projects implemented by The Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, and WWF all opened spaces for Tibetan cultural expression, and validated them through the discourse of science. For example, the concepts of sacred mountains and ri gua – a ‘door to the mountain’ that marks the divide between the realm reserved for territorial deities and the human realm (a form of the broader Tibetan cultural practice of ‘sealing’6) – were highlighted prominently in The Nature Conservancy’s work in north-west Yunnan (Anderson et al. 2005; Coggins and Hutchinson 2006; Hakkenberg 2008; Litzinger 2004, 2006). Furthermore, Tibetans eagerly responded to these opportunities by taking up these discourses. The early 2000s witnessed a proliferation of Tibetan community environmental organizations, as well as an outpouring of writing by influential Tibetan Buddhist leaders, social scientists, and grassroots leaders, making the argument that Tibetan culture is valuable for conservation. As I have argued elsewhere, these translocal and transnational collaborations created spaces in which Tibetans were able to make a bid for the legitimacy of cultural practices in ways previously unthinkable, and that have become increasingly foreclosed again after 2008 (Yeh in press, 2014). Thus, we can trace a reasonably direct line between the origins of the contemporary Chinese environmental movement and a far more capacious understanding of Tibetan culture than currently dominates as a result of the policy of the ‘harmonious society’.

At the same time, the intertwining of Tibet with Chinese environmentalism is manifest in the trajectories of many of the earliest Green Camp participants. Among the participants in the first two years were not only Shi Lihong and Xi Zhinong, but also Zhang Li, Lu Hongyan, Wen Bo, Hu Jia, and Hao Bing. A professor in animal behaviour and conservation biology at Beijing Normal University, Zhang Li has also been China director of the International Fund for Animal Welfare, as well as

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6. This refers to a range of practices of territorial control for a variety of purposes, including protecting game animals from hunting and guarding against the disturbance of local territorial deities (see Huber 2004).
the director of programmes for Conservation International – China. Lu Hongyan founded the Sichuan Environmental Volunteers Association and taught sustainable development at Sichuan University, and then earned a PhD in environmental policy, returning to Sichuan University to teach about the environment and renewable energy. Wen Bo, who for many years coordinated the China advisory board for the Global Greengrants Fund, as well as working in Pacific Environment’s China programme, founded the China Green Student Forum, now a network of more than 100 student environmental groups, and has been named an ‘Eco hero’ by Time magazine and a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum in 2009, for his ongoing involvement in China’s environmental movement. He was also the force behind the founding of Snow Alliance, a new NGO dedicated to protecting the environment in Tibetan areas of Qinghai, with attention to indigenous knowledge and narratives about glaciers as an entry point into local livelihoods.

Hu Jia was not able to participate in the first Green Camp, but did attend the second one in the TAR. By that time, he was already a member of Friends of Nature, and began to volunteer in many other organizations, including the College Students’ Green Forum and Friends of the Earth. He subsequently became very involved in Friends of Nature’s second major campaign, on the Tibetan antelope, and in 1998 founded the Tibetan Antelope Information Center, a Web site that served as an information clearinghouse and communication centre about the Tibetan antelope. The centre also kept in close touch with local Tibetans, supporting their anti-poaching patrols and other efforts through fundraising and serving as an informal liaison between them and environmental NGOs in Beijing (Hao 2007; Yang 2009: 130). As Shapiro (2012: 144) notes, Internet organizing around the protection of the Tibetan antelope contributed significantly to the formation of networks of student environmental groups on college campuses, which subsequently served as vehicles for information exchange and organizing in the environmental movement more generally. Hu Jia is also a Buddhist who, unlike many Han Chinese, professes great admiration for the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. He went on to become an HIV/AIDS, pro-democracy, and human rights advocate, and was arrested and sentenced to three and a half years in prison in 2008.

When Hao Bing participated in the first Green Camp in 1996, she had just completed her master’s degree, a member of the first class of
students in China to receive this degree in environmental education. After participating in the first two Green Camps, she became a project coordinator for Friends of Nature, and produced and disseminated local environmental education materials as part of the Tibetan Antelope and Wild Donkey Vans project. In the process, she worked with Wang Lixiong and Tibetan environmentalist Tador, travelling through Yushu Prefecture and other Tibetan areas with them. From there, she went on to found her own NGO, the Beijing Brooks Education Center, which created forums for discussions about the rights of migrant workers, supported the building of rural libraries, and worked with the International Crane Foundation. It also developed the People and Grasslands network aimed at fostering an atmosphere in Beijing that would lead to the implementation of policies that would be better for Tibetan and Mongolian herders’ livelihoods and rangelands. The Beijing Brooks Education Center also for a time recruited and supported Tibetan college graduates to return to teach in Tibetan schools in western Sichuan. Like many other earlier participants, Hao Bing was inspired by her experiences in Tibetan areas to deepen her commitment to the environment – in her case, environmental education. At the same time, she found a way to incorporate her concerns about ordinary Tibetans into her environmental work.

The Tibetan antelope campaign

Like the snub-nosed monkey campaign in north-west Yunnan, the campaign to save the Tibetan antelope – Friends of Nature’s second major campaign – inspired China’s young environmental activists in the late 1990s. Even more so than the snub-nosed monkey, it forged a network of connections that created the conditions of possibility for Tibetan articulations of the relationship between Tibetan culture and nature preservation, and opened a space for the assertion of Tibetan culture.

In 1984, gold was discovered in Kekexili, an uninhabited and, at some 80,000 square kilometres, very expansive, high-altitude area in western Qinghai, leading to a gold rush in which more than thirty thousand illegal prospectors entered the area. In 1991, Jesang Sonam Dargye, then Party secretary of Suojia Township (Drido County, Yushu Prefecture), which administered the Kekexili region, was appointed deputy Party secretary of Drido County as well as Party secretary of its Western
Working Commission, in charge of mineral rights in the area. Entering into the desolate Kekexili area to try to stop illegal gold mining, he and his team, which included his friend and personal secretary Tashi Dorje, or Tador, also found that outsiders were poaching endangered Tibetan antelope (chiru) on a large scale (Liu 2009).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, there were an estimated one million Tibetan antelopes on the Tibetan Plateau, but their numbers had declined to fewer than 75,000 by the mid-1990s. The reason for the dramatic decline was the rise in consumer demand for shawls made of shahtoosh, the delicate down hair of the antelope, reputed to be the softest and warmest in the world. Called the ‘king of wool’, it had for centuries been traded from Tibet to Kashmir, where it is woven into shawls so fine that they can be passed through a wedding ring, giving them the nickname ‘ring shawls’. Shahtoosh shawls were used as dowry items in India, but the trade was small in scale until the mid-1980s, when it became a hot commodity in the fashion world. Despite the Tibetan antelope’s inclusion in Appendix 1 of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in 1979, smuggling of the wool from Tibet to India continued. Pronounced must-have items by fashion magazines such as Vogue, Elle, and Harper’s Bazaar in the 1990s, shahtoosh shawls sold for upwards of $15,000 apiece in Hong Kong and other high-end markets, driving the mass killing of the antelopes especially in Kekexili, through which groups of Tibetan antelopes moved on their annual migration. The market demand triggered the transformation of small-scale, low-tech hunting by herders before the 1970s into poaching by outsiders using much more sophisticated weapons and fast-moving jeeps (Harris 2008; Schaller 1998).

After discovering hundreds of Tibetan antelope carcasses with their skins stripped off, Jesang Sonam Dargye shifted his attention from mining to halting the poaching by outsiders. Under the auspices of the Western Working Commission, in late 1992 he also established an Office of Wildlife Protection and an Office of Mountain Grassland Protection. Over the next year and a half, Sonam Dargye, Tador, and a few others travelled to the desolate Kekexili region west of the Qinghai–Tibet highway twelve times, patrolling for poachers. In January 1994, Sonam Dargye was killed in a gun battle with poachers. His brother-in-law, Drakpa Dorje, who had been a police chief in Drido, established an informal patrol with local resi-
dents the following year. Naming themselves the Wild Yak Brigade, they continued the work of trying to protect Kekexili’s antelopes. Over a period of four years, the brigade arrested 250 suspected poachers, confiscating more than 3,000 skins and 10,000 rounds of ammunition.

Several other events and connections were made during this period that led to the Tibetan antelope becoming the object of the second major campaign of China’s fledgling environmental movement. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, several Western wildlife biologists, including the Wildlife Conservation Society’s George Schaller, began to study Tibetan antelope populations in Xinjiang, Qinghai, and the TAR. Schaller in particular drew attention to the decline in the Tibetan antelope population due to poaching for the shahtoosh market. In 1997, the Wildlife Protection Society of India published an influential exposé of the trade, calling out the fashion industry’s deceptive claims that the wool was collected by subsistence herders who plucked it from trees and bushes against which the antelope scratched themselves (Wright and Kumar 1997). The wildlife trade monitoring network TRAFFIC, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), and WWF also began to popularize the plight of the Tibetan antelope.

In the meantime, shortly after Sonam Dargye’s death, Tador met Chinese explorer-turned-conservationist Yang Xin, who had since 1986 been organizing rafting expeditions to explore the source of the Yangtze River and who, over the course of a number of trips, had begun to notice environmental changes including receding glaciers and grassland degradation. Tador was in charge of receiving and arranging logistics for Yang Xin’s fifth expedition to the area, which took place shortly after Sonam Dargye’s death. Deeply affected by the death of his friend, Tador told Yang Xin about Sonam Dargye and the problem of the poaching of Tibetan antelope. This inspired Yang Xin, now a well-known adventurer and photographer, to establish a non-governmental protection station for the antelope. He began raising money around China, and in 1995 established Green River, an environmental protection NGO based in Chengdu and focused on protecting the source of the Yangtze River. Yang Xin enlisted the help of Liang Congjie of Friends of Nature for his fundraising efforts, and in 1996 organized a scientific expedition to study the area, laying the groundwork for the establishment of the Sonam Dargye Nature Protection Station, built the following year by
Yang and a team of Chinese volunteers. Through this work, Yang Xin also joined patrols organized by the Tibetan Wild Yak Brigade, and worked closely with Drakpa Dorje, who attended the opening ceremony of the nature protection station.

In the winter of 1997, the CCTV television show *Eastern Horizon* decided to do a profile of Yang Xin. Xi Zhinong went as the cameraman, and through Yang met Drakpa Dorje, with whom he became close. Upon his return, he gave an interview to the *China Youth Daily* for a story, 'Blood-dyed hope: Sonam Dargye', in which he vividly described the slaughter of the antelope by poachers, as well as the story of Sonam Dargye. Published in January 1998, this piece brought the Tibetan antelope situation to the attention of Chinese environmentalists. Two months later, Xi’s wife, Shi Lihong, who was then working at WWF−China, received information from WWF−India, the Environmental Investigation Agency, and the Wildlife Protection Society of India about the antelope. Together with Wen Bo, she collected information about the Hong Kong market and wrote a report about its trade.

This led in 1998 to a campaign to protect the Tibetan antelope, jointly organized by WWF−China, IFAW, and Friends of Nature. As part of these efforts, Friends of Nature, together with the environmental magazine *Green Weekend* and CCTV, invited Drakpa Dorje to Beijing to give lectures to university students to raise awareness about the Tibetan antelope. Because of the campaign and Drakpa Dorje’s high profile in Beijing at this time, Sonam Dargye quickly became known as an environmental ‘martyr’. Only a month after his highly successful visit to Beijing, however, Drakpa Dorje died of a gunshot wound at home, purportedly a suicide, though neither local Tibetans nor the Chinese environmentalists with whom he became friends believe that this was what actually happened.

Despite this setback, the Tibetan antelope and the local Tibetans of the Wild Yak Brigade were a catalysing force for Chinese environmentalists, becoming a cause célèbre and ‘a flag for the Chinese environmental community’ (Economy 2004: 155). The campaign led Liang Congjie to deliver an open letter to Tony Blair asking for his support in halting the trade and sale of Tibetan antelope products on the English market. Liang and a number of prominent Chinese journalists also wrote to Premier Wen Jiabao asking that the local Wild Yak Brigade be allowed
to continue its work, despite the provincial government’s desire to shut it down. Friends of Nature raised money to buy jeeps for the brigade, and Hu Jia was so impressed with Drakpa Dorje and the other Tibetans that he established the Tibetan Antelope Information Center, which liaised between Beijing environmentalists and Tibetans in Qinghai. Yang Xin’s establishment of the Sonam Dargye Nature Protection Station also brought college students and others from eastern China as volunteers to the area, again connecting the fostering of Chinese environmentalists with the Tibetan landscape and people. Through the efforts of Yang Xin, Liang Congjie, Xi Zhinong, and others, Sonam Dargye and the Wild Yak Brigade were frequently featured in the national media, such as in the pages of *China National Geographic*. The status of Sonam Dargye as an environmental martyr was further solidified by the 2004 feature film by director Li Chuan, *Kekexili: Mountain Patrol*, a semi-fictionalized account of the Wild Yak Brigade and Sonam Dargye’s death. More generally, the intertwined stories of the antelope and the Tibetans who tried to save them helped catalyse and give a focus to China’s burgeoning environmental movement.

The wholesale appropriation of the movement that grew up around the Tibetan antelope by the ‘harmonious society’ became apparent in 2008, when the Tibetan antelope was featured as one of the five official mascots of the Olympic Games in Beijing. The use of the Tibetan antelope as a national symbol of China appears to be an outgrowth of the earlier activism, and thus of the presence of Tibet at the heart of the Chinese environmental movement. However, the nationalistic character of the appropriation reflects a very different moment than that which characterized the Chinese–Tibetan–environment nexus a decade earlier. The proposal to adopt the mascot came first from the state nature reserve that was established in Kekexili after the Qinghai provincial government succeeded in shutting down the Wild Yak Brigade, against the objections of the Chinese environmental community. The earlier moment was one in which metropolitan Chinese residents fashioned themselves as environmentalists in part through their encounter with Tibetans who were already protecting the animals, and by actively col-

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7. Green River brought environmentalists to the station until the accidental death of a volunteer at the end of 2002. The management of the station has since been turned over to the state nature reserve.
laborating with and seeking to support local people in these efforts. In doing so, they recognized the differences between Chinese and Tibetan cultures and interests, and sought to make space for and value both. By 2008, that type of organic collaboration had been replaced by a more statist vision of ‘harmony’ and the role of the Tibetan environment in China.

Tibetan environmentalists

The same set of circumstances that led to the galvanization of the environmental movement around the Tibetan antelope also forged connections between Tador and Chinese environmentalists such as Liang Congjie, Yang Xin, and Wang Lixiong, among others. After becoming Party secretary of Suojia Township in 1998, Tador established the Upper Yangtze Organization, the first environmental NGO in Tibet. Three years later, he co-founded another Tibetan environmental NGO, the Snowland Great Rivers Environmental Protection Association, which established a Green Community network, supported many of the numerous Tibetan community groups that proliferated in the early to mid-2000s, and focused on activities such as protecting sacred mountains.

Through his network of relationships to Chinese activists, transnational conservation organizations, and rural Tibetans, Tador has played a key role as a cultural and linguistic translator between Tibetan villagers and Chinese environmentalists. As such, he has been a very strong voice in arguing for the importance of Tibetan culture in protecting the environment and, conversely, of the need to protect and revive Tibetan culture in order to protect nature. Given his connections to well-connected and well-positioned Chinese environmentalists, he played a key role in creating interest among Chinese activists and scholars in the promise of Tibetan culture for biodiversity conservation, opening up space for a number of collaborative projects through the 2000s that worked towards both nature protection and Tibetan cultural revival (see Yeh in press, 2014).

Conclusion

The campaigns to save the snub-nosed monkey and the Tibetan antelope are well known, as is their unparalleled importance in the development of China’s contemporary environmental movement. What has not
been remarked upon is the centrality of Tibet to these stories. The fact that contemporary China’s first few explicit environmental campaigns took place in Tibet was no doubt in part because wildlife conservation was and is seen as relatively non-political, a ‘safe’ issue compared, for example, to protesting against pollution from local factories. It is also in part because, covering almost one quarter of the PRC’s total land area, culturally Tibetan areas are home to much of China’s remaining wildlife, especially charismatic megafauna. This contingent geography of species and habitats overlaid by the CCP’s assessment of threats to its rule put Tibet at the very heart of the contemporary environmental movement.

This is important for two reasons. First, despite Tibetans’ status on the margins of mainstream Chinese society, Tibet was at the very centre of the campaigns that created the Chinese environmental movement. Chinese environmentalism thus strengthened a view of Tibetan areas as Chinese territory, as parts of China’s land area in particular need of attention for their rich and valuable biodiversity. However, recognizing the prominent role that Tibet played also means recognizing a moment in which Tibet and Tibetans were not seen as a constitutive Other who could only be dealt with through a state-led programme of forcible ‘harmony’, but rather as an inspiration for the majority, a place and a people that could teach rather than just be forced to learn.

Second, and at the same time, these early campaigns, together with the Green Camps, brought many prominent future environmentalists into contact with rural Tibetans. For many, their embodied experiences in Tibet formed or contributed to their environmentalism, while also leading many of these early activists to develop much more sympathetic views of Tibetan culture, religion, society, and people than were mainstream at the time. This led to programmes that sought to mobilize Tibetan culture and religious authority for conservation, and to revive and give scientific and legal credence to traditional practices around sacred mountains and territorial ‘sealing’. At the same time, they led to networks that fostered Tibetan environmentalists who further sought to use environmentalism to create a space for cultural assertion in ways that were previously impossible and that were once again greatly limited after the 2008 protests, in the context of the harmonious society. The intertwining of Tibet with the formation of the Chinese environmental movement suggests the possibility for collaboration, for a form of coop-
eration that does not erase differences, and for harmony as something other than a coercive tool in the exercise of sovereign power.

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CHAPTER TEN

Contesting harmony through TV drama: Ethnic intermarriage in Xinjiang Girls

Joanne Smith Finley

Introduction

Interruption has been viewed by ethnicity theorists as a strong indicator of ethnic assimilation and integration (Spickard 1989: 10–13). The original assumption was that the minority group sought to assimilate into the dominant society. Yet the context for intermarriage is not always or necessarily dictated by the dominant group; it can equally be controlled by the dominated. Ethnic groups differ in the fluidity they are prepared to tolerate at the margin, and, when closing their boundaries, may try to sever formerly acceptable ties with other groups, such as intermarriage (Horowitz 2000: 56, 62). Spickard notes that by the turn of the twentieth century, some American minorities (Japanese-Americans, Jews) ‘had agendas of their own … shaping the settings of interethnic relationships in which intermarriages took place’ (1989: 5). In most interethnic contexts, opinions on intermarriage are influenced largely by the images that people construct, in other words, by stereotypes rather than experience (Shibata 1998: 83; Spickard 1989: 19). Xinjiang is no exception. In this chapter, I employ the controversial TV drama series Xinjiang guniang1 (Xinjiang Girls, 2004) as a vehicle to explore: (1) the use of television in Chinese state projects of social engineering; (2) the role of audience reflexivity in the negotiation of self, community, and nation; (3) the personal dilemmas of young Uyghurs aspiring to mixed romantic unions; and (4) the power of community supervision in the maintenance of (selective) endogamy. I show that while the Chinese state has sought to use television as a tool to encourage its ideal of ‘social

1. For Chinese language terms, I use the pinyin transliteration system.
harmony’, *Xinjiang Girls* had the reverse effect of deepening social controversy and shoring up the boundaries it ostensibly sought to remove.²

**Ethnic intermarriage as *minzu tuanjie* (nationality unity)**

While policies towards ethnic intermarriage in China have oscillated over the centuries (Smith Finley 2013), mixed unions have often symbolized Chinese (Han) sovereignty, serving as a vehicle for the subjugation of the peripheries and the cultural assimilation of non-Han groups (Bulag 2002: 98–99; Harrell 1994: 19). Uradyn Bulag shows how the Mongolian people were ‘domesticated’ through a poetics of *minzu tuanjie* (nationality unity), embodied partly in the marital union (2002: 15, 23). Following the establishment of the PRC in 1949, assimilation through intermarriage was openly pursued during politically ‘red’ campaigns. During more conciliatory periods, while not enforced, intermarriage was actively supported. According to Tashmämät, a historian in his forties from Kashgar, many Uyghurs were sent to China proper in the 1950s and 1960s to study and were encouraged to remain there following graduation. As a result, many Uyghur men took Han wives and produced mixed-race offspring (cf. Qarluq and McMillen 2011: 23). Tashmämät characterized this as a deliberate government attempt to assimilate the Uyghur ethnic group. The recent ‘Xinjiang Class’ programme, which provides state funding for teenaged Uyghurs to study in eastern China and aims to ‘enhance ethnic integration’ (Chen 2010: 2), has similarly come in for criticism as a government plot to increase rates

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² The core of the empirical data, gathered during the summers of 2002 and 2004, comprises informal conversations with, and direct observations of, some 50 Uyghur respondents of both sexes, of various ages (ranging from 17 to 75), and from various localities (Kashgar, Khotan, Ürümchi, Qumul, Ghulja, and Aqsu). At the time of interview, all respondents were based in Ürümchi. They represent a diverse range of social backgrounds, including intellectuals, retired persons, employees of state work units, students and graduates of high schools and universities, independent traders, police officers, and service industry employees. While their names and the specific details of their professions are altered to protect their identities, information concerning age, occupation, and hometown is retained. Rising tensions between Uyghurs and Han Chinese since the early 1990s meant that if one group saw you in the company of the other, it regarded you with suspicion. Thus, since I was interested mainly in Uyghur attitudes towards intermarriage, I decided not to compromise Uyghurs’ trust by associating openly with Han residents (cf. Smith 2006). While some of those interviewed were long-term respondents whom I had known since 1995, others were people with whom I built a mutually trusting relationship during the 2002 and 2004 field trips. Conversations took place in a variety of locations, including respondents’ homes, my hotel, Uyghur restaurants, cafes, teahouses, and public parks.
Contesting harmony through TV drama

The socio-political function of intermarriage is lauded by some (though not all) contemporary Han scholars. Xie Lei argues that, historically, Tibetan–Han intermarriage was ‘a necessity’ to ensure the harmonious co-existence of ethnic groups, while in contemporary times the practice has ‘suppressed splittist behaviour, prompted ethnic unity, and upheld the peaceful unification of the motherland’ (2006: 148–9, my translation). His view reflects that of Chinese historians who portray Wencheng, the Chinese wife of Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo (ca. 618–50), as a pioneer of unity and friendship between Han and Tibetans, and of the sinicization of Tibetan culture. Yet in Tibetan accounts, she plays only a peripheral role (Powers 2004: 31, 37).

In contemporary Xinjiang, official tourist guides and heritage signs emphasize the contribution made to ‘nationality harmony’ by the marriage between the (Uyghur) Fragrant Concubine and the Qianlong emperor (Fuller and Lipman 2004; Millward 1994; Zarcone 1999). Yet this state representation contrasts sharply with local Uyghur oral histories, which claim that the Fragrant Concubine refused to allow the consummation of the marriage, and planned to kill the Qianlong emperor in revenge for his occupation of her homeland. As Fuller and Lipman remark, ‘these anachronistic arguments project contemporary social conflicts backward 200 or 300 years’ (2004: 321–2). The Chinese state, aware of the potential for intermarried people to form bridges and mediate ethnic conflicts (cf. Shibata 1998: 97), has enshrined in law the principle that neither a couple’s parents/family nor any third party shall influence an individual’s marriage choice. According to Uyghur respondents, the state is particularly eager to encourage marriages between Uyghur females and Han males, a practice referred to as a ‘one-way street’. Here we find echoes of the resentment expressed by African-American and Nisei (second-generation) Japanese-American communities in the United States concerning the ‘one-sided privilege’ of the dominant group (white males) in instigating sexual relations.

3. The ‘Xinjiang Class’ project (since 2000) is a national policy which established four-year boarding high school classes (Xinjiangban) for elite Uyghur students, to be attended in Han-majority schools in eastern cities of the PRC. Since 2005, the estimated total enrolment has exceeded 20,000 individuals in 500 classes across 24 inland cities (Chen 2010: 2).

with black women (Evers 1975: 155) and in dating Japanese women (Spickard 1989: 65). Ibrahim, an observant male in his seventies from Khotan, attributed the state’s eagerness to a latent aim to sinicize minorities by means of patrilineal descent:

If an Uyghur man wants to marry a Han woman, it’s extremely difficult. The Han relatives won’t agree – the child’s name follows the father’s line – but the authorities won’t intervene. Yet if a Han man wants to marry an Uyghur woman, that’s different. He can do so easily because the authorities interfere, supposedly for the sake of ethnic unity, but really because the child will take a Han name! … They call the two families in to ‘educate’ them, remind them that the law protects freedom of marital choice, and accuse them of ‘local nationalism’ [Uy.: millāchiliq] if they persist in opposing the match.

In this way, local Uyghur families have come under increased pressure from the authorities to cease their interventions.

**Intermarriage statistics in contemporary China**

Rates of exogamy for ‘severely divided societies’ typically run below 10 per cent of all marriages, or lower where only unions between the most conflicted groups are counted (Horowitz 2000: 62). Correspondingly, Chinese social scientists consider an intermarriage rate of 10 per cent or higher between groups as an indicator of ‘relatively good ethnic relations’ (Li Xiaoxia 2004: 20; cf. Zhang 2005: 24). However, the rate of intermarriage between minority and Han in China varies by region and group. A study conducted in Kunming, south-west China, found that ethnic intermarriage was prevalent, and that most spouses valued equal social status more than common ethnicity (Xing 2007: 170, 175, 178). In Xinjiang, the situation is quite different: intermarriage between Han migrants and minority females is on the increase with all groups but the Uyghurs (Ren and Yuan 2003: 99). Ma Rong, conducting a survey in 1997 on ethnic relations in Qaghiliq (Chi.: Yecheng) County, Kashgar Prefecture, failed to find a single instance of Uyghur–Han intermarriage. While his team found three examples in a neighbouring horticultural garden, all occurred within the same family

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5. At the same time, Xing’s findings suggested that, as the size of urban minority elites increased after 1990, minority individuals increasingly sought to match both status and ethnicity when choosing a mate (2007).
Contesting harmony through TV drama (Ma 2003: 120), suggesting that ethnically mixed marriages commonly repeat down generations (cf. Li Xiaoxia 2005: 63–64). In Herbert Yee’s study of Uyghur–Han relations in urban Xinjiang, conducted in 2000, 78 per cent of Han respondents gave the green light to intermarriage, but less than one-third of Uyghur respondents approved. Indeed, the actual level of Uyghur approval was probably lower if we account for respondents giving politically correct answers. Only seven out of Yee’s 378 respondents (1.8 per cent) were in a mixed Uyghur–Han marriage (2003: 436–7). Zhang Suqi’s study, conducted in Turpan in the early 2000s, revealed just four instances of Uyghur–Han intermarriage in 2001, rising to nine instances in 2003 (2005: 25). While finding that Uyghurs are more likely to intermarry with Han than with any other group (Kazakhs and Hui sit in second and third place), Li Xiaoxia calculated the intermarriage rate among Uyghurs at just 0.62 per cent (2004: 21). In their comparative study of ethnic intermarriage in Beijing and Xinjiang, Mamet, Jacobson, and Heaton found that, of all minority groups in Xinjiang, the odds of exogamy were lowest among Uyghur males (just 0.2 per cent) and Uyghur females (0.46 per cent) (2005: 198, 200). According to another study conducted in rural areas of Kashgar Prefecture, strict endogamy remains the rule, with 99.39 per cent of couples registered in all-Uyghur marriages (Hu 2006: 15–16). Here, as in Turpan, the number of intermarried couples had doubled between 2000 and 2004, but the proportion of such unions within the total population remained negligible (Hu 2006: 16).

In interviews I conducted in 2002 and 2004, respondents in Xinjiang conceded that intermarriage had ‘very slightly increased’, estimating the percentage of individuals taking this course at around 1 per cent. Most believed that the majority of intermarriages occur in the regional capital, Ürümchi, a perception supported by one study, which found that the odds of exogamy in Xinjiang increase among the young, highly educated urban residents, and northern residents (Mamet et al. 2005: 199). All respondents noted that Uyghur women were more likely to take Han husbands than the reverse, a gendered pattern also confirmed in domestic and international scholarship (Mamet et al. 2005: 196, 201; Zhang 2005: 24). Yet, if anything, this small increase in intermarriage seems to have heightened the degree of ethnic resistance as families and communities respond to boundary transgression.
Television and audience reflexivity

Media researchers agree that the mass media have been used predominantly as vehicles for the official viewpoint, a means to structure public opinion and promote particular ideologies and narratives (Lee and Cho 1990: 33–34; Skuse 2005: 164). In this sense, mass media become tools of social engineering with the capacity to alter public perception. However, it is equally recognized that the audience’s social experience affects the way in which it reads the television text, so that viewing a TV programme becomes a process of negotiation between the text and the context of the audience (Lee and Cho 1990: 37, 42), or ‘a dialogue between fiction and reality, television and country’ (Acosta-Alzuru 2010: 186). It has been argued, for example, that television invites a continual reconfiguration of boundaries presumed to delimit the cultural world (Saenz 1992: 575), and that analysis of popular television narratives must be undertaken in the context of struggles over the construction of identity (Jontes 2010: 716–7). Television thus invites reflection on social life and generates the space for a politics of audience reception. The dynamic between visual representation and society was observed in America in the 1960s, a period during which social attitudes towards black–white intermarriage began to change. Two films dealt with this sensitive issue. The first, One Potato, Two Potato (1964), stressed the inevitability of societal censure, i.e. white harassment of mixed couples. A few years later, Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner (1968) presented a more hopeful outlook, progressing through serious moments to finally reach a positive outcome (Spickard 1989: 294).

China’s main television network, Chinese Central Television (CCTV), founded in 1958, was originally envisaged as the ‘throat and tongue’ of the Chinese Communist Party, a ‘totalising state voice’ for the project of socialist modernity (Sun 2007: 188–9). Yet following China’s embrace of global market economics since 1980, a tension has evolved between the state’s desire for a Gramscian form of hegemonic control on the one hand, and the creative impulse of television combined with naked economic ambition on the other. As a result, in China too, televisual forms of representation now enjoy a reciprocal relationship with the society that creates them; they are ‘indexical to, and constitutive of, the profound changes taking place in the imagination of self, home, place, time, community and nation’ (Sun 2007: 189–90). The use of
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Television by Chinese cultural elites as a vehicle to stimulate intellectual debate was first witnessed in 1988, in the shape of the documentary series *Heshang* (*River Elegy*). This series, which rejected the ‘backward’ Chinese worldview in favour of a (then) coveted Western civilization, is widely considered to have altered the means of imagining the Chinese nation and to have challenged the tradition of didactic representation (Sun 2007: 192–3).

In Xinjiang, social and political realities are often strikingly different from those in China proper, and this is no less true for state control of mass media. On 1 January 2002, Uyghur poet Tursunjan Ämät recited a poem titled ‘Wild Pigeon’ following the close of a public concert in Ürümchi. In the days that followed, officials condemned the poem as ‘inflammatory’, charging that it exerted a bad influence on society by advocating ethnic separatism. The chairman of the regional government subsequently called for a strengthening of the anti-separatism struggle in the ideological field, and announced a series of ‘study classes’ to be undertaken by media personnel involved in literature and the arts, the press and publishing, radio, television, film production, cultural management, social science research, and other fields. These classes were intended to educate media personnel in how to wage ‘a just and forceful struggle against all kinds of acts opposing the unity of the motherland’ (Amnesty International 2002). In this context, the production of *Xinjiang Girls* can be seen as a media attempt to engineer social harmony in a context of regional political unrest. Indeed, at the global level, ‘mass media interventions’ are increasingly employed by governments and NGOs as a tool of change or conflict reduction. A key example is the Latin American *telenovela* genre, described as a ‘guide to nationalism, modernity and social change’ (Skuse 2005: 160–1; cf. Acosta-Alzuru 2010). Yet studies show that television dramas also have enormous potential to invite social criticism. To cite one example, Korean viewers demonstrate audience reflexivity when they criticize domestic Korean dramas (which typically represent women as limited to the home) and imported Western dramas (whose depictions of sexual freedom invite moral condemnation and withdrawal to a ‘superior distance’) (Kim

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6. The poem tells the allegorical story of the son of a pigeon king who is trapped and caged by humans while on a mission to find a new home for his flock. He commits suicide by eating a poisoned strawberry rather than sacrifice his freedom.
2005: 451, 460). In this way, television viewers selectively incorporate some values into the reflexive formation of their lives while contesting others (Kim 2005: 458).

The TV drama Xinjiang Girls (2004)

The controversies surrounding ‘one-way intermarriage’ in Xinjiang were neatly reflected in public reactions to the state-commissioned TV drama series Xinjiang guniang (Xinjiang Girls), which I found myself watching in a Beijing street restaurant in July 2004. This TV play was rare in the PRC in that it was directed by an Uyghur woman (Chi.: Wuliyasi Mayinuowa; Uy.: Maynur Ilyas) and acted almost exclusively by Uyghurs; the exception was a Han male who takes the sole Han part (Frangville 2007; Yuan 2008). The 20-episode series, whose plot unfolds chronologically, was broadcast on CCTV Channel 8 – the national channel reserved for serialized dramas – and follows the lives of four daughters of an Uyghur professor based at the Central University for Nationalities in Beijing. While all four were raised and educated in the Chinese capital, the two eldest live in Ürümchi while the two youngest remain in Beijing. As the director shares her complex vision of the diverse personal experiences of the four women, we find that only the eldest daughter – a doctor – is stable in both her professional and personal life. The second youngest daughter, a translator, is troubled by the dilemma of ‘situating herself as a modern woman in a culturally determined community’ (Frangville 2007: 329), and the youngest chooses an international lifestyle as part of a dance troupe rather than return to a Xinjiang homeland she has never known (see Schluessel, ch. 12 in this volume, on the sense of cultural crisis now being debated among Uyghur intellectuals). But it is the second eldest daughter, a civil servant torn between her memories of an absent Uyghur husband and a new Han beau, who provides the central focus for the story. In the face of fierce opposition from her grandfather, portrayed as tradition-bound and inflexible, the drama concludes by suggesting that the Han beau should remain hopeful and wait patiently until the Uyghurs are ‘modern enough’ to accept intermarriage (cf. Frangville 2007: 330).

In her analysis of cinematic roles played by China’s minority nationalities since 1950, Vanessa Frangville argues that, despite the evident aim of the female Uyghur director to underline the complexity of con-
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temporary Uyghur identities through the vehicle of the four daughters, \textit{Xinjiang Girls} nonetheless reflects minority stereotypes circulated among the majority Han. These include: (1) the representation of the Uyghur family as symbolic of a united Uyghur community; (2) the assumption that the Uyghur patriarch is obstructive to the match only because of cultural differences deriving from the two groups’ different stages of development; and (3) the representation of the Uyghur father as an apologist for the Uyghurs’ ‘backwardness’ in the context of the obvious devotion of his would-be Han son-in-law (Frangville 2007: 329–330). For Frangville, these examples prove that Han discourses of minority peoples are inevitably reproduced within the minority consciousness (2007: 330). Her compatriot, Marie Bellot, goes a step further, proposing that the reproduction of such stereotypes shows that Uyghurs have ‘willingly placed themselves in a position of inferiority vis-à-vis the Han’ (2010: 84). Without having interviewed Ilyas, it is hard to know this female Uyghur director’s intentions. However, I would suggest that the scenarios could be interpreted quite differently, if we afford the director the same capacity to resist hegemony as is routinely afforded the audience (cf. Skuse 2005: 161; see also Nyima, ch. 5 and Cencetti, ch. 6 in this volume) on the active engagement of Tibetan herders in shaping the effects of state intervention). Perhaps Ilyas intended to champion – and strengthen – the solidarities that have arisen within the Uyghur family and wider community in the face of seemingly irresistible social forces of ethnic assimilation (see Hann, ch. 7 and Robin, ch. 8 in this volume) on Uyghur and Tibetan resistance to the state policy of ‘bilingual education’); or to send a message to the state that its goal of social harmony is not so easily achieved. One might even speculate that she predicted in advance the uproar that this socially unacceptable thread would create, and purposely included it to ensure high viewing rates in the Uyghur community and further build popular resistance to Uyghur–Han intermarriage. In other words, Ilyas may have purposely employed popular culture as a means to create collective freedom in a situation of individual oppression (Fabian 1998: 19). And, of course, one should not underestimate the commercial gain involved in such a strategy.

Most interviewees in Ürümchi (2004) resented the suggestion that Uyghurs need to ‘adapt to the modern world’, and that they can achieve
this by intermarrying with Han people. Many insisted that the drama was politically motivated – an example of what Sun calls ‘indoctrination’: the delivery of indoctrination packaged as television entertainment (2007: 191). Räwiä, a first-generation minkaohan (Chinese-educated Uyghur) in her forties, was deeply cynical: ‘All those around me saw it as a propaganda exercise. Hoping to make us Uyghurs marry with Han more and more. But they can’t assimilate us all, can they?’ Dilbär, a female minkaomin (Uyghur-educated) high school student, remarked that ‘the Han’ – conceived as a monolithic entity – would like to see the drama end in successful intermarriage, just as they would like to see ethnic unity and rapprochement in society. Others, such as Ömär, a male minkaomin high school student, acknowledged that Xinjiang Girls dealt with an existing social phenomenon which, while infrequent, was ‘a grave problem’. All insisted that the implications of the drama’s conclusion were ‘unrepresentative’ of the actual situation. Aynur, a minkaomin graduate in her twenties, argued that in reality very few Uyghurs could accept Uyghur–Han intermarriage, a view echoed by Dilbär, who noted that while people will happily watch a fictional drama, they could not bear such a storyline in real life. According to Jelil, an observant graduate in his twenties, most of his male peers felt that the plot was ‘incorrect’ and ‘dishonest’, while Aynur described how the denouement had provoked her to telephone a male cousin in rage. In the most extreme reaction, Tashmämät, a historian in his forties from Kashgar, pronounced that the series should have been called Xinjiang Prostitutes. These reactions demonstrate that viewers ‘perceive of the lives of characters as something they can actively engage in or alter’ (Skuse 2005: 171). Television is transformed into oral culture, and resisted through that culture, as its meanings are re-circulated and altered in the course of everyday life (Lee and Cho 1990: 33). The more ‘unrealistic’ the plot, particularly where it touches on a socio-economic or political issue, the lower the level of public tolerance, and the more likely it is that viewers will demand to see the problem’s solution in the programme itself (cf. Acosta-Alzuru’s analysis of the telenovela Los ninos de la calle [Children of the Streets], 2010: 197).

7. For a case study of the growth of political awareness within one minkaohan individual over her life course, see Smith Finley (2007).
Reflecting on media, identity, and struggle in twentieth-century China, Vanessa Fong asked how accurately Chinese media representations reflect the lived experiences of China's citizens, and whether citizens accept the messages to which they are exposed (2007: 58). In the case of Xinjiang Girls, the portrayal of interethnic courtship was deemed to have little to do with social reality, while the message embodied in its plot was firmly rejected. Thus, rather than persuading viewers to ‘voluntarily participate in the state’s ideological projects’ (Fong 2007: 58), the series stoked pre-existing hostilities and sensitivities surrounding Uyghur–Han relations.

The romantic, gentle, and upwardly mobile (male) Other
Allowing that ethnic intermarriage in Xinjiang has slightly increased, what can we make of this phenomenon? For first-generation minkaohan who took Han spouses, it is likely their choice was driven partly by ‘internalized oppression’ (Herschel 1995: 179) – the shame of being Uyghur, engendered by Han intolerance of minority cultures during the ‘politically red’ campaigns of the 1960s and 1970s. This was previously observed among Nisei (second-generation) Japanese-Americans, who, rejected as possible marriage partners by the white community following the Second World War, began to display ambivalence towards their own Japanese-ness. In such contexts, some individuals seek to elevate their sense of self-worth by impressing or conquering a member of the culturally leading race (Beigel 1975: 82).

For second-generation minkaohan, one might hypothesize that study and work in Han-dominated environments leads to a greater instance of Uyghur–Han intermarriage. Globally, intermarriage tends to be more common between college-educated individuals, owing to their shared experiences of higher education and/or their shared urban, professional background (Breger and Hill 1998: 8). In America, intermarriage rates increased across successive generations, with the change in the third generation resulting from the lessening of ethnic tensions (following the civil rights movement) and the coming of age of a ‘highly assimilated and upwardly mobile’ youth (Spickard 1989: 362–3). In contemporary East Asia, young, middle-class, educated Koreans display a cosmopolitan willingness to embrace other cultures (Kim 2005: 456). Individuals of different ethnicities are especially likely to develop close relationships.
where they grow up together in one community, even in cases where groups were historically at conflict (Evers 1975: 153).

In central and northern Ürümchi, increasing numbers of young, urban Uyghurs are being raised in Han-dominated communities and educated in Chinese-medium classes or schools. Seeing an Uyghur–Han couple out in public together in 2004 (unheard of in the mid-1990s), I expressed surprise to Nurmämät, a minkaomin market trader in his forties. He retorted, ‘Oh, there’s plenty of that these days! You see, a lot of Uyghurs go to Han schools from a young age. So they hardly speak much Uyghur, and end up becoming quasi-Han [Uy: khänzu bop galiU].’ Gülhärä, a 20-year-old female minkaomin student, concurred that minkaohan Uyghur youth who spend a lot of time with Han peers have developed a ‘Han temperament’ (Uy: khänzu mijä), and claimed that some begin to resemble the Han physically. This is viewed as a natural consequence of growing up with Han children, as explained by Rabiyä, 20, a female minkaomin student: ‘They end up speaking and acting like the Han. They don’t speak Uyghur very well, some of them. And so their way of thinking comes to resemble that of the Han. When they think, they think in Chinese. They’re not comfortable with the Uyghur script.’

Yet despite popular perception, it became evident that minkaohan and minkaomin occupied a diversity of positions along what may be termed an ‘accommodation spectrum’ (Smith Finley 2013). Some young Uyghurs at the extreme pole of acculturation, particularly females, may be more likely to consider interethnic courtship. I interviewed Gülshäm over a four-week period in 2004. A 20-year-old minkaohan who had grown up in Ürümchi, she expressed a strong (potential) preference for a Han boyfriend, explaining, ‘I just feel more at home with them. I suppose it’s because everyone in my street is Han and I’ve always gone to Han schools ever since I was small … so all my friends are Han.’ It is crucial to note that Gülshäm came from a single-parent family, composed of an absent minkaohan mother and a minkaohan father who spoke only Chinese in the home. Conversely, Burkhan, 15, a heavily acculturated minkaohan male, ruled out the possibility of courtship with a Han, despite certain structural difficulties:

Our school has separate Chinese-medium and Uyghur-medium classes, and each keeps to itself. In our [Chinese-medium] class of 40, there are only three or four Uyghurs plus some other minority students. So
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there is little chance to meet other Uyghurs. But I’m still young; when I leave school and go to work, there will be more opportunities to meet a [Uyghur] girlfriend.

This suggests that young males adhere to endogamous principles more strictly than young females, regardless of language of tuition. Similarly, while some young, urban minkaomin expressed a degree of sympathy towards mixed Uyghur–Han unions, others signalled the opposite trend: an acute sense of cultural distinctiveness, heightened political consciousness, and desire to maintain (selective) endogamy. As an example of the latter type, Yee’s study found that at Kashgar Education College, where teaching staff are predominantly minkaomin, no intermarriage has ever taken place between Uyghur and Han staff (2003: 450). For these reasons, it is hard to argue that minkaohan are more prone to intermarriage while minkaomin are less so.

Another factor frequently found to underlie mixed unions is the marginalization of one or both partners. In former Soviet Central Asia, Turkic members of the Communist elite were often orphans or otherwise marginal people who lacked a large kinship network. It was thus quite common for Central Asian male communists to marry Russian women, since for this type of ‘perfectly deracinated citizen’, the Soviet identity would always trump family or minority group membership (Edgar 2007: 593). For some young urban Uyghurs in Xinjiang, attendance at a Chinese-medium school limits their social circles; others grow up in Han-dominated urban districts where the demographic pool of potential Uyghur partners is reduced. The brother-in-law of one respondent married a Han woman he met while working in Qaramay, where the population was 73 per cent Han in 1992 (Wang 2004). Socially stigmatized persons, such as Uyghur sanpei xiaojie (hostesses working in karaoke rooms), may be equally prone to out-group marriage. Mālikā, 20, a minkaomin student and part-time hostess, confided, ‘I really got to like my [Han] manager. … He saw me in tears the first time I did hostess work, and was impatient. But later he looked after me, and wouldn’t introduce me to potentially stroppy customers.’ This girl had lost her father and been forced to hostess in order to pay for her university education. She came very close to accepting her Han manager’s marriage proposal, finally rejecting him on the grounds that he was not a Muslim. Some minkaohan respondents desired to find marriage
partners from within their sub-group, feeling that they shared a sense of liminality vis-à-vis the ‘authentic’ Uyghur cultural community.

A third factor underlying mixed unions is not structural but functional: the desire to improve socio-economic status (cf. Xing 2007). Many Ürümchi respondents attributed the recent growth in intermarriage to the ethnic ‘income gap’. Märyäüm, a trader of music CDs in her thirties from Ghulja, suggested that the primary motive for marrying a Han was financial gain. This charge of ‘gold-digging’ was partly substantiated in subsequent interviews. Räbigül, 24, a minkaomin policewoman, described her affair with a married Han male as follows:

I have a Han colleague I could really have fallen for. ... He likes me to show him places in Xinjiang. The other week, he paid for me to go to Shanghai with him; we stayed in a hotel and everything. Hard to believe at my age. ... I bet you think I’m only interested in money now!

More recent research on mixed marriage goes beyond the traditional foci of structure and function, protesting that these leave no room for ‘the aesthetic spark, the romantic and wholly reckless anti-strategy of love’ (Kohn 1998: 69). From this holistic perspective, ‘the spontaneity and mystery of attractions to Others mingles with the practicalities and functions attendant on these attractions’ (Kohn 1998: 77). This can include physical attraction to a different aesthetic, as when an American woman in one study described the appeal of the darker colouring, slimmer builds, and aquiline noses of Middle Eastern men (Brown and Farahyar 1994: 177). In interviews, young Uyghur females identified the romantic and gentle manner of Han men as key factors underpinning their yearning for a mixed union. Gülshäm explained:

I can’t stand Uyghur boys. There’s a world of difference between an Uyghur and a Han guy. Take going out on a date: an Uyghur guy won’t make any effort. You’ll walk past any old street restaurant and he’ll say, ‘We’ll eat here’. He’ll take you to one of the city parks, and sit there. That’s it. Now, a Han guy knows how to treat a girl. He’ll look for a place with nice surroundings, a romantic atmosphere.

She rejected the suggestion that there might be a correlation between atmospheric restaurants and a man’s financial means, claiming that such places were ‘not necessarily expensive’, then continued: ‘It’s about deeds, actions [indicates an Uyghur couple sitting behind us]. See? That
Uyghur guy just sent that Han flower seller away! ... He told the child she should be at home. ... A Han would have bought the flower and presented it to his girlfriend!’ Gülshäm interpreted the man’s behaviour not as a politically symbolic act (as I had), but as ‘an inability to understand romance’. Her friend Räbigül, a minkaomin policewoman, agreed: ‘Han men understand romance [Uy.: romantik]; they know how to treat a girl. They’re very gentle. ... They know how to talk to you on the phone. Uyghur men just grunt a few words and then hang up! I want a guy who will hold my hand as we walk along the street and never let go!’ As we dined outside in central Ürümchi, Gülshäm continuously eyed passing Han men, and occasionally Western men. She was particularly impressed by a group of Han businessmen, who clearly hailed from the more developed and wealthy east. At one point, she squeaked excitedly and indicated a ‘mixed’ couple (Han boy, Uyghur girl) of around 16 years of age, walking hand in hand. She was deeply impressed by the couple’s courage. Both women identified the casual dress sense of Han men as a ‘pull’ factor, as confirmed by their schoolmate, Dilbär: ‘The minkaohan like those [Han] guys who dress down, wear leisure gear [Chi.: xiuxian fuzhuang]. Uyghurs usually dress up, ... wear Western-style suits, shirts, and dress shoes. ... The other night, Gülshäm said she didn’t like guys who “dressed like her grandfather”!’

A fourth factor which may influence attitudes towards intermarriage is a change in religious belief, brought about by a secular education, rapid modernization, and/or globalization (cf. Shibata’s study on Guyana, 1998: 91). Zemmel found that contemporary Anglo-Jews brought up in an environment in which they do not identify positively as Jews are more likely to marry out of the faith (1999: 67). The traditional institutions of authority (the family; rabbis) exercise less influence than previously because young people see marriage as an individual choice. They also tend to go to university and marry later, when they are financially independent and no longer reliant on the family, in particular the ‘protective’ Jewish mother (Zemmel 1999: 75, 195). In contemporary Xinjiang, there may be greater potential for intimate relationships with Han peers among Uyghurs who were not raised to adhere strictly to orthodox Islamic practice, that is, among those who observe only dietary restrictions. Gülshäm admitted that while she considered herself ‘too young’ to have a boyfriend (at 20), some of her friends were dat-
ing Han. She shrugged off the suggestion that the Islamic faith might create problems for such unions, observing nonchalantly, ‘They [Han boyfriends] go home at the end of the day, and don’t eat pork in front of us’. Nevertheless, her acknowledgment that Han boyfriends would need to go home to eat pork highlights an important distinction between possibilities for courtship and marriage.

Finally, a mixed union can release some individuals from the strictures of their own society, particularly gender roles and expectations. Studies show that some men are attracted to out-group women because they are perceived to be more submissive than in-group women, as when white American males are drawn to Japanese women (Beigel 1975: 69) or black American males to ‘ultra-feminine’ white girls (Downs 1975: 164). Conversely, some women may be repulsed by certain male characteristics within their ethnic group, such as traditional dominance over women (Shibata 1998: 90) or a tendency towards violence (Beigel 1975: 82). For example, Indian women in Guyana ‘do not easily forget witnessing their mothers’ miseries at the hands of their Indian husbands’, and some therefore opt to marry African men (Shibata 1998: 89). A female Greek respondent described the soft, calm, patient character of her Turkish husband, contrasting this against Greek husbands, who ‘shout, swear, and cheat on their wives’ (Petronoti and Papagaroufali 2006: 571). A black American woman described how her first marriage to an in-group member failed owing to her husband’s male chauvinist values, while her second marriage to a Jewish American succeeded because it was based on equality (Tartakov and Tartakov 1994: 150).

In Islam, while the concept of ‘mutual respect in marriage’ – meaning that married couples should maintain conjugal intimacy and marital decorum in an expression of the love and compassion between them – is recognized, a woman is nonetheless required to obey her husband. This is known as tamkin (obedience), as opposed to nushūz (disobedience) (Yamani 1998: 162). Many Muslim females therefore choose to marry out based on the desire to rebel against traditional female roles (see Khatib-Chahidi et al. 1998: 61). In a study of intermarriage in Turpan, several female Uyghur and Hui respondents cited the desire to avoid male chauvinism as their main motivation in seeking a Han husband (Zhang 2005: 27). My interviews in Ürümchi suggested a similar pattern. Patigül, a trader of music CDs in her twenties, attributed her friend’s 12-
year marriage to a Han to the husband’s relative tolerance of her friend’s personal freedom: ‘Her husband is very gentle [Uy.: yawash];8 he lets her get away with an awful lot! Not like an Uyghur husband, who would rule with an iron fist [Uy.: qoli qattiq].’ Räbigül, a minkaomin police-woman, cited male violence as a key factor putting her off relationships with in-group men: ‘Uyghur men are so abrasive towards their wives. … I’ve seen too many women getting beaten by their husbands to want that for myself!’ To be sure, in a rare example of a mixed union involving an Uyghur husband and Han wife, domestic violence had initially proved an issue. The husband, a market trader in his thirties from Aqsu named Osman, confided, ‘In the first three years of marriage, I occasionally beat her … because we were arguing and she wouldn’t obey me. But I don’t hit her now. Now I respect her and she respects me.’ The situation was neatly summarized by Zunun, a minkaomin in his thirties working in the service industry: ‘Many Uyghur women … have been ill-treated at the hands of Uyghur boyfriends; there is a culture of Uyghur men hitting their women. So, if Uyghur women increasingly fall into the arms of Han men, the blame lies at least partly with us.’

Parental prohibition and community supervision

At the time of the broadcast of Xinjiang Girls, the threat of boundary crossing had already produced keen resistance within the Uyghur community. This came primarily from the protagonists’ parents. Studies show that parental obstruction to intermarriage is most likely to occur where one group has a strong sense of ethnic or religious identity, or a history of political and/or socio-economic conflict with another group: ‘Where ethnic loyalties are strong, intermarriage is even more urgently than usual a family matter’ (Horowitz 2000: 62).

Respondents in Ürümchi confirmed that few Uyghur parents would allow an Uyghur–Han match, estimating the proportion of tolerant parents conservatively at 1 per cent and generously at 10 per cent. Even those parents who might potentially have taken a more progressive attitude rarely did so. It is documented that the situation of an absent parent can sometimes lessen parental opposition (Khatib-Chahidi et al. 1998: 55). Yet although Gülshäm’s father was both Chinese-educated

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8. The Uyghur word yawash can mean, variously, ‘gentle’, ‘kind’, or ‘obedient’. Many Uyghur men (and some women) ridicule Han males for being ‘afraid of their wives’.
(minkaohan) and a single parent, he forbade her to date anyone before completing her higher education, enforcing this via an evening curfew. He thus outlawed romance during precisely that time when she was most likely to interact with Han boys. While he occasionally threatened to re-marry with a Han, there was a clear dividing line between humorous banter and real life. Gülhärä, the 20-year-old minkaomin university student mentioned earlier, exclaimed that her father would ‘go mad’ if she became intimate with a Han male, while Aynur declared that her parents would ‘kick her out of the house’. This was later confirmed by her male cousin, who added with a grin, ‘They would say, “She’s no daughter of mine!”’ As a result, most mixed couples in Xinjiang choose to separate. In the United States, filial piety prevented many Nisei Japanese-Americans from marrying non-Japanese partners (Spickard 1989: 67).

In Xinjiang, enduring respect for elders combined with adverse parental reaction serves to ensure, even guarantee, endogamy in Uyghur society. In a minority of cases, a couple may defy familial sanctions by eloping, a practice common throughout history and across national borders (Ellman, cited in Spickard 1989: 194). Thus, community attempts to prevent intermarriage can provoke rebellion in a mixed couple and encourage them to take risks. Stoltzfus describes how a German woman engaged to a Jewish man shunned the German store where she normally shopped on 1 April 1933 – the national boycott day – walking straight past Sturmabteilung (Stormtrooper) guards to enter a store marked as Jewish (1996: 39). Summoned in 1934 to the local Nazi party headquarters, where an officer attempted to ‘enlighten’ her about the ‘evil Jews’, the woman responded, ‘Well, I’m not marrying a Jew, but a person’ (Stoltzfus 1996: 55). In October 1933, some German–Jewish couples had rushed to the altar upon hearing that the Nazi regime planned to make intermarriages illegal (Stoltzfus 1996: 45). Contemporary Uyghurs similarly emphasize the power of love when eloping, as described by Tahirjan and Ghäyrät, minkaomin migrant workers in their thirties from Aqsu: ‘The son or daughter says, “This is the person I have fallen in love with”. If the parents don’t agree, they go someplace far away, coming back only when they have children. Even then, they may ignore the parents and look the other way in the street.’

9. The Sturmabteilung (SA) was the Nazi militia created by Hitler in 1921, which helped him to power.
Obstructive parents may thus be rejected by defiant children in a process of ‘counter-ostracization’ (cf. Evers 1975: 157). It is worth noting here that elopement has long been a recognized social institution among Uyghurs, regardless of whether a proposed match crossed ethnic boundaries. Once a couple has eloped, the action is irreversible. A humorous Uyghur saying warns: ‘If the parents won’t at first agree to the match, they will after the couple has eloped for fifteen days!’ The implication is that, after two weeks alone with a male, the female is no longer pak (pure) and no other man will have her. Where a marriage takes place against parental wishes, familial sanctions may remain in place long afterwards in the form of parental excommunication (cf. Beigel 1975: 72). Patigül, the trader of music CDs mentioned earlier, described how her friend was disowned after she took a Han husband who failed to convert to Islam: ‘She and her parents don’t talk. They won’t have her in the house. So, every Rozi or Qurban festival, she’s in tears because that’s when families should get together.’

Alongside parental prohibition, community supervision plays a key role in preventing Uyghur–Han intermarriage. As Grearson and Smith note, ‘People in intercultural relationships must be prepared for extra attention, some of it subtle and some of it not so subtle’ (1995: xi). Mixed marriages are often treated with suspicion because they call into question boundaries between ‘self’ and ‘other’. This in turn causes extended kin and the local community to reinforce negative discourses and stereotypes of the out-group (Breger and Hill 1998: 4, 9, 12), with intermarriage and mixed-lineage offspring deemed threatening to the ‘purity’ of one or both groups (Hartley 2010: 237). Community supervision can be particularly effective in Islamic societies, which seek to organize the minutiae of family life through the collective enforcement of public morals (Ayubi 1991: 35). Since the Arab-Islamic culture emphasizes ‘external’ over ‘internal’ moral enforcement (i.e. shame over guilt), it is the public who are expected to collectively oversee sex, women, and the family (Ayubi 1991: 37, 42–44). In contemporary Xinjiang, few dare to pursue marriage with a Han person openly. Uyghur–Han couples who appear in public risk the verbal and sometimes physical censure of the Uyghur public. Adil, a male restaurateur in his forties, explained: ‘If we see an Uyghur and a Han together in the street, we feel anger in our hearts; they appear ugly [Uy.: sät körünidu].’ According to Patigül,
mixed couples were never seen in the Uyghur district (Döngköwrük) of Ürümchi, for people would curse them and hurl jibes at the Uyghur girl, such as, ‘What’s wrong? Couldn’t you get an Uyghur partner [Uy.: sanga chigmidi ma]?’

Nurmämät, the minkaomin market trader in his forties, and Gülşhäüm added that some individuals would even strike the couple, as confirmed by a 19-year-old respondent dating a Han man: ‘It’s hard for us to even go out in Ürümchi. If other Uyghurs see us together, they make trouble. Men swear at us and hit us. … Uyghur women aren’t so bad, but they still make [critical] comments.’ This girl’s mother would not allow the couple to marry in Xinjiang, though the Han male had given up pork and was learning the Uyghur language. However, she agreed to her elder daughter’s marriage to a Han in Beijing because their married life would be spent away from Xinjiang and the concomitant social pressure. Ben-Adam (1999: 204) documents similar cases where Uyghur students married to Han people in China proper were instructed by parents not to return to Xinjiang.

Most effective in enforcing the intermarriage taboo are friends and co-workers. When Gülşhäüm mused upon the possibility of a Han boyfriend, her minkaomin classmate was furious, threatening to ‘kick [Gülşhäüm] in the face’, and break off their friendship. According to Gülşhäüm, this reaction resulted from the Uyghurs’ strong ‘ethnic thinking’ (Chi.: minzu guannian): ‘They think the Han are unclean, and set themselves apart. They’re stand-offish; they exclude the Han from their lives.’ One might surmise that community supervision would therefore have a greater impact on minkaomin, who interact mainly with Uyghur peers. Zunun, the service industry employee, described how an interethnic courtship in his workplace (Uyghur female, Han male) had collapsed after Uyghur co-workers urged their compatriot to abandon the match. However, the taboo can operate just as effectively among minkaohan.

Despite speaking Chinese more fluently than Uyghur, and being acculturated in dress, manner, and musical taste, 15-year-old Burkhan stated that he would never marry a Han: ‘If I did, no Uyghur would visit me or befriend me.’ This view was reflected in the comment of an Uyghur researcher working for Herbert Yee, who insisted that his daughter must

10. This respondent used ma at the end of her question instead of the Uyghur mu, a common habit in Ürümchi, where the distinction between the Uyghur and Chinese question particles is increasingly blurred.
never marry a Han lest their family be ‘looked down upon by his fellow people’ (2003: 450).

Like familial sanctions, community opposition may continue to affect an Uyghur–Han union following the marriage, as in the case of Osman, the Uyghur market trader who is married to a Han woman. Several years after the wedding, a fellow trader from Khotan continued to voice strong disapproval of Osman’s choice: ‘He has a good heart. But we don’t approve of him marrying that Han, because she’s not a Muslim and won’t take the religion. … They just play with this [points to mouth] and this [points to genitals]. … That’s all it’s about.’ He thus defiled Osman’s relationship by describing it in purely sexual terms. The wife’s failure to convert meant she had to keep away from her husband’s kebab stand for fear that Uyghur customers would deem her presence haram (unclean). Instead, she performed less visible tasks in the restaurant’s kitchen. Patigül expressed a similar lingering suspicion of her friend’s Han husband, who had not converted, confessing that her appetite failed when visiting the couple’s home.

Male honour, female shame

Marrying out is often considered a violation of group identity and of the ‘sexual taboo’ (Barbara 1989: 15). At the heart of this lies the notion of the ‘gendered ethnic centre’, an ideology which defines in-group women in symbolic terms as ‘mothers of our people’ (Breger and Hill 1998: 15). It was long ago shown that in ‘intimate’ Mediterranean societies, the basis for honour and shame was essentially sexual, with women expected to remain chaste until married and faithful thereafter. A single mistake destroys female honour and, with it, that of their close male relatives (Peristiany 1966; cf. Antoun 1968: 674–8 on modesty in Arab villages). Thus it is intermarrying women who often become targets of harassment when crossing normative boundaries (Shibata 1998: 84, 96). Particularly in plural societies, minority women may become ‘forbidden persons’, prevented by their menfolk from forming relationships with majority men, so that marriage becomes the last arena in which minorities retain control (Barbara 1989: 14–15). Restrictions on in-group women may be precipitated by a sense of political, social, cultural, or economic impotence (Buijs 1993: 5, 18). In West Berlin, for instance, high unemployment created feelings of disempowerment among
Palestinian refugees, and males reacted by reconstructing the ideals of female seclusion and gendered segregation of space (Abdulrahim 1993: 67). In this way, they reconstructed group identity around male honour and female shame (Breger and Hill 1998: 14–15).

In Xinjiang, I did interview some female respondents who demonstrated a capacity for tolerance of, and empathy with, Uyghur–Han romantic unions. These ‘universalists’ hailed exclusively from the young generation, and invariably focused on love as the central consideration in courtship. However, the vast majority opposed intermarriage with Han people, and all the more fiercely in the context of the phenomenon’s increase. Uyghur men were especially visceral in their opposition to interethnic courtship, expressing this in violent criticism of the females concerned and an earnest defence of Uyghur males. Shökhrät, a male intellectual in his thirties from Kashgar, cynically rejected the idea that Han men were ‘more romantic’, countering, ‘The Chinese are loaded, the Uyghurs have no money’. He added that such girls ‘don’t have a brain’ [Uy.: kalisi yoq] and are ‘little better than prostitutes’, a view later echoed by Tashmämät, a historian in his forties. Jelil, the pious university graduate in his twenties, argued that Uyghur women were attracted both to the superior financial means of Han partners and to their often higher level of education (this explaining why rich Uyghur businessmen may be deemed less attractive). Tashmämät listed four reasons why Uyghur women date Han men:

First, some girls will go with anyone who has money, with Han, old men.
... Second, these girls have grown up among the Han [are minkaohan or Ürümchi-born] and are closer to the Han. Third, these girls have often slept around, they are broken [Uy.: buzuaq, no longer chaste], and cannot find an Uyghur husband. Fourth, they are living in their own world [Uy.: özining dunya], a dream world [Uy.: khiyali dunya].

The phenomenon was thus attributed to ‘gold-digging’ (marriage for financial gain), acculturation, lost virginity, and a lack of common sense. Abdukerim, an observant minkaomin graduate from Aqsu in his twenties, identified the relative upward mobility of urban Han as a key factor and, while allowing for the sanctity of love, characterized Uyghur–Han marriage as an ‘empty-headed’ act. All four implied that such women lack a political conscience. Interestingly, Dilbär, the minkaomin high school student, agreed with many of these comments, which suggests that some Uyghur women may be equally critical. According to Han
scholar Li Xiaoxia, it is ‘inevitable that minority women attracted by the higher political and social position of Han males will abandon in-group customs and adopt those of their Han spouse’ (2006: 84, my translation). His view is endorsed by Xing Wei, who found in the early 1990s that minority women in the south-west were more likely to marry out than male counterparts (2007: 169).

Just one respondent openly invoked the political situation in connection with the intermarriage taboo. This was Ömär, the minkaomin high school student, who explained:

We cannot accept Uyghurs marrying Han – unless the latter convert to Islam. It’s too much to bear. We think, ‘They took away our country [Uy.: dölitimizni eliwaldi], our language, and our culture, they made us like them. And now they want our women too.’ ... These things are connected and cannot be separated. And so we oppose intermarriage. It’s the final straw, the last thing we can resist. I can’t bear the thought of reading in history books that ... we were assimilated through intermarriage with the Han. That’s too humiliating. I don’t want us to end up like the Native Americans.

Uyghur–Han intermarriage is thus interpreted as a ‘loss’ in a context where Uyghur language, culture, and social status are under threat. Here, women become the ‘culture bearers’, to be protected from encroachment by Han men as a means to preserve the Uyghur cultural heritage and maintain face. In this way, where other cultural markers such as language are gradually eroded, the intermarriage taboo comes to embody the final arena of ethnic resistance (cf. Borchigud 1994 on Inner Mongolia).

Notions of loss and restoration of male honour carry a particular weight in Islamic societies, and are especially marked in Arab countries where males experienced a double humiliation during the twentieth century: national humiliation following the 1967 defeat by Israel; and social humiliation caused by class demotion resulting from certain socio-economic policies. Here, women have often become the vehicle for the ‘restoration’ of male honour (Ayubi 1991: 40). For many Uyghur males, the vision of in-group women courting Han men can be characterized as the painful culmination of a series of humiliating blows, including the invasion and political domination of the Uyghur homeland, the erosion of Uyghurs’ social position through discriminatory socio-economic policies, and the attack on Uyghurs’ cultural heritage.
through assimilatory policies towards language, culture, and religion. As Nurmämät remarked, ‘If a mixed couple appears in Erdaoqiao [the Chinese name for Döngköwrük, the Uyghur district], people swear at them, even hit them! If it’s an Uyghur girl. If it’s a boy, they say nothing.’ The responsibility for avoiding further national shame and rebuilding national honour thus lies squarely with Uyghur women. The gender discrepancy is partly explained by the Islamic norm of patrilineal descent. Uyghur women are required to marry in-group men, or men from other Muslim groups, to ensure continuity of religious identity. A Muslim husband provides the child with his name and religion, and ensures that the mother – as the source of the child’s religious and moral education – continues to practise Islam (cf. Yamani 1998: 154).

Most male respondents firmly rejected the suggestion that Uyghur women are fleeing to Han men to escape Uyghur male violence. Tashmämät observed:

The Han interact according to a system of Confucian relationships, one of which requires that women obey their husbands. Han households in Xinjiang operate on this basis. In an Uyghur household, we say that men should dominate, but don’t put this into practice for fear of what may happen to us in the afterlife [Uy.: Yaman bolidu däp – things will go badly on the Day of Judgment].

While admitting that some men behave badly by sleeping with and then abandoning girls, Jelil protested that Uyghur males no longer beat women. He also defended them against the charge that they do not understand romance: ‘It’s true that Uyghur men don’t do romantic talk, can’t do it. … But they still feel those things in their hearts.’

Conclusion

Li Li has suggested that, as the most influential genre in China’s new media landscape, the television drama ‘embodies the many complex aspects of social forces and relationships contested in China’s reform’ (2011: 327). Its function as a ‘dynamic cultural agent’ in a public space governed by political interventions can be traced back to the CCP’s response in 1991 to Kewang (‘Yearnings’), a groundbreaking TV play set against the Cultural Revolution. Li Ruihuan, the Politburo member charged with overseeing ideological matters following the 1989 Tian’anmen incident, invited the film crew to Zhongnanhai in Beijing, and commended the
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drama as a ‘worthy model’ for the nation's literary and artistic writers. He observed that in order to make socialist principles – defined as ‘honest, sympathetic, sacrificial, and harmonious’ human relations – acceptable to the masses, media workers must learn to use the forms favoured by the populace. Since then, the Jiang and Hu administrations have advocated the ‘harmonious society’ as the primary theme in Chinese media production, with sympathetic feelings generated by TV dramas forming the core of the ‘social, moral, and ethical values that … could hold together a united and harmonious society’ (Li Li 2011: 338–9). Yet the extent to which Xinjiang Girls reinforced this ideal is questionable. The presentation of true love, modelled on the narratives of ‘genuine human sentiment’ that have characterized Chinese melodrama since the 1980s, proved unconvincing for most Uyghur viewers. Shibata notes that a brief increase in intermarriage can add extra force to local antagonism, ‘highlighting new weaknesses in the racial barricade … that need to be shored up’ (1998: 87). The response from the Uyghur community in 2004 suggests just such a social backlash. Andrew Skuse has described the deliberate sidelining of the Taliban in the Afghan radio play New Home, New Life (1996–1998) as ‘reflective of production struggles over political and moral interpretations of Afghan society’ (2005: 162, 166). In the same way, one can imagine the scene as media workers debated possible endings for Xinjiang Girls: Could the Uyghur audience accept the eventual marriage of the second eldest daughter to her Han beau? Or would this lead to street demonstrations in the regional capital, as had the publication of the book Sexual Customs (considered offensive to Islam) in 1989? The compromise position eventually adopted – to leave the ending open as the Han beau awaits the modernization of Uyghur thought – did not provoke street protest. However, I would argue that it did bring the Uyghurs’ subjection directly into their consciousness, causing them to challenge the ideology marketed by the dominant group, and to ‘demand a form of correction’ in everyday life (cf. Lee and Cho 1990: 40–41).

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ON THE FRINGES OF THE HARMONIOUS SOCIETY


CONTESTING HARMONY THROUGH TV DRAMA


ON THE FRINGES OF THE HARMONIOUS SOCIETY


CHAPTER ELEVEN

Harmonizing Islam in Xinjiang: Sound and meaning in rural Uyghur religious practice

Rachel Harris

Introduction
In a small Uyghur village in southern Xinjiang, 60 women have squeezed themselves into a guestroom in a village house. They have chosen a house well away from the main road, and arrive in ones and twos to avoid drawing attention to their activities. Behind closed windows and doors in the baking mid-summer heat, they recite from the Qur’an, perform dhikr, and they cry.

Known as büwi, or in some areas as qushnach, these are respected women within the local community who perform rituals of cleansing or expulsion, mourning and commemoration, and prepare the bodies of deceased women for burial. This form of women’s ritual practice is widespread across Uyghur society. Within the village, participation in these rituals offers women status, fellowship, and a channel for emotional expression which, as I will argue, does important spiritual work within the community. In the current political climate, however, they are increasingly under pressure from the Xinjiang authorities, who seek to suppress or control all ritual activities which lie outside the sphere of officially approved and regulated religion.

In this paper I follow contemporary trends in ethnomusicology, arguing that an investigation of the Uyghur village soundscape provides useful insights into the nature of religious practice and power. The practices of the büwi illustrate the ways in which gendered and ethnic hierarchies are sonically negotiated both within village society and in relation to the state.
Across the PRC, non-institutional religious practice has for several decades been condemned and criminalized as ‘feudal superstition’ and ‘anti-state’. The discourse of the ‘harmonious society’ introduced in 2006 seemed to promise that the state would tolerate a wider range of religious practices under the rubric of respecting ‘cultural pluralism’, if these practices could be seen to promote, and not harm, ‘social stability’. In a recent overview of state policy, Richard Madsen (2010: 65–66) argues that the application of this principle has been highly variable across the PRC and depends on local circumstances. My fieldwork experiences in Xinjiang since 2006 suggest that any form of Islamic practice, or even display, beyond the structures of institutional religion is regarded as damaging to the harmonious society.

Over the past two decades, alongside many aspects of life, religious practice in Xinjiang has been affected by tensions in the region following the establishment of the independent Central Asian states in 1991, the rise of orthodox or fundamentalist forms of Islam across the region, and responses by the Chinese state to fears of Uyghur ‘separatist’ or, post-2001, ‘terrorist’ activity. Whilst it is generally accepted that small numbers of Uyghurs are involved in extremist organizations active in the Central Asian states (Gladney 2004: 389–92; Rashid 2002: 204), the Chinese state response has been widely criticized as disproportionate to the actual threat (Becquelin 2004; Millward 2004). State media habitually report all kinds of violent incidents in the region as terrorist activity, thus inflating the perception of the threat – according to some observers – in order to justify the ongoing tight controls. As Pitman Potter argues, regulation of Islam in Xinjiang ‘appears to reflect conclusions’ about the convergence of religion and Uyghur nationalism. In state propaganda, heavy emphasis is placed on prohibitions against using religion to oppose CCP leadership and the socialist system to engage in activities that split the motherland or that destroy unity among nationalities (Potter 2003: 329). Measures of control and coercion among the broad Uyghur population involve mass education campaigns, surveillance and arrests, bans on large-scale gatherings, and anti-‘illegal religious activities’ campaigns which have had an impact on a wide range of popular religious practices that are far removed from fundamentalist Islam. This, I argue, has had special repercussions for Uyghur women, who are largely excluded from institutional forms of Islam in the region, both in terms of
veiling practices (the visible markers of their Islamic identity) and their sounded religious practice.

The village soundscape
A recent trend in anthropology builds on the concept of the ‘soundscape’ originated by Canadian composer Murray Schafer. According to new interpretations, Schafer’s notion of soundscape delineates a publicly circulating entity that is a produced effect of social practices, politics, and ideologies while also being implicated in the shaping of those practices, politics, and ideologies. … Like ‘landscape,’ as well, the term contains the contradictory forces of the natural and the cultural, the fortuitous and the composed, the improvised and the deliberately produced. Similarly, as landscape is constituted by cultural histories, ideologies, and practices of seeing, soundscape implicates listening as a cultural practice. (Samuels et al. 2010: 330)

During my fieldwork in an Uyghur village in the Aqsu region of southern Xinjiang over the past six years, the rural soundscape has been rapidly changing. The braying of donkeys – so much a feature of the village in 2006 – is now rarely heard; instead of donkey carts, Uyghur peasants travel on motorbikes and three-wheel motor vehicles on the new tarmac roads. In the dry summer of 2009, the nights throbbed to the sound of pumps on the wells using cheap electricity to irrigate the cotton fields. By 2012, the daytime was filled with the sound of cement mixers, an indication of the villagers’ new-found capability to build proper brick houses, aided by government grants. When these were silenced in the early evening, it was possible to hear the rumbling of heavy lorries on the main road, carrying cement for more large-scale building projects. Contemporary China is a noisy place, full of the mechanical sounds of development and industrialization, and this remote patch of southern Xinjiang is no exception. The state continues to claim its space in the soundscape: another striking development in 2012 was the return of the village loudspeaker, that supreme sonic marker of the Chinese Cultural

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1. In the summers of 2006, 2009, and 2012, I spent up to two months living in a small village in the Aqsu region of Xinjiang with my children and my husband, to whom, as ever, I am indebted for help with interviews and translations, and many insights. We were hosted by relatives, to whom I am eternally grateful for their generosity, tolerance, and hard work on our behalf.
Revolution, once again broadcasting music and news of the latest campaigns.

It might be thought that these sounds of industrialization and state media leave little space for the sonic articulation of faith in this highly religious village. Certainly key iconic aspects of Islamic soundscapes are absent, notably the Muslim call to prayer (adhan). Andrew Eisenberg argues in his study of religious practice in Mombasa that the adhan ‘defines the spatial parameters of the community, and serves in the production of a broader – global – Muslim identity, both localizing and globalizing’ (Eisenberg 2009: 98). In Mombasa, as in many other societies where Islam is the prevailing religion, calls to prayer, often conveyed via loudspeaker, punctuate social time and structure, and are received by pious Muslims through a set of ingrained comportments such as the automatic adjusting of headscarves or hushed conversation (ibid.: 100). In this Uyghur village, although the sound of the adhan was absent, villagers set their mobile phone alarms to the times for daily prayers, creating their own individualized trigger for a set of deportments that would be quite recognizable to the inhabitants of Mombasa: the pious retired to wash, and soon the older men of the household could be heard reciting the Qur’an tunelessly while women whispered their own devotions, creating their own barely audible pious soundscape. It is another semi-hidden set of ritual sounds which forms the subject of this chapter: a women’s gathering known as a khätma, which includes recitation of the Qur’an, sung prayers, and dhikr.2

Büwim ritualist specialists

Such gatherings are widespread across Xinjiang, in urban and in rural areas. A gathering comprises a loose affiliation of a senior büwi, her apprentices (shagird), and other respected, pious, usually older women living nearby. Many groups come together for weekly meetings. They also gather for a vigil (tünäk) after a death at the home of the deceased. They may be invited to people’s homes to recite and pray in order to dispel some misfortune or illness, and they perform large-scale rituals during the month of Barat. These informal groups are widespread throughout

2. Dhikr, a practice associated with Sufi ritual, is described by Dähnhardt (2012) as ‘the repetition, individual or collective, aloud or silently, with or without movements, of a divine name or a litany’.
the region. Folklorists in the regional capital Ürümchi have documented hundreds of groups, and suggest that in every locality (group of villages) there is an active group (Zhou 1999). Their rituals are closed to men, though children may attend. Some older büwi wear full-face veils in public, which they draw aside within the all-female context of the ritual. Similarly the sounds of their ritual are veiled by the walls of the guest room where they sit, semi-audible to the men of the community, and hidden from outsiders. Rituals include Qur’anic recitation (khätmä), sung hikmät lyrics attributed to the twelfth-century Central Asian poet and mystic Ahmed Yasawi, and munajat, a sung genre of Uyghur-language prayers which draw on the idioms of folk poetry. Groups of büwi can still sometimes be found in the more public context of shrine festivals in the south of the region, reciting hikmät and accompanying themselves with percussion sticks, standing in a small circle surrounded by crowds of women pilgrims who often weep as they listen and pile gifts of bread and cloth in the middle of the circle.

Büwi are often said to be the wives of male religious clerics, but the four women I knew during my fieldwork were married to peasant farmers or small traders, and had either inherited the role from their mothers or had found their own paths to the role of ritual specialist. Aygul, a tall woman with an air of authority in her late thirties who was already regarded as a büwi of exceptional power, explained her own development in terms of a physical crisis marked by a dream encounter, a process which resonates with shamanic traditions across Central Asia:

After I had my second child I was not well, and I had no time for my prayers for a few years. Then, one morning at around three o’clock, I had a dream. A fine old man with a handsome beard sitting on a carpet came towards me from the sky. I was in a graveyard, and he lectured me about the Qur’an. I was very afraid. I had developed a liver illness, and I thought I would die. At that time my youngest child was only six

3. A large piece of cloth or blanket thrown over the whole head and shoulders. This is a local veiling practice which seems to have entered rural custom in the mid-twentieth century.
4. These are linked to the poetry collected in the Diwan-i Hikmat by Yasawi, who was the founder of the Yasawiyah Sufi order in Central Asia. His tomb, built by Timur in the late fourteenth century, lies in Turkestan in southern Kazakhstan, and is still today an important pilgrimage site.
5. During and Mirabdolbaghi (1991: 22) refer to these as ‘prayers of supplication’.
6. See Harris (2009) for further discussion of shrine (mazar) festivals.
7. All names in this chapter have been changed.
months old, and I was so scared. After that dream I woke up, and I under-
stood myself. This was 12 years ago. Since then I have been praying and reading the Qur’an.8

Another more senior büwi in the locality, whom I will call Maryam, was introduced by the women in my host family in similar terms: ‘Maryam became a büwi after seeing ghosts. She is a real bakhshi [shamanic healer].’ They also commented, ‘When she was young she was wild, she had a lover. Even now she likes to talk and laugh.’ This type of gossip echoes the popular Uyghur saying, ‘When a tart gets old she becomes a büwi’ (Jalab keri bolghandin keyin büwi bolidu), which points to the problematic status of such women who give voice in spectacular, albeit semi-hidden form, and who must possess the authority and charisma needed to lead large-scale rituals.9 Such gossip, however, was muted, and within village society büwi were largely respected and feared for the role they play in dealing with death and the power they have over the passage of the soul.

Beyond these shamanic resonances, the ritual practices of the büwi also bear many more direct points of resemblance to rituals performed by the more formally organized male Sufi groups which are allied to Sufi orders and based in recognized Sufi lodges.10 Uyghur Sufi lodges associate themselves with the Naqshbandiyya, Qadiriyya, and Chishtiyya orders which are found throughout Central Asia, Pakistan, and China. Some of the major lodges of Xinjiang trace their genealogies back to the seventeenth century, when Sufi orders flourished under the patronage of the Khoja dynasty of Kashgar, but other lodges were founded much later by Uzbek sheikhs who fled from the USSR in the first decades of the twentieth century (Zarcone 2002: 534). While some Sufi groups operate underground, the major lodges in Xinjiang are recognized and administered by the state, forming a part of institutional religion in the region.

Some of the Sufi lodges have women’s groups, also known as büwi, attached to the lodge, but more usually the rituals of the büwi are con-

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8. Sigrid Kleinmichel (2000) notes similar shamanic resonances in her study of women ritual specialists in Khorezm in western Uzbekistan. See also Razia Sultanova’s (2011) study of otnoy in the Ferghana Valley.

9. See Harris (2013) for a discussion of women, song, and morality in Uyghur society.

10. See, for example, detailed descriptions of rituals in Sufi lodges across Xinjiang in Zhou (1999).
ducted quite separate from the male world of Sufi lodges, and they do not possess an equivalent hereditary authority. Unlike the male Sufi orders, the state has until recently made little or no attempt to regulate their practices. Indeed, all forms of religious practice for Uyghur women beyond private individual prayer are excluded from institutionalized, state-sanctioned practice. Under Uyghur custom there is no place for women in the mosques (unlike the situation in Hui communities, where a tradition of women’s mosques exists). No religious instruction is offered to women in the Xinjiang Islamic Institute (again, this is different from the situation in Islamic institutes in Hui regions, where women may study). As Maria Jaschok comments on the situation of Uyghur women, ‘State control is complemented by the hold of patriarchal leadership over mosque life, rendering this entirely masculinised space inaccessible to women’ (2009: 489). Jaschok correctly identifies a double marginalization effect for Uyghur women, yet the büwī tradition provides a channel for religious teaching, cultural expression, the exercise of female authority, and prestige which significantly moderate and counterbalance this effect. The büwī tradition lies outside the state structures but is complementary to, and sometimes draws on, the formal patriarchal sphere of the mosque. It is also intertwined with the male Sufi traditions.

Most village-based büwī do not identify themselves as Sufis, and have no formal links to established orders or their lodges; indeed, the women I worked with during my fieldwork had little or no knowledge of organized Sufi groups, and were hardly familiar with the term Sufi (Uy.: sopī). Even so, the links to Sufi ritual practices are strong. They invoke the name of Naqshband, the founder of a major Central Asian Sufi order, in the course of the khātmā ritual, and in their khātmā and funeral rituals they perform the classic Sufi style tahlīl − the chanting of the shahada (profession of faith), La illaha illa allah, as a dhikr, repeated and progressively shortened until the final consonant, the single syllable hu, is repeated rhythmically, accompanied by dancing.¹¹

The büwī I interviewed say only broadly that their practice is ‘handed down from olden times, our Muslim traditions’, but we might posit a historical process of transmission from the Naqshbandiyya order in Bukhara to Sufi orders in Xinjiang, which has in turn filtered outwards

into rural communities. Undoubtedly, we can suggest an ongoing process of transmission, one that is not exclusively gendered, as women or girls learn from fathers, brothers, or husbands within the home, and bring this practice into the exclusively female sphere of the village khatmā rituals. Likewise, the religious knowledge and practices of the büwi, such as Qur’anic recitation, are not entirely separate from institutionalized (male) Islam: two of the büwi with whom I worked had learned the art of Qur’anic recitation from male religious clerics.

In the Ferghana Valley of Uzbekistan we find groups of women ritualists, the otin, who are in many ways equivalent to the Uyghur büwi. A study of the otin by Kandiyoti and Azimova (2004) serves as a useful model for situating the Uyghur practice within twentieth-century history. They argue that the otin ‘are neither hapless victims whose culture was being obliterated, nor valiant resisters preserving some “unspoilt” Islamic identities’, arguing instead that we should see ‘a constant historical process of adaptation and synthesis’ (2004). They note that in the early twentieth century the otin were the sole providers of women’s education in the Ferghana Valley. Under the Soviets their activities became clandestine. They were cut off from the textual sources previously central to their rituals and teachings, in part due to a ban on religious texts, but also due to the impact of script change.

Likewise, in the context of contemporary Xinjiang, we should remember that the current büwi leaders are products of the revolution who spent their youth under the commune system and the subsequent chaos of the Cultural Revolution, whose violence reached even these remote villages. In oral testimonies, village women recall secretly buying a sheep from the guards at the nearby prison camp to slaughter for a wedding. Their tearful recollections of suffering (ghām) include sharp memories of being forced to leave their small children alone at home all day, crying and hungry, while they went to work for the village commune. The structures of socialist China remain very much a part of their imagination, even where these structures are weakening. When older village women refer to local places and structures, they use the old Maoist terminology, for example,

12. See also Sigrid Kleinmichel’s (2000) major study of the texts recited by female ritual specialists in the Ferghana Valley and Khorezm.

13. Cf. Benedicte Grima’s study of emotion rituals among Pashtun women (2005), and her argument that tearful narratives of suffering (gham) validate feminine identity and grant status and power.
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gongshe (commune) and bizning dadui (our work team). When Subinur, a village-based büwi who taught me some of the basics of their practice, emphasizes the importance of ritual washing and prayer in daily life, she says it is ‘so that your children will grow up to be clean people [Uy.: pak adâm], useful and competent [Uy.: yaramlij], and like village heads [Ch.: xiangzhang].’

Policies towards religious practice in the PRC may actually have given their rituals greater prominence in village worship than previously. In her study of women ritualists in Uzbekistan’s Ferghana Valley, Deniz Kandiyoti (2004) argues that Soviet and post-Soviet policies towards Islam have impelled a ‘privatization’ of religious practice, a relegation to the domestic domain, and hence a tendency for women to play more significant roles (see also Tapper and Tapper 1987). This ritual form is not gendered at root; it is linked in terms of texts and performance style to male Sufi orders. It becomes women’s work when absorbed into home-based life-cycle rituals and linked to rituals surrounding death, and hence, perhaps, is better preserved than in male spheres of worship, though certainly not fossilized.

State responses to büwi practice

As I argued above, the CCP has tended to hear the sounds of the büwi as oppositional and potentially threatening to the idealized socialist order or, more recently, to the ‘harmonious society’ because they lie outside the regulated state religious structure. In the 1990s, they were commonly accused of conducting ‘feudal superstition’ and extorting money from gullible victims. Over the past decade, they have fallen foul of the laws on ‘illegal religious activities’. In recent years, however, some efforts have been made to draw these village ritual specialists under the regulation of the state. A proposal brought to the Xinjiang People’s Political Consultative Conference by the vice-chairwoman of the XUAR Women’s Federation in 2008 argued that büwi had previously existed in a ‘no-man’s land’ without state oversight, and suggested using the women’s high social status to spread the Party’s religious and ethnic policies among Muslim women. Failing to capitalize on the status of büwi to disseminate Party policy, it stated, could permit ‘hostile elements within

and outside of [China’s] borders’ to use religious and ethnic customs to ‘carry out infiltration activities among women’. The report argued that in areas where ‘a religious atmosphere is comparatively strong’, women believers were vulnerable to infiltration by the ‘three forces’ of terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism. It also cited cases of such forces ‘using’ büwi to carry out ‘illegal sermonizing activities’.15

In the two years following this proposal, efforts were made to regulate and control büwi activities, but again state intervention appears to have been highly variable across the Xinjiang region. In the southern areas around the cities of Kashgar and Khotan, Xinjiang government reports provide detailed accounts of government efforts to regulate büwi activities. According to an American study of this campaign, government and Communist Party officials in Yengi Mähällä Township of Kashgar gathered the büwi of ten local villages for training in government and Party policy towards religion. They were asked to sign a pledge to ‘uphold stability’, which included refraining from ‘wearing veils or long dresses, teaching religious texts to students, and forcing other individuals to participate in religious activities’.16 The report details several examples of such training being implemented in areas around southern Xinjiang. In contrast, büwi ritual practice has been relatively open in the eastern region around Turpan, an area relatively free from unrest; the büwi here are such good citizens of the PRC that in 2008 the leader of one group of büwi organized a donation to the Sichuan earthquake victims. In 2009 there were no controls on this kind of religious activity in the regional capital Ürümchi, though büwi groups are active there.17

In 2009, I found that büwi in the Aqsu region were regulated by the state, and were even issued permits. Official permission related specifically to their basic task of washing the bodies of dead women and conducting prayers in the home before the body is taken for burial. Large-scale khätämä were not sanctioned, and transmitting Islamic practice was especially problematic; the rubric ‘illegal religious schools’ seemed to cover a wide range of practices from the large-scale residential Islamic schools for young men and boys which are described in campaign lit-

16. Ibid.
17. Information supplied by Rahila Dawut of Xinjiang University.
erature right down to the informal home-based classes in basic prayers and Qur’anic recitation for local girls which büwi have traditionally provided. From the examples detailed in the congressional report and our own encounters, it seems clear that this division of officially sanctioned and illegal activities was widespread: büwi were being officially defined and sanctioned as corpse washers – the most basic and least prestigious of their tasks. All other ritual activities and teaching, the Qur’anic recitation, munajat and hikmät prayers – in other words, those activities that define the place of büwi in the soundscape and their status within the community – were deemed illegal.

By 2012, the situation was yet more restricted. A major new anti-illegal religious activities campaign was underway, and the policy of drawing büwi into the framework of state regulation, at least in the Aqsu region, had been overturned. Xinjiang media carried reports of abuse of children, including beatings, rape, and even murder, alleged to have occurred in illegal religious schools around the region. Police raids on religious schools were also reported in the media, at least one of which, in southern Khotan, led to violence and injuries. Also from Khotan, the South China Morning Post reported in 2011 on a new ban on what Uyghurs call the ‘Arab-style’ women’s full veil, which has become fashionable in the region over the past decade. Women wearing this kind of veil were described as ‘blindly affected by extreme religious thought’ and directly linked to terrorist activities:

‘The black and loose robes enable potential attackers to hide their weapons and, hence, pose a security threat to the safety of the public’, [a government spokesman] said. The Hotan [sic] government had launched a campaign to encourage women to avoid such clothing, he said, using slogans telling them to ‘show off their pretty looks and let their beautiful long hair fly’.

An acquaintance from Khotan observed dryly that life for women in Khotan had become very difficult: if they wore a headscarf to go to work

18. Activities such as recruiting believers among schoolchildren and establishing illegal (that is, not properly approved and registered) religious schools are considered in violation of the PRC’s constitutional provision that religion may not obstruct state education (Potter 2003: 326).
20. ‘Ban on Islamic dress sparked Uygur attack’, by Choi Chi-yuk, South China Morning Post, 22 July 2011.
they were sacked, and if they did not wear a headscarf to go to the bazaar they had stones thrown at them.

In rural parts of Aqsu in 2012, I observed several signs in town centres and villages stating that it was illegal to pray or wear the full-face veil in public; transgression would incur fines of up to 2,000 yuan. People found praying in the town bazaar were kept in prison overnight, and given 15 days of political education. One elderly woman complained that she had inadvertently gone out wearing an ordinary black dress and been detained for over an hour by police, who assumed that her dress was a form of illegal Islamic costume. Not only police were actively involved in enforcing the campaign. Professional work unit employees were obliged to spend several hours of their work time patrolling the town streets, dressed in army fatigues and supplied with hard hats and large sticks, removing religious clothing (for example, prayer caps and women’s veils which covered anything more than their hair). It was notable, however, that the campaign was not being enforced with the same rigour in urban areas. In the same period in Aqsu city and in the regional capital Ürümchi, however, there was little evidence that the campaign was underway, and women fully veiled in black with the niqab face covering walked unhindered through the cities’ Uyghur bazaars.

The Xinhua News Agency reported in January 2012 that 8,000 police officers had been recruited in order to apply a policy of ‘one officer, one village’, enabling the police to ‘manage migrants and crack down on illegal religious activities’.

One village büwi we spoke with had been issued a permit in 2009, only to have it taken away a year later. Since 2010 she had been banned from conducting any rituals, including those related to deaths. She was subject to police harassment, including regular searches of her home, and seemed deeply paranoid, fearing spies and imagining listening devices everywhere. Other women reacted to state controls in more oppositional fashion, drawing on their faith to support their resistance:

I was praying once at night and the police caught us; I was with one girl from Ürümchi and two from Aqsu, and I was in custody for 15 days. After that Allah gave me even more strength and faith, and I became even stronger. We shouldn’t be afraid of them because Allah said on the Day of Judgment [qiymät küni] even a mother will forget her baby.

22. From an interview with Aygul, July 2009.
By 2012, this oppositional stance had led her to further substantial fines and two beatings at the hands of local police, but she was nonetheless continuing her practice, leading regular meetings of women to recite the Qur’an and to cry.

**Listening to religious practice**

The disjuncture between the state discourse of illegal religious activities and Aygul’s discourse of faith and salvation is striking, and it points to radically different ways of hearing the same sounds. The anthropologist Charles Hirschkind, writing on twentieth-century Egypt, describes the conflict of modernist nationalism and religious sound worlds, and argues that the task of creating a modern national auditory – an ear resonant with the tonalities of reason and progress while deaf to the outmoded noises of religious authority – required a concerted intervention into sites of aural discipline (Hirshkind 2006).

Certainly the ears of many educated Uyghurs are well attuned to the tonalities of modern nationalism, and they find the khätma discordant. One male nationalist friend disapproves of Aygul’s talk: ‘This kind of thing – this Sufism – is what brought down the Yarkand Khanate’, he says, referring to the seventeenth-century kingdom which for many is the Uyghur ‘golden age’. Perhaps this is not just a modernist–religious divide, but also has gendered connotations. The sights and sounds of the ritual often provoke a negative reaction from boys and men within the community, one grounded partly in fear. My friend recalls a tünäk (gathering of women on the night before burial) from his childhood:

They cried, they cuddled each other, jumping around. I remember being very scared ... crazy things, like witches. ... They screamed, ‘Look! Åzrayı̈l [the angel of death] is up in the window’; they talked about the bad things and good things the dead person did; they beat their bodies and said, ‘Now I can hear the bad spirits torturing the dead person’. ... I don’t like büwi, not a nice job actually.23

In some areas, men may actively try to prevent their wives from participating in büwi gatherings. The musicologist Sabine Trebinjac writes of the difficulties of gaining access to what she calls ‘women’s dhikr rituals’ in the late 1980s, and of the women begging her ‘not to tell their

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23. Interview with Aziz, February 2011.
husbands’ of their activities (1995: 67). In my own experience in rural Aqsu, however, the husbands of the büwi I met – also religious men – seemed supportive, respectful, and even proud of their wives’ activities. ‘Of course they support us’, said Fatima, another büwi in the locality, ‘if they don’t want to go to hell!’

Below I give my own description of a large khätmä ritual held in a private home in a village in the Aqsu region of southern Xinjiang in 2009. This ritual is usually held to mark the month of Barat. It lasted nearly three hours and was divided into two roughly equal halves with a short break in between. The first stage consisted of Qur’anic recitation, which they term khät oqup (reading); longer solo sections were interspersed with periods of short, rhythmic, repeated phrases sung or chanted together by all the women. Although the büwi say that this ritual involves a complete recitation of the Qur’an, this is actually a succession of short prayers (du‘a) contained within the Qur’an. The texts emphasize themes of salvation, the Day of Judgment, and the glorification of God, and include prayers for the Prophet.

The ritual was conducted (almost literally in the sense of an orchestral conductor) by the most senior and respected büwi in the locality, the diminutive, vibrant Maryam. Seated in the place of honour at the centre of the back wall, she controlled not only the order of events – leading into new group chants, pointing to various women at other times to perform solo recitation – but also the emotional intensity of the meeting, which grew gradually through peaks and troughs to a climax. Maryam’s opening solo recitation was in every sense ‘performed’: beautifully voiced and pitched, and full of emotion. Shortly into this recitation, Aygul began to weep, and as the intensity grew other women joined her.

Around an hour into the ritual, the women began to recite a dhikr in the Arabic language: a repeated short falling phrase to a rhythmic foursquare beat, and a melody with a narrow range of a third:

Subhan’Allāh wa bihamdihi, subhan’Allāh il adhim’.24

When the rhythm was established, and most of the women were reciting roughly in unison, Maryam gestured urgently and called out, ‘Come

24. ‘Glory to God and I praise him, Glory to God the supreme.’ This is a well-known dhikr, and regarded as a powerful means of alleviating sin. Aygul refers to the explication by Bukhari: ‘Whoever says [the above] a hundred times during the day, his sins are wiped away, even if they are like the foam of the sea.’
close, hold hands. Recite at the same time together, as if with one voice.’ At this signal the women shuffled forward to form a tighter circle around her; the intensity and weeping reached their peak, and one woman began to jerk her body and cry out, ‘Woy Allah! Woy Allah!’ Other women fanned her and restrained her while the chanting continued. At its conclusion all the women rose, still weeping copiously and demonstratively, and moved around the room, embracing each other.

The second stage, termed hikmät, consisted of melodic prayers recited (or sung) in Uyghur, and the classic dhikr chant, Allah hu, which accompanied dancing, first by Maryam’s apprentices, later joined by a few of the other younger women. Maryam sang a melody over the rhythmic chant maintained by the group in the manner of hapiz (reciters) in the male Sufi meeting houses (see Harris 2009; Zhou 1999). Again many of the women began to weep, and another woman fell into a trance-like, affective state. Then Maryam rose to dance while the younger büwi led the chanting. When this chant concluded, Maryam called on different women to recite individual hikmät; then she and her main disciples moved outside while another woman took up the central role, and gave a long prayer in Uyghur to conclude the proceedings.

**Emotion and salvation**

The most striking aspect of the ritual for observers is the emotional intensity, particularly the copious weeping. How might we understand the emotional response of participants to this ritual? As a cultural outsider attending the ritual, I am also deeply affected by it; the emotion is highly contagious. For the participants the ritual is surely a powerful cathartic experience; an opportunity to vent the frustrations and pain of their hard lives. Yet there is clearly much more at play here. The anthropologists Lutz and White argue that ‘emotions are a primary idiom for defining and negotiating social relations of the self within a moral order’ (Lutz and White 1986: 16). They play a key role in shaping action where choices must be made. Emotions are bodily experienced (in the case of shame in European societies, for example, through the involuntary response of blushing), indicating the embodiment of social values. Furthermore, emotional performance in religious ritual symbolically manifests intersections of morality, aesthetics, cognition, and memory in ways that disclose lived social orders and cultural presuppositions.
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Through this practice the women are doing spiritual work on themselves. My research assistant Huriyet, a devout orthodox Muslim woman who was somewhat disapproving of these women but also moved by listening to the video recording, said at the end, when the women all rise and embrace:

This is quite powerful. They are expressing spiritual closeness, solidarity. They are not crying because they feel weak; they are feeling close to Allah, feeling their enslavement to God, so free from enslavement to man … emptied out emotionally, spiritually filled, full of confidence. They feel their prayers have been accepted, they are free from sin; matters will be solved.25

In interviews, the women themselves speak less of the individual benefits and more of the communal ‘work’ done by their ritual practice and their weeping. One woman in our household told me, ‘They weep for our sins; when we die we don’t know if we will go into water or fire’. The büwi describe particular spiritual rewards which come from reciting the proper sequence of prayers and verses from the Qur’an. They make frequent reference to the Day of Judgment. They tell a popular story about the Prophet Muhammad, who was told that one cup of the tears of his followers could quench the fires of hell. For them, weeping is a key part of the efficacy of this ritual, and part of the ‘emotional work’ that they perform for the community.26 The core meaning of this ritual – performed at a key point in the Islamic calendar, the night of Sha’ban in the month of Barat (the month of the Prophet’s death) when the sins and good deeds of all are believed to be weighed in the balance – is the alleviation of individual and communal sin.27

The work of William Christian on public displays of weeping in medieval Spain provides an interesting comparison. He notes that collective weeping in these communities ‘represented collective repentance … of vital practical importance to communities, as well as of spiritual importance

26. There is an interesting parallel here to Hochschild’s (1983) classic discussion of ‘emotional work’ carried out by employees. She describes how flight attendants are called upon (in gender-biased ways) to engage not only in productive activities, but also to project modalities of emotional agency, producing themselves as human emblems of an airline’s ‘friendly skies’.
27. Ildiko Beller-Hann (2001: 15) notes that the fourteenth night of the month of Barat is the occasion when scribe angels sit on a person’s shoulders and record his or her good and bad deeds and weigh them in the balance.
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to individuals. Without it God would not be moved. ... Emotions were serious business’ (Christian 2004: 46). In a study of a closer parallel – the women’s funeral ritual *mevlud* in Turkey in the 1980s – Nancy and Richard Tapper (1987) argue similarly that within the context of these rituals weeping does important work. *Mevlud* are the most important way for the bereaved to help themselves and the soul of the deceased through positive ritual activities. The message of these rituals is that death can be overcome by seeking Muhammad’s intercession with God, and the purpose is often explicitly stated to be the road to salvation or release. Likewise, the *khätmä* is not only a vehicle for attaining individual religious merit, but also an act of intercession for the whole community.

The purpose of the tears, then, seems clear, but what is it that produces them? The key to the efficacy of this crucial ritual in village life arguably lies in the act of listening. In his work on the contemporary Islamic reformist movement in Cairo, Charles Hirschkind (2006) lays particular emphasis on ways of listening and the meanings of sound. Drawing on Foucault’s notion of ‘technologies of the self’, he highlights the ethical and therapeutic virtues of the ear in Islamic thought, arguing that ‘audition is essential to the cultivation of the sensitive heart that allows one to hear and embody in practice the ethical sensibilities undergirding moral action’ (Hirschkind 2006: 9). Central to ethical and therapeutic practices in Islam is listening to the recitation of the Qur’an. As experienced by Muslims over the past 14 centuries, the majority of whom could neither speak nor read Arabic, the Qur’an is primarily sound, not script. This is certainly the case for the majority of Uyghur women with whom I worked. When teaching the basic verses (*hayat*) of the Qur’an used in daily prayers, Subinur does not offer translations, nor even the rough lexical meaning, of the sounds she imparts to learners for them to commit to heart. But this does not mean that these sounds are meaningless: they are imbued with affective power, which, as we have seen, produces culturally meaningful emotions that do critical work within the village community concerning the salvation of souls.

Writing on Qur’anic recitation in contemporary Egypt, Michael Frishkopf (2009) says the experience of recitation is pre-eminently emotional. Many *hadith* reference weeping in response to the Qur’an.

28. A set of procedures by means of which individuals can work on their souls and bodies to achieve a distinct ethical or aesthetic form (Foucault 1988).
Classical treatises even collect the stories of those who have been ‘slain by the Qur’an’, mortally overwhelmed by its sublime sounds (Dammen McAuliffe 2006). Its aesthetic and emotional impact is an important part of its religious authority. In her discussion of *huzn* (Arabic: sorrow) in Qur’anic recitation, Kristina Nelson cites the twelfth-century theorist al-Ghazali: ‘... and when they hear what has been sent down to the Messenger, thou seest their eyes overflow with tears because of the truth they recognize’ (Nelson 2001: 95). Hirschkind argues that this kind of emotional response to the sound of the recited Qur’an is a form of ‘moral physiology – the affective–kinesthetic experience of a body permeated by faith [*iman*]’ (2006: 75). The weeping participants in this *khättnä* ritual are engaged in an ‘ethical performance’, bodying forth the attitudes and expressions proper to the ritual, resonating (re-sounding) the sacred text.

**Accessing external sounds of orthodoxy**

The sounds of their Qur’anic recitation also offer clues to the links between the village world of the *büwi* and the world of transnational Islam. An insight comes from the sharp ears of my research assistant Huriyet. Uyghurs who have access to Islamic education beyond the immediate community – perhaps perceiving themselves as marginal Muslims, far removed from the religious centres of Cairo and Mecca, with a tendency to deviancy which needs to be redressed (cf. Waite 2007) – pay much attention to the rules of *tajwid* – the correct pronunciation and style in recitation.29 Huriyet, an educated Arabic speaker, contrasts the local style (comical) of Maryam with the more impressive, correct performance of Aygul. Aygul herself talks at length about the importance of *tajwid*, and how this communicates the ‘true meaning’ of the Qur’an:

I had a teacher, a woman from my own village. I followed her blindly for two years reciting the Qur’an. ... Then I studied *tajwid* for six months with a mullah from Kashgar, and I learned how to pronounce the ‘dh’ and the ‘h’, and then I understood why we say *bismillah ir-rahman ir-rahim*. ... If you use the letters properly, then the meaning of the Qur’an is not spoiled.

29. *Tajwid* is a comprehensive set of regulations which govern many of the parameters of the sound production in Qur’anic recitation, such as duration of syllable, vocal timbre, and pronunciation (Nelson 2001: 14).

30. Interview with Aygul, August 2009. Aygul is quite consistent with Arab scholarly views on this point. Kristina Nelson (2001: 14) argues that *tajwid* preserves the nature of a revelation
Beyond the rules of *tajwid*, however, there are other less formally recognized aspects of Qur’anic recitation which are more musical, including mode, melody, rhythm, and ornamentation. These musical aspects are key to the affective power of the recitation, and they furthermore link the recitation to place, to schools of practice, even to well-known individual reciters. In 2009, towards the end of the first section of the *khätmä* described above, Aygul recited Sura Al-Rahman (The Beneficent):

(Allah) Most Gracious!
It is He Who has taught the Qur´an.
He has created man:
He has taught him speech (and intelligence).
The sun and the moon follow courses (exactly) computed;
And the herbs and the trees – both (alike) prostrate in adoration.
And the Firmament has He raised high, and He has set up the Balance (of Justice),
In order that ye may not transgress (due) balance.
So establish weight with justice and fall not short in the balance.
It is He Who has spread out the earth for (His) creatures:
Therein is fruit and date-palms, producing spathes (enclosing dates);
Also corn, with (its) leaves and stalk for fodder, and sweet-smelling plants.
Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?

In Aygul’s recitation of this passage, musically speaking we can hear several aspects which link her performance to the widely influential ‘classical’ Egyptian public recitation style. Unlike the local Uyghur style of recitation more commonly employed by *büwi*, she recognizably employs the modes of classical Arabic music; also close to the Egyptian style is the prominent use of melisma at phrase ends, the slow pace, and nasal timbre. Also similar are the audible responses of the participants between phrases: the performances of prominent Egyptian reciters such as Abdul Basit al Samad (readily accessible on YouTube) are punctuated by murmurs and gasps of admiration, while Aygul’s performance is punctuated by muffled sobs and sighs.

whose meaning is expressed as much by its sound as by its content and expression. ... *T*
ajwid links these parameters to the meaning and expression, and indicates the appropriate attitude to the Qur’anic recitation as a whole.’

31. See Nelson’s (2001) excellent study of reciting the Qur’an in Egypt for a full discussion of these issues.
Could this adoption by Aygul of foreign styles of recitation be evidence, as Chinese media claim, of ‘hostile elements outside of [China’s] borders’ carrying out ‘infiltration activities among women’? Michael Frishkopf has conducted a convincing study of the links between recitation style and religious ideology in contemporary Egypt (Frishkopf 2009). He describes how developments in recording technology of the 1960s and 1970s permitted the global spread of the classical Egyptian style. Egypt’s state-owned recording company, SonoCairo (founded in 1964), produced a series of star reciters for worldwide export, including figures like Abdul Basit al Samad. By the mid-1970s, however, a new challenge to this dominant complex of sound and ideology arose. A decentralized mass media system emerged in Egypt, aided by the arrival of cheap cassette technology and the development of a free-market capitalist economy, and Saudi New Islam, whose worldwide spread really began in the 1980s, was widely promoted through cassette recordings of sermons and a new style of recitation which was simpler, faster paced, and without melisma. Frishkopf shows how a distinctive ‘Saudi’ style of Qur’anic recitation sonically and symbolically promotes reformist–revivalist Islamic ideology prevalent in contemporary Egypt. This ideology opposes the traditional mystical–aesthetic values of Egyptian Islamic practice.

Can the same semiotic system be applied to Qur’anic recitation in China, more specifically, in Uyghur society? It might be thought appropriate that the classical Egyptian style with its links to a mystic, Sufi-influenced mode of Islam should be brought into the context of this strongly Sufi-influenced ritual in Xinjiang. But the situation is not so straightforward. In 2012, I discussed recitation style with Aygul. She had learned new styles of reciting from cassettes and VCDs purchased in Ürümchi some years previously. Many such recordings were imported by Pakistani traders during the 1990s and openly sold in town bazaars. The sale of recordings of Qur’anic recitation is currently banned, but they continue to circulate underground. Aygul had learned her recitation of Sura Al-rahman from a recording of Pakistani reciter Sadaqat Ali, a pupil of Abdul Basit who is admired for being one of the few Asian reciters able to perfectly reproduce the classical Egyptian style. We talked about the Saudi style too. ‘Ah yes’, she said, ‘you mean Imam Abdurahman Sudais.33 I’ve learned him too. I’ll recite some for you at our next ritual.’

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33. Sudais, as well as being a prominent reciter in Saudi Arabia, is well known as a preacher who promotes in the global arena, often controversially, the orthodox Islamic doctrine of Wahhabism.
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Aygul interchangeably inserts into the khâtmâ ritual both the classical Egyptian and the new Saudi recitation styles. If we follow Frishkopf’s delineation of style and ideology, her inclusion of the Saudi style is rather extraordinary. This is a style linked to strongly, even violently, anti-Sufi ideology; it preaches above all a direct relationship with God, and as such is strongly opposed to the kind of acts of spiritual intercession in which these büwi are engaged. This kind of disjuncture of sounds and meanings recalls the theorizing of the world music industry in ethnomusicology. In his substantial book, Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination, Veit Erlmann explores how consumers of world music shift the contexts of their knowledge and endow phenomena with significance beyond their immediate realm of personal experience. As disembodied sounds circulate around the globe with increasing ease and rapidity, meanings are detached, and sounds are re-signified (Erlmann 1999: 187–8). I believe we find the same phenomenon in transnational flows of Qur’anic recitation.

The arrival of these styles in rural Xinjiang demonstrates how wider trends in Islam are audibly penetrating remote villages on the fringes of the Islamic world, but the ways in which they are interpreted are strongly localized. Aygul is mimetic in her practice. She absorbs and re-sounds these foreign styles in order to strengthen her religious practice, internalizing and bodying forth the power of this other Islam.34 For her, Egyptian and Saudi styles – far from indexing opposing ideologies as Frishkopf demonstrates in Egypt – are interchangeable, and what they both index is a form of religious practice which is powerfully modern and linked directly to a technologized self:

Now our rituals are even stronger than before. … The government doesn’t like big gatherings of women so there are restrictions, but now we understand better than before, our heads are like computers, more developed.35

This discourse is strongly localized. It is a direct reaction to Chinese state policies, as religious practitioners seek to strengthen themselves in the face of their current marginalization and criminalization at the hands of

34. Cf. Michael Taussig’s rich discussion of mimesis and the paradox of absorbing the Other in order to stay the same (1993).
the state. It also draws directly on prevalent state discourses of development and modernity, even as it deploys the sounds of the Middle East.

Conclusion

It is easy to laugh at the story of the foolish local policeman who thought an elderly lady in a black dress was a suitable target for an anti-illegal religious activities campaign, but this level of ignorance and disregard for individual rights is writ large in the current anti-religious extremism campaign as a whole. This limited fieldwork-based study cannot, of course, attest that extremist forms of Islam are not penetrating the region, but it does indicate the need for a more nuanced understanding of the transnational flows of sounds and ideologies into the Xinjiang region, and their localization within religious practice. Attention to embodied forms of religious practice like those of the büwi may cast light on the contemporary political debate concerning Islam in this region. As Saba Mahmood argues, ‘[I]t is necessary to pay attention to local explanations – the terms that people use to organize their lives are not simply a gloss for universally shared assumptions about the world and one’s place in it, but are actually constructive of different forms of personhood, knowledge, and experience’ (Mahmood 2005: 16–17). A focus on the village soundscape and specifically on ways of performing and ways of listening to Islam provides particular insights into local religious practices. Rural Uyghur women, who occupy the bottom rungs of the social hierarchy, sonically negotiate their status through embodying and re-sounding their religious faith. Their noisy weeping, often taken as a symbol of feminine weakness, enables the efficacy of their rituals, which play a key role within the village belief system, and serves to enhance their status and authority. In order to strengthen their practice they access male conduits of power, learning from male clerics who operate within state structures and outside them, and from the sounds of ‘correct practice’ transmitted into the region via digital technologies.

The khätma rituals are discordant to the modernizing state agenda, but they are not fundamentally oppositional. Likewise, they should not be understood as ‘traditional’; we can hear processes of change and alternative ideologies of modernity sounding at the heart of these rituals. They form part of a very local set of practices and beliefs, and with their Sufi links and role in intercession they are antithetical to fundamentalist
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trends in Islam. They are, however, crucial for these deeply religious local communities, a valuable part of rural women’s expressive culture, and arguably they serve a ‘harmonizing’ function within village society. As a musicologist I hear its value as creative practice, its aesthetic beauty which is a key part of its religious meaning. If different state attitudes towards religious practice prevailed, this could well be put forward to UNESCO as another item of China’s Intangible Cultural Heritage worthy of study and preservation. In an ideal world such practice would be recognized by the state as contributing to rather than undermining the ‘harmonious society’, and yet in recent years surveillance of ritual practitioners has become intense, and the practice has been driven underground. Andrew Eisenberg argues that the sacralizing function of the pious soundscape plays a powerful role in determining the boundaries and characteristics of public space, and sets the stage for spatial politics and the production of insiderness and outsiderness (2009: 121). Where publically audible and visible Islamic practices are outlawed, the pious soundscape is maintained in forms only audible to insiders, parallel to, yet in constant conversation with, the public soundscape which is dominated and controlled by the state.

References


HARMONIZING ISLAM IN XINJIANG


CHAPTER TWELVE

Thinking beyond harmony: The ‘nation’ and language in Uyghur social thought

Eric T. Schluessel

Introduction

‘What do Uyghurs think?’ is a deeply problematic question, yet it is one that a scholar of modern Xinjiang is liable to be asked quite frequently. Whom, exactly, does the questioner mean by ‘Uyghurs’: the people identified by the People’s Republic of China (PRC) as Uyghurs, or those who identify themselves as Uyghur? Within either category, one can readily perceive social cleavages, reflected in outlook and concerns, between urban and rural residents, educated and less-educated individuals, women and men, and those who come from different subregions of Xinjiang (Rudelson 1997). Age, as elsewhere in China, is an important factor in Uyghurs’ opinions (Smith 2000), as individuals’ lived experiences can have exposed them to several different hegemonic discourses produced for their consumption not only by a changing China but by the Soviet Union and its successor states and by pan-Turkic nationalists seeking the unity of Turkic peoples across Eurasia. Since the surrender of the remaining Nationalist forces in Xinjiang and its addition to the Chinese Communist state in 1950, Uyghurs have experienced and taken part in political campaigns such as collectivization, the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, and Reform and Opening Up, along with the accompanying state discourses that were central to these projects. Each of these successive periods has left its traces in memory and worldviews. It is worth exploring the degree to which the Chinese state has colonized the minds of its Uyghur subjects; I do so in this chapter by focusing on the work of Uyghur public intellectuals, those writers who intend in their published work to address and influence popular opinion about society.
Since 2005 when PRC President Hu Jintao announced the new value orientation, the Harmonious Society (Chi.: hexie shehui; Uy.: inaqliq jäm’iyät), the state has again deployed a hegemonic discourse in Xinjiang directed at Uyghurs. Yet, even more so than in China proper, where the idea of ‘harmony’ has been turned ironically against the state and its censorship apparatus, the propaganda seems to be falling on deaf ears in Xinjiang. In this chapter, I explore the articulation of ‘harmony’ in Uyghur scholarly writing and works by public intellectuals and argue that the concept has failed to gain acceptance among precisely those people who are meant to be its conduits into Uyghur popular discourse. Instead, Uyghur intellectuals have continued to pursue a set of concerns about social maladies and their resolution that can be traced back at least to the 1980s. While these concerns arose in dialogue with state discourse and in response to the ‘harmonious society’, they have begun to add a discordant note to the textual chorus conducted by propaganda and censorship, as they ignore or cynically manipulate the concept of ‘harmony’. Whereas in China proper the state is concerned mainly with disharmony arising from economic inequalities, in Xinjiang it refigures harmony in ethnic terms, most especially through the metaphor of language and belonging to a linguistic community. However, while authors writing in Chinese have readily taken up the idea of ‘language harmony’, Uyghur scholars writing in Uyghur barely mention it. I argue that, apart from the general vagueness of the term ‘harmony’, Uyghur intellectuals have rejected the discourse because it is incompatible with the worldview and idea of the process of history that they have developed over the past century.

In order to approach intellectuals’ worldviews and concepts of progress and national development as suggested by their writings, I take as my object of study their depictions of the ‘process of history’ (Chatterjee 1986: 38), the historical understanding of time and cosmology that informs modern and nationalist thought. I think it is clear that the PRC’s leadership takes and propagates a theory of history as a process of unfolding and epochal development, and that such a view is also central to any narrative of national liberation that presupposes the future historical outcome of the liberation struggle. The process of history is therefore both central to the national imaginary and a potential object of comparative analysis.
The conspicuous absence of ‘harmony’

Formulating an answer to the question raised at the beginning of this chapter (‘What do Uyghurs think?’) poses particular challenges, especially in view of the absence of reliable survey data on current issues and the difficulty of conducting fieldwork on popular opinion. Therefore, in order to address this question and do justice to the emic perspective, I have collected a sample of writings from Uyghur public intellectuals from published scholarly and popular journals from 2005 through mid-2012. The sample included six bimonthly literary and cultural periodicals, six scholarly journals of philosophy and social science produced by Xinjiang universities, and the collections of essays by individual writers cited below.1 As scholarly journals in Xinjiang have parallel Chinese-language and minority-language editions, the contents of which can differ greatly, I have also consulted the Chinese versions.

The differences in content and discourse between the Uyghur-language and Chinese-language sources, first of all, are startling: in every case where a university journal produces parallel series in Chinese and in Uyghur, the Chinese-language editions are replete with the language of harmony, while in Uyghur-language editions the term ‘harmony’ (Uy.: inaq) or ‘harmonious’ (Uy.: inaqliq) occurs only rarely, the exception being early 2008, when the ‘harmonious society’ was introduced most forcefully into the Xinjiang propaganda apparatus following occasional references to it in previous years. The discourse is almost entirely absent from Uyghur-language-only publications, even though articles in them regularly draw on other state discourses, notably the ‘scientific development concept’ that Hu Jintao introduced in 2002. ‘Harmony’ is conspicuous by its absence.

Whence the Uyghur rejection of ‘harmony’? Ethnicity may not be the most important factor: one only has to look at the way that ‘harmony’ has become a joke among ordinary Chinese to understand that the term is not taken seriously nationwide. Unlike ‘science’, ‘democracy’, ‘socialism’, or ‘development’, ‘harmony’ in popular Chinese discourse is understood

1. The sample included the following scholarly publications: Shinjiang Universiteti Ilmiy Zhurnili, Shinjiang Pedagogika Universiteti Ilmiy Zhurnili, Qäshqär Ma‘arip Instituti Ilmiy Zhurnalı, Shinjiang İtişma’lıy Pânırlar Münbiri, Shinjiang İtişma’lıy Pânırlı, and Til wä Türjimä. It included the following literary journals: Tarım, Shinjiang Mädâniyîti, Bulaq, Mîras, Tangrîtaq, and Yengi Qashtesî. Chinese publications consulted included: Xinjiang Daxue Xuebao, Xinjiang Shifan Daxue Xuebao, and Yuyan yu Wenzı.
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to stand for no positive ideas. Rather, many Chinese people take it to be an empty slogan that euphemizes censorship and political oppression. One cannot study contemporary China without being aware that, in place of ‘harmony’, Web users frequently type the homophonous phrase ‘river crabs’, since even discussing the word ‘harmony’ might get them ‘harmonized’ – that is, censored. I am not aware of a similar Uyghur pun, which may suggest that even the terminology necessary for this kind of cheeky détournement is by and large absent from the Uyghur-language media that Uyghurs consume.

Uyghur writers, who are familiar with their own literary heritage, as I will discuss below, as well as with the history of Chinese thought, may find little appealing in the Confucian origins of the term ‘harmony’. Unlike in the Soviet Union, where many Central Asian intellectuals came to regard the Russian cultural heritage as part of their own, the PRC has had little success in making the Chinese heritage appeal to some of its minorities. Close cultural links between Uyghurs and Central Asian Turkic Muslims were institutionalized by a Soviet-backed administration beginning in the 1930s, so it should come as no surprise that the older generation especially feels a closer kinship with the Soviet tradition and the model of national modernity it provided (Schluessel 2009). Indeed, it is normal to find translations from Russian authors in Uyghur literary anthologies, but works originally written in Chinese are rarer. ‘Harmony’ is thus presented not as an international or progressive ideal akin to socialism or science, but as a concept linking social and political priorities to essentialized Chinese cultural and therefore nationalist imperatives.

The word ‘harmony’ itself sounds awkward in Uyghur and communicates no immediately clear meaning. Inaq generally describes the idea of getting along well; it does not in itself carry the Confucian cultural and intellectual connotations of hexie. The derivations of inaq include inaqliq (‘harmonious’ or ‘harmony’ [abstract]), inaqlashmaq (‘to be harmonious’), and inaqlashturmaq (‘to cause to be harmonious’, i.e. ‘to harmonize’). A Web search for these words across their morphological paradigms in both the Arabo-Persian script and different romanizations confirms that inaq and its derivations are found almost exclusively on government websites and in contexts where the term has been translated from Chinese. Thinking beyond inaq, there are alternative translations available.
that would more clearly describe a process of accommodation and getting along: qoshulush (‘agreement’) and maslishish (‘mutual suitability’) are both verbal nouns that suggest flexibility and an effort to work together. Older dictionaries give these words, and not inaq, as translations of hexie, but the PRC has not adopted them in official discourse (cf. Peng et al. [1989]1995: 744). Morphologically, the use of inaq and its derivational suffixes indicates a focus not on the social acts of being harmonious, but on the abstract concept. Moreover, to comprehend inaq presupposes an understanding of what the government means by hexie. The term therefore seems pretentious and alien, as it immediately indexes the distance of its meaning – and thus its speaker – from common discourse.

What comes out in translation, then, is not the ideology of ‘harmony’, but the vagueness of the concept. One could call ‘harmony’ a ‘super-sign’, ‘a hetero-cultural signifying chain that criss-crosses the semantic fields of two or more languages simultaneously’ and is actually dependent on that translingualism to have meaning (Liu 2004: 11–13). In introducing a set of vocabulary and ideas across linguistic varieties, the state is attempting to regulate semiotic practices and to establish consciously a hegemonic discourse the form of which presupposes a translingual consciousness. That is, the PRC expects Uyghurs to do the symbolic work to understand ‘harmony’ in and through translation with reference to its significance across ethnic boundaries within a unified China; doing that work is itself a symbolic act of submission to the state and acceptance of its hegemony. To speak of ‘harmony’ as an Uyghur is to express a pan-Chinese identity and complicity and engagement with the state project to construct that identity. If ‘harmony’ is a super-sign, however, it is either an incipient or a failed one. By expecting Uyghurs to handle translation, PRC ideologues forget the ‘thrown-togetherness’ of a symbol, that the term ‘harmony’ presents itself as natural and fully-

2. In place of ‘harmony’, then, one frequently finds the well-established terms ‘unity’ (Uy.: it-tipaqliq, translating Chi.: tuanjie) and ‘stability’ (Uy.: muqimliq, translating Chi.: wending) (cf. Tömür and Yasin 2009). In the wake of the Ürümchi riots of July 2009, stability and unity, rather than harmony, comprised the main discourse deployed in Uyghur-language essays encouraging Uyghurs to remain loyal to the government. It is possible that the ‘harmony’ discourse is being deployed gradually and will only become more pervasive in Xinjiang once the government believes that certain conditions have been met. The terminology appears in Uyghur on propaganda posters and banners, but it is far less common than more familiar exhortations, such as ‘Minorities and Han Chinese depend on each other’ and ‘Construct a civilized Xinjiang’.

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formed but is actually subject to momentary redefinition. This state discourse is not truly hegemonic, since meaning and ideology are not transmitted unproblematically through orphaned items of vocabulary as part of the linguistic signal, but depend on the acceptance both of ideas and of their formal expressions.

A positive outcome of the undersignification of ‘harmony’ is that it provides an opportunity for some authors to present their ideas through the terminology of state discourse without adopting its tenets. Examples of ‘harmony’ in Uyghur scholarly writing are comparatively rare, and they appropriate its meaning in ways that appear either cynical or instrumental. Gülzäpär Muhämmät (2008: 5–7) is one author who has appropriated ‘harmony’ to advance a feminist agenda. The theoretical machinery of ‘harmony’, however, is active in her work only as a metaphor. Her argument relies, firstly, on a smattering of quotations from European writers; secondly, on a series of assertions about psychological differences between men and women; and, thirdly, on an appropriation of the term ‘harmony’ away from its meaning in official discourse and into a context where it stands simply for a notion of feminine peacefulness relative to male rashness. As I will demonstrate below, these three strategies – an eclectic borrowing of Western ideas, psychology, and reappropriation of terminology – comprise the three common threads connecting Uyghur popular intellectual writing.

The emergence of Uyghur nationalist thought

If Uyghur intellectuals are not writing about ‘harmony’, then, what are their concerns? Since the beginnings of modern Uyghur thought in the early twentieth century, the overriding concern of Uyghur intellectuals has been the ‘nation’ (Uy.: millät). Today, millät is used to translate the Chinese term minzu (‘nation, ethnic group’), but the act of translation masks the etymological complexity of both terms. The concept of

3. This is a phenomenon familiar from other parts of China, where scholars often apply state-approved boilerplate to the introductions and conclusions of their works, but leave the content largely unchanged.

4. The term millät has a complex etymology and is difficult to translate. I render it as ‘nation’ here in part because the English term is similarly ambiguous in its scope and claims to territorial and political independence. Millät derives ultimately from Arabic millat, associated with a religious creed. The Ottoman Empire institutionalized millät as a system of governance for different religious communities. In the nineteenth century, millet was increasingly used to communicate the idea of a nation or ethnic group in a range of senses, from the romantic na-
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millät has been at the centre of a range of different national imaginaries, and it will be helpful to review them here. Because the following is the first general history of Uyghur nationalist thought published in English, it is preliminary and directed to the concerns of the present day.

Uyghurs today can look back on a rich history of modernist intellectual and cultural production: from at least the 1910s onward, Uyghur authors have looked abroad for guidance in engaging with modernity as a society, and have implemented plans to bring about modernization in their homeland. Most such figures were idealists in the sense that they were concerned more with psychological or spiritual conditions than with material progress. They engaged with the modernisms then popular in the Turkic and Muslim worlds and wrote literature, translated books, built modern schools, and printed newspapers to spread their ideas.

Central Asian and Tatar thinkers usually referred to as Jadids were also very influential in eastern Xinjiang. The word jadid simply means ‘new’ in Arabic, and Jadidism, broadly construed, referred historically to Islamic modernism, particularly those strains of thought that emerged in the Tatar and Ottoman milieux of the nineteenth century. Beginning in the 1910s, Tatar students of the Jadid poet Abdulla Toqay began to work in the area around Turpan and gradually populated a network of schools throughout northern Xinjiang under the patronage of the trader Mäkhmut Muhiti (1885–1931). It was from these communities that the famous poet Abdukhaliq Uyghur (1901–1933) and the Turkic Islamic Republic of East Turkestan (TIRET, 1933–1934) leader Mahmud

5. The literature on Jadidism has grown quite rich, and a general understanding of the topic of this important strain of thought in the Turco-Muslim world is essential to thinking about Uyghur intellectual history. The now-classic work in English is Khalid (1998: 4–9), and the most thorough discussion to date about Jadidism in Xinjiang is Brophy (2011: 168–221).
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Muhiti (1887–1944) emerged. This group seems to have developed overt ideological affiliations only strategically and not to have articulated a distinct vision of the *millät*, save for its strong emphasis on the importance of the ‘mother tongue’ for the realization of popular, practical education oriented towards industrial skills. Of course, these ideas did not develop in a vacuum, either, but drew on a range of influences from the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds.

To this we may add the presence of Ottoman Idealists, followers of the Ottoman thinker Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924) who came to southern Xinjiang beginning in the 1910s, peaked in their influence at the beginning of the 1930s, and whose ideas continued to impact some circles through the late 1940s. Gökalp’s theory, derived from the sociology of Émile Durkheim and Auguste Comte, holds that the *millät* is not a primordial entity, but rather an emergent psychosocial phenomenon. Gökalp’s ideas motivated the corporatist popular educational movements centred around the ‘Turkish Hearths’ of the late Ottoman period, as well as pan-Turkist literature that aimed to use mythology to spread the ‘ideal’ (Ott.: *mefküre*, Gökalp’s neologism) of nationalism. At least four Ottoman Turks present in Xinjiang during this period are identifiably part of Gökalp’s circle, the best-documented of whom was Ahmed Kemal Ilkul (Habibzade [1925]1996), who established a school in Artush at the invitation of a family of well-travelled businessmen who later employed several other Ottomans at institutions across Xinjiang (Seyit et al. 1997: 23–30). One Kurban Koday pursued pan-Turkic national awakening in Khotan, Keriya, and eventually in northern Xinjiang as well in a career spanning the period from the 1910s through the 1940s. (Turan 1984: 8; Turan 1989: 27–28) Several Uyghurs, including future provincial governor Mäsud Sabri (1886–1952), had extensive contact with Idealists and those who espoused this philosophy. The latter included the Turkestani diaspora community in Turkey, which actively rejected Marxist materialism and so held fast to Idealism long after it had lost favour in Kemalist Turkey. Ottoman Idealism found expression in articles published in the early Uyghur newspapers produced before the fall of the TIRET (1933–1934), and its political programme

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6. The following section briefly summarizes Schluessel (in preparation).
7. For a detailed discussion of Gökalp’s thought, see Parla (1985).
8. For an example of Idealist discourse in the Turkestani diaspora in Turkey, see Kırımer (1937).
influenced educational movements, most notably Turkish-educated activist Məmtəlī Tokhtəjī’s (1901–1937) popular schools and Ottoman-inspired ‘scouts’ (Uy.: izchi). In short, this variety of nationalism was Ottoman modernist, pro-European, and bourgeois in its cultural orientation, rejected the centrality of material progress, and focused instead on education in pursuit of modern consciousness.

At the same time, Chinese nationalist thought was translated into Uyghur. İsa Yusuf Alptekin (1901–1995), later known as a leader of the short-lived East Turkestan Republic and of the Uyghur diaspora in Turkey, published an Uyghur- and Chinese-language newspaper in Nanjing that made its own contributions to Uyghur nationalist thought. The articles in The Voice of Chinese Turkestan, produced under the patronage of the Chinese Nationalist Party, reflect Sun Yat-sen’s ideology based on the Three Principles of the People, translated into Uyghur by way of English. Alptekin’s millät is a translation of Chinese minzu and ideally coterminous with the state – indeed, his texts describe national formation in almost strictly geographical terms. Although it is difficult to know how widely Alptekin’s periodical may have circulated among Uyghurs at the time, his own importance as a nationalist leader is unquestionable.

Finally, as David Brophy demonstrates conclusively, Uyghur nationalism owed its origins in large part to the action of Xinjiang workers’ associations in Soviet Central Asia in the 1920s (Brophy 2011: 222–255). It was there that the ethnonym ‘Uyghur’ first gained its modern currency. Because of these groups’ embroilment in complex politics on both sides of the Sino-Russian border, their shifting affiliations were more instrumental than ideological. This was an under-articulated, perhaps even premature, nationalism, but it was central to the development of modern Uyghur nationalist thought.

Literate Uyghurs, then, had access to a range of different conceptions of nation and nationality in the early twentieth century. The political and military domination of Xinjiang by the Soviet Union in the 1930s and 1940s, however, brought much greater numbers of young people into contact with Soviet ethnological theory. A government-issued pamphlet from 1936 claims to be the first authoritative discussion of the idea of millät in Xinjiang (Abdulla et al. 1936): it first argues against other interpretations of the term, and then explicates the primordialist,
materialist, and teleological theory of national formation then current in the Soviet Union. This was the prevailing theory expressed in official textbooks and propaganda through the early PRC, until the state engaged in the widespread destruction of Soviet-produced materials following the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s. Meanwhile, other streams of nationalism continued to persist in the Uyghur diaspora, including Gökalpian idealism (cf. Rühi 1955).

**Uyghur intellectuals, 1949–present**

The period from the 1950s to the early 1980s in China presents a number of challenges to the intellectual historian, as the demands of the state on culture workers, especially strict censorship and the practical requirement of participation in writers’ unions, changed intellectual production in ways that are difficult to understand without thorough biographical study. During the Cultural Revolution, writers were forced to postpone projects, sometimes for many years. A younger Abdurehim Ötkür (1923–1995) had once collaborated with Mäsud Sabri in writing the novel *Niyaz Qiz* (Turan 1988: 42). Yet, it was only after the Cultural Revolution that he continued to work on historical novels. The events of these decades also broke down regional and intellectual boundaries: internal divisions, such as oasis affiliations, became weaker as people were moved around the region, and, with the conscious effort to eliminate the past, intellectual foundations were shaken. Abdushükür Muhâmmät’îmin (1934–), the editor of several books on philosophy, dramatizes this effect vividly in the finale of a collection of short philosophical and literary vignettes penned between 1967 and 1977 (Muhâmmät’îmin 2000: 241–2): in a chaotic vision, writers familiar from the Turco-Persian world appear alongside mythic and intellectual figures from a range of other traditions. His vision neatly describes the eclecticism of the post-Cultural Revolution intellectual field, exposed to global influences and international currents as well as the uncertainty of how to come to terms with these intellectual trends.

Following this traumatic break with recent intellectual developments, Uyghur writers in Xinjiang began to re-engage not with the modern

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9. Muḥammad Rüḥî was a diaspora author whose works displayed a continuing dedication to the Gökalpian conception of national ‘spirit’ (Ar./Uy.: ḫāl), here reflected in the author’s own pen name.
thought that had emerged and developed in such a complex way through the mid-twentieth century, but rather with pre-modern Turco-Muslim writings. The thinkers of the early twentieth century were not forgotten, and indeed they continue to be memorialized in writing and praised as progressive heroes, but their ideas make almost no clear contribution to new arguments. In the PRC, and particularly since the early 1980s, Yūsuf Khāṣṣ Ḥājib’s *Qutadghu Bilik* (1069/70), Maḥmūd Kāshghari’s *Diwānu l-Lughat at-Turk* (c. 1077), and Alisher Navā’ī’s (1441–1501) Turkic-language works all gained a new status not just as literary classics, but also as repositories of a distinctly Uyghur philosophy.10 The first issues of revived or newly founded Uyghur-language literary and scholarly journals published in 1980 and 1981 universally included lengthy essays on the centrality and importance of these works. Despite the regular publication of still more texts in the journals *Bulaq*, a bimonthly available primarily by institutional subscription, and *Miras*, a literary journal sold in bookstores, most Uyghur writers draw their primary points of reference from this canon, particularly when making comparisons with other, similarly reified philosophical traditions.

One of the earliest examples comes from Abdurehim Ötkür’s 1980 essay, published in the very first issue of *Bulaq*, on Navā’ī’s *Muḥākamat al-Lughatayn* (‘The Judgment of Two Languages’), a polemic that declares the superiority of the Turkic language over Persian (Ötkür 1980). Uyghur writers take his disputation very seriously, as Navā’ī appears to argue passionately for the unique expressive power of Turic vocabulary and morphology. Similarly, the *Qutadghu Bilik* has taken on the role of an Uyghur classic to match ancient Chinese and European thought.11 Older linguists who had extensive exposure to the intellectual currents of the pre-1949 era have generally worked on lexicography and histor-

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10. Although modern Uyghur writers lay claim to the heritage of the historical Buddhist Uyghur states and the art of pre-Islamic Xinjiang, they rarely draw on it as a source of inspiration, suggesting that Islamic intellectual history has been refigured in ethnic terms. Nevertheless, some Uyghurs, following the trend towards an archaeology of national essence discussed further below, hold the opinion that conversion to Islam weakened the Uyghur nation.

11. The *Qutadghu Bilik* belongs to the Persianate genre of didactic literature known as ‘mirror for princes’, while Navā’ī’s *Muḥākamat al-Lughatayn* is a *munazara*, a form of poetry that presents a contest or ‘debate’ between two things and that was particularly important in pre-modern Turco-Persian literature. The suitability of either variety of literature for comparison with a Chinese classic such as the *Daode Jing* or Aristotle’s work on ethics, in terms of genre and methodology, is debatable. Cf. Āmāt (2010) for a commentary on the moral value of the *Qutadghu Bilik* contextualized in terms of European philosophy.
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cal linguistics and avoided social commentary, as in the case of Ibrahim Muti’i (1920–2010), whose writings focused on Kāshgharī’s work and the Turkic languages of medieval Xinjiang.12

Simultaneously, in Uyghur intellectual historiography, the writers active in the early twentieth century have been classified according to the Chinese Communist conception of the stages of China’s modern cultural development, being associated with literary and political trends in distant Chinese urban centres, such as the May Fourth Movement (Dawut 2010). This canon has come to obscure the more complicated intellectual history of the twentieth century, even as some figures from this history have been recast as Chinese Communist heroes. As in the Soviet Union, the term Jadid has been applied variously as a term of derision and of praise, depending on inscrutable political circumstances, and it is difficult to know exactly where one stands as an Uyghur intellectual in relation to one’s forebears. Given the difficult task of discussing the Uyghur intellectual past publicly without fear of censorship and official criticism, it is no surprise that today’s authors refer mostly to the distant and safely apolitical past. The result is an internationalization of Uyghur authors as progressive Chinese heroes and a nationalization of pre-Uyghur authors as uniquely Uyghur.

Contemporary Uyghur social thought

Having introduced the foundations of modern Uyghur public intellectual writing, I will return to exploring contemporary Uyghur social thought. Since the 1980s, and especially since the mid-1990s, a small number of public intellectuals have produced a body of literature on social thought that strives to be systematic, enlightening, and pioneering. Moreover, Uyghur intellectuals aim to create a literature and scholarship that is both national (Uy.: milliy) and ‘global’ (Uy.: dunyawi) (Ablaṭ 2010), uniting the national essence with the apparent chaos of the modern world. Their visions of the process of history, in turn, are consumed by an interested public, mostly comprised of educated Uyghurs.

The writers who are most widely read and influential today come from different backgrounds, but they have all made it their business to comment on society’s ills. One, Abduqadir Jalalidin, originally from Kashgar, is a professor of literature at Xinjiang Normal University. Apart

from several collections of poetry, he has produced Uyghur-language translations of Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Nietzsche 1999), Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, and Plato’s *Dialogues*, as well as many essays on a wide range of topics. From early in his career, he has been interested in making social-theoretical statements: ‘The world of meanings’, he wrote in the introduction to a 1993 collection of poetry, is in ‘constant dialog’ with the ‘world of people’ (Jalalidin 1993). It is not peculiar, in the Uyghur context, for a literature specialist to be an all-around intellectual with a wide range of interests. Indeed, Jalalidin’s work, like that of other Uyghur intellectuals, is philosophical in that it seeks to make fundamental assertions about major questions on the basis of the author’s creative reflections.

Jalalidin’s essayistic work matured over the course of the 1990s. Broadly speaking, he can be characterized as an idealist, in that he asserts the primacy of thought and of ‘knowledge’ in processes of social change. ‘A poverty of knowledge’, he writes, ‘is the reason for political, economic, and civilizational poverty. Every error in history is related to [stages on] that ladder of knowledge’ (Jalalidin 1998a: 54). His purpose, however, is to relate knowledge as a systematic, rational understanding of the world connected indirectly to ‘feeling’, which is a direct, irrational, sensual disposition towards the world, a kind of *Weltanschauung*. Philosophy, then, is the sign of the ‘awakening’ of both ‘feeling-poetry’ and ‘knowledge-science’, which are necessary in equal parts for the ‘complete construction of a civilization.’

To reach these conclusions, Jalalidin quotes a number of Western thinkers as diverse as Emerson and Einstein, whom he believes to be just the sort of systematic thinkers necessary to the development of a *millät*. He characterizes the great poets of the Uyghur literary past as people who once drew their nations forward, but whom people in the present merely ‘worship’ (ibid: 53). Students today, he argues, for all their interest in the arts, have difficulty paying attention to and understanding philosophy, without which a *millät* cannot give rise to great

13. This concern with ‘construction’ in Jalalidin’s work is not the same as that of authors writing on the ‘construction’ of a harmonious society. The latter is a translation from the Chinese *goujian* as *bärpa qilish*, the meaning of which is closer to ‘to establish’, ‘to create’, or ‘to bring about’, and has a very active meaning. Jalalidin’s ‘construction’ is in Uyghur *qurulush*, a passive verb which indicates the more or less natural emergence of internal structure, as in the gradual accretion of a person’s or a nation’s psychological makeup.
historical personalities. Following Nietzsche, he expands on the role of outstanding individuals in bringing about social change in a 1999 essay entitled ‘Where Will We Find the Supermen?’ (Jalalidin 2000). Here, he draws more specifically on the German experience of intellectual development as an example of ideas, but especially ‘national consciousness’ (Uy.: milliy ang), leading the way to development and strength. He then poses the question of why, when so many young Uyghurs are studying literature and the arts, they have been unable to bring about the beginning of a new high culture. His solution is to open up the analytical and creative power of every member of the millät in order to bring forth a new era of thought. This formulation is both individualistic and national, and in this sense resembles Gökalp’s Idealism, even if it lacks a direct genealogical connection to it. Firstly, it reflects a common metaphor of the nation as person, an idea that appears in the author’s memoirs of his time in Japan, an experience that led him to consider his own national identity and come to a sense of national crisis (Jalalidin 1998a: 180–1). Secondly, he connects the individual and the nation on the level of consciousness. Jalalidin’s writings on the crisis of the millät, then, are idealist and hardly mention material conditions at all, contrary to what one would expect from a professor in the PRC today.

This is not to say that Uyghur writers do not draw on Chinese official discourse. When they do, however, they may reinterpret decontextualized statements about China and material progress in idealist terms. Islamjan Sherip’s book Krizis wä Bärpachiliq (‘Crisis and Creativity’) (2001: 1–5) begins with a problematic formulated by Jalalidin in a 1998 essay (Jalalidin 1998b: 293), namely, that the Uyghur people are the heirs to millennia of complex cultural development – they have been simultaneously an island of original civilization, akin to Mesopotamia, and a depository of world culture. In their present state, however, Uyghurs’ ‘creativity’ (Uy.: ijadiyät) has been internally repressed and must be opened up again. Sherip’s solution involves a strange trick of translation: he responds by quoting Jiang Zemin’s 24 November 1998 statement that ‘Creativity is the soul of a nation’ (Chi.: chuangxin shi yige minzu de linghun, my emphasis), which originally referred to the ability of a country to compete in the field of science and technology. Whereas Jalalidin speaks of ‘creativity’ as ijadiyät, which suggests literary production, Sherip translates Jiang’s ‘creativity’ as bärpachiliq, which
implies a will to make things. Sherip thus reinterprets Jalalidin through Chinese, specifically through Jiang Zemin, and thus makes a rare appeal to the authority of official discourse. This allows Sherip to reinterpret all human action as a form of material production (Sherip 2001: 293), even as he reappliies Jiang’s statement to Uyghurs specifically and agrees with Jalalidin’s basic conclusion that ‘talented people’ are the key to the nation’s success.

Although Abdurehim Ötkür is known best for his historical novels published in the 1980s, his first essay appeared in the Xinjiang Daily in 1942, and many more followed (Ötkür 1996: 308). In the late 1980s, he began again to discuss social questions. His 1989 essay, ‘Traditional culture and the development of the millät’, begins with a distinctly idealist statement:

The history of human society has proven that, if a millät that dares to reflect on itself, that is expert at reflecting on itself, has a high level of conscious self-recognition, that millät will be successful and have the chance to create itself anew. Thus it will be able to create the conditions to advance its own development. If it is otherwise, that millät will easily become wrapped up in itself and will fall behind other milläts. (Ibid: 256).

It is difficult to say, however, whether this is a statement about the importance of the ideal of the nation or, instead, a statement about national consciousness in the sense of class consciousness, or even the consciousness of a colonial people in the world capitalist system. Ötkür’s vocabulary is ambiguous, but it includes direct borrowings from Chinese. The rest of the essay is a jumble of ideas. Most of them are explicitly Marxist, referring to the role of geography in the development of a millät and its traditional means of production. Obviously, Ötkür was under great pressure to produce writing that was in agreement with state ideology, but one cannot reject the possibility that, over the course of decades living in the PRC, he had come to accept many of these ideas. Elsewhere, Ötkür refers to the ‘spirit’ (roh) of the Uyghur millät as manifested in tendencies to accept or reject good or bad cultural practices (ibid: 265–7). Like Jalalidin, then, Ötkür finds the crisis of the Uyghur millät in its lack of creative energies in the contemporary world.

It is in this tradition, then, that another contemporary Uyghur intellectual, Äsät Sulayman, proceeds to excavate that spirit of the Uyghur
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millät. In Täklimaghangha Dümlängän Roh (‘The Spirit Buried under the Taklimakan’), his first book, he quotes Ötkür and follows his assertions regarding the importance of historical and geographical circumstances in the formation of a ‘cultural psychology’ (Sulayman 2000: 2–4). His innovation, at least in vocabulary, consists in drawing a distinction between the ‘spirit’ (Uy.: rohiyät, Sulayman’s neologism) of a millät and its ‘intrinsic nature’ (Uy.: mahiyät). The ‘intrinsic nature’ of a millät is unchanging and ‘primordial’, but is itself psychological. Cultural change is reflected in the metamorphosis of the spirit, something that is between Jalalidin’s ‘psychology’ and Hegel’s ‘Spirit’, which Sulayman refers to directly.

The discourse of ‘spirit’ deserves some comment. Sulayman’s ‘spirit’ is distinct from the ‘spirit’ invoked by Gökalp’s Idealists, for whom it stood for an emergent national consciousness. Nor is it ‘spirit’ in Alptekin’s terms from 1932, when it was something like public opinion, nor ‘spirit’ as the common psychological aspects of an ethnic group, as the Soviet-influenced authors understood it. Sulayman refers to Hegel’s ‘spirit’—it is not uncommon for Uyghur authors to make passing reference to Hegel and to the dialectic, but Sulayman is unique in that he takes it up as an analytical tool and narrative device. That is, he takes seriously those things that other authors, Uyghur and Chinese, only refer to without discussion. However, Sulayman’s spirit does not in content or action resemble Hegel’s, but rather the romantic and patriotic ‘spirit’ of Herder that is the cornerstone of so many nationalist movements. Here, Sulayman betrays not only a philological method that recalls Chinese scholarship, but also that one of his central concepts is derived from the Chinese nationalism that animates Chinese Communism. What the discussion of spirit and psychology in these works represents is a reinterpretation of Chinese Communist ideas about national formation, reiterated here in idealist terms in order to deny the centrality of the material or the validity of materialism.

However, Sulayman’s collection of essays, Tarim Qowuqini Chekilgändä (‘Knocking on the Tarim’s Gate’), published in 2002, puts forth a sociology that is dramatically different from that produced by early Idealist thinkers. The Idealists saw the millät as a psychological phenomenon that gains social relevance, a product of conscience that can achieve self-realization in the world. Sulayman, in contrast, unwaveringly depicts
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ethnic groups as primordial entities that must come to recognize their basic faults and contradictions in order to affect progress. Ethnic consciousness is a desirable secondary phenomenon of material conditions; nevertheless, this consciousness is achieved through the excavation of real or material ethnic culture. Sulayman utilizes a recurring geological metaphor in his work to illustrate the structure of national psychology: the spirit or psychology is formed through ‘accretions’ produced by the interaction of two layers closer to the surface of reality, material culture and society (Sulayman 2002: 4).

Having abandoned ‘intrinsic nature’ for a more primordial sense of ‘spirit’, Sulayman begins the work of intellectual excavation. His method is simultaneously philological and penitent. He works through the accounts of the European explorers who once visited Xinjiang and observed its people, and notes their universal condemnation of the backwardness of the natives. Przhevalskii’s impressions of the primitiveness of the inhabitants of Lop Nor become a metaphor for the actual cultural state of the whole Uyghur people. The process is reminiscent of the ‘investigation of principle’ pursued by Neo-Confucian scholars, particularly of the school of evidential learning, who searched through old texts to discover the essential truth of a matter. Sulayman borrows a peculiar metaphor to talk about Xinjiang as a place: he calls it the ‘chamber of penitence’ (Uy.: istigpar hujrisi), borrowing the title of Republican-era Xinjiang governor Yang Zengxin’s (1867–1928) collected writings, Records from the Studio of Rectification (Chi.: Bugu zhai Wendu) (Sulayman 2002: 6, 28).14 He also refers to Xinjiang as the ‘Chamber of the Seven Sleepers’, simultaneously evoking not only the ancient pilgrimage site with pre-Islamic origins in Tuyoq, near Turpan, but also Lu Xun’s metaphor of the people asleep in the iron box in ‘Diary of a Madman’, a short story universally familiar to Chinese citizens.

Sulayman develops his sociology through a kind of social psychology of the nation. A 1999 essay entitled ‘A psychological diagnosis of the structure of contemporary Uyghur psychology’ (ibid: 348–71) presents an interesting adaptation of Marxist dialectical materialism in idealist language: the world is entering a new era, which requires every millât to

14. Sulayman’s translation of the Chinese buguo (‘rectification [of the self]’) as Uy.: istigpar (Ar.: istighfār, ‘request for forgiveness’) is another example of the peculiar politics of translation between Uyghur and Chinese across both languages and cultures.
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engage in a critical self-assessment and face the internal contradictions that bring them to the edge of revolution. Sulayman defines these contradictions in terms of a reified cultural complex, part of which is essential: ‘The sunken stratum of a millät’s culture necessarily constitutes the hidden internal essence of that millät’s psychology’ (ibid.: 353). Uyghur national psychology, he writes, has been shaken, and its ‘balance’, which he leaves undefined, has been upset by the imposition of movements for international cultural unity in China and Central Asia (ibid.: 357). This has given the non-essential stratum of Uyghur psychology a ‘passive’ character that he defines elsewhere as both ‘Oriental’ and ‘feminine’ (Sulayman 2000: 4). Indeed, given Sulayman’s frequent reference to such Chinese modernist touchstones as Lu Xun’s self-deceiving ne’er-do-well Ah Q, as well as the sense that the encounter with the foreign is a moment of crisis, it seems that he may have appropriated the Chinese narrative of national humiliation for the Uyghur people as well.

In his later work, Äsät Sulayman further develops the question of the relationship or ‘dialogue’ between the Uyghur people, homeland, and the world. While his earlier writing does not articulate a theory of nationality outside of the historical process of national formation as it is usually advanced in China, Özlük wä Kimlik (‘Ego and Identity’) (Sulayman 2006), a memoir of a year’s research in Sweden that achieved remarkable popularity in Xinjiang and continues to be printed, reconsiders this position. Like Jalalidin, Sulayman found his ideas of nationality and ethnicity challenged by his experience of life in a foreign country. As in his earlier work, however, ‘dialogue’ does not describe the content, but rather the theme of the book, as he finds commonality with other immigrants and, feeling obliged to constantly explain his own hybrid identity, begins to see identity as variable and constructed in the process of observation. Where Sulayman previously found national essences in archaeology, he now perceives the role of other forces in shaping national identities, particularly print culture. Still, he writes in terms of cultural essentials and national ‘character’; ultimately, the dialogue is more about coming to a more complete understanding by gaining knowledge of another culture.

One contemporary writer, Setiwaldi Kerim, inherits some of the ideas of the Idealists. Kerim, a schoolteacher in the city of Artush, is defensive of Mämtili Tokhtaji’s legacy, and he perceives a crisis of Artush’s local culture in the loss of the old spirit of educational reform. In his 2000
essay *Dāz Kātkān Ānggūštār* (‘The Cracked Diamond Ring’) (Kerim 2000: 54–76), he presents education and trade as a pair of jewels that once informed the traditions of Artush’s culture and granted its people a special place in Uyghur society (ibid: 56). Kerim articulates a need for the people of Artush to rediscover their traditions in their true form and so regain that position (ibid: 76). Like Sulayman, Kerim speaks of culture as a multi-layered system, as well as one with distinct origins, although not in a primordial *millāt*, but in the thought and practices of certain spheres of cultural activity: while a series of modernist educational movements have produced a strong educational culture in Artush (ibid: 62), economic globalization has weakened the area’s economic culture (ibid: 57). In order not to ‘fall behind’ other peoples, a point that Māmtīli himself once expressed in poetry (Alp Tēkin 2000: 3), both of these cultural roots must be revived and treasured again through proper education.

From the sprouts of modernism among pre-Communist Uyghur thinkers to its more tentative expressions today, both connections of intellectual authority and disjunctures of perspective are apparent. Throughout, the texts of the Turco-Persian tradition have remained icons of a golden age of national literature ready to be revived. The pre-revolutionary era is remembered by many as a second period of florescence in Uyghur thought, and the textual records reflect the expression of a range of ideas. Uyghur authors from the early twentieth century are revered selectively. Yet, those who survive from the early days have changed their stances significantly. Their identities from before 1949 or 1966, as well as their literatures, are suppressed, while their stature as writers remains. It would be difficult to demonstrate a clear connection between the social thought of the 1930s and that of the 2000s, but perhaps a trace of anti-materialism lingers on in contemporary intellectuals’ predilections. Across the century, one common theme in Uyghur social thought has been the centrality of language and education to ethno-national survival; I will focus on this issue in the next section in order to tease out some of contemporary Uyghur intellectuals’ more specific concerns and proposals.

‘Harmonious language’: an official discourse

Before discussing Uyghur writers’ ideas about language, it is reasonable to consider the discourse currently promoted by the PRC and XUAR
governments. Since 2004, when the XUAR announced a new policy of 'bilingual education', language politics have taken on a disproportionately important role in policymaking and public opinion (see also Hann, ch. 7 in this volume). In China, generally with specific reference to Xinjiang and Tibet, language policy has been shoehorned awkwardly into the 'harmony' framework: language, the argument goes, is the basic tool of human communication. Therefore, in order to create a harmonious society, it is first necessary to bring about a 'harmonious language environment' nationally, regionally, and locally (Chen 2007: 119).

The formulation of ‘language harmony’ first appeared in a 2005 article by Zhou Qingsheng, an influential scholar of minority language policy (Zhou 2005: 24–6). His argument is based, firstly, on Chinese exceptionalism, the uniqueness of the Chinese linguistic situation and tradition of thought about language; secondly, on the need to allow free-market economic forces to determine the value of a given linguistic variety; and, thirdly, on the idea that every language has its assigned place in a society, which the state is responsible for maintaining according to the needs of the market. Language harmony, then, means mobilizing different social groups on the basis of linguistic competencies through state capitalism. Moreover, Zhou defines a ‘harmonious’ relationship in this context as one in which one party yields to another; the idea of ‘harmonious language’ euphemizes the subordination of minority languages to Mandarin Chinese. This formulation, which departs from official ideology but perhaps reveals the intentions behind it, has practical implications both regionally, where this idea stands for a continued policy of teaching through Mandarin language to non-Han Chinese, and in the classroom itself, where teachers are instructed to create ‘harmonious’ language environments for student interaction in order to minimize ethnic tensions.

The notion came into official usage in Xinjiang in 2007, where it first appeared in the official record in a speech made by XUAR Chairman Nur Bäkri at that year’s meeting of the directors of the XUAR Language Committee (Baikeli 2007: 3–8). In this speech, Nur Bäkri reiterates the freedom of all minorities to use and develop their mother tongues as stated in the 1982 Constitution, but declares that ‘the social function of each language differs greatly according to history, geography, and distribution of its population’. The vision of harmony in language is superficially one of a great social machine in which each part has its purpose, but it is
difficult to say what the function of a given minority language might be when compared to that of Mandarin Chinese, the official language of the entire country, the native language of the majority of its population, and a variety that the PRC hails as the key to the advancement of knowledge and development in minority areas. ‘Language harmony’, then, differs from the ‘scientific view of development’ paradigm only in its formal justifications for value judgments regarding language. Previously, government officials and many academics in China described languages as bodies of knowledge reflected in lists of vocabulary, as expressed in utilitarian statements that Chinese ‘contains more information’ than minority languages (Dwyer 2005: 37). ‘Language harmony’ takes a corporatist position whereby linguistic varieties stand for distinct social solidarities, and acts simply as a rubric for the differential valuation of linguistic varieties.

From the sample of Uyghur- and Chinese-language journals consulted for this study, it appears that official discourses are overall much more pervasive in Chinese-language work. That is, while a certain number of articles in either language are overtly written using the terminology and framework of current ideology, the proportion of Chinese-language articles written in this way is much higher. This suggests either tighter official control of the message in Chinese-language media than in Uyghur-language media or the greater complicity of Chinese scholars in transmitting and normalizing ideology. Uyghur authors use the expression ‘harmonious language’ and all that it implies when writing in Chinese; the division is a linguistic one, not an ethnic one. Indeed, I have only encountered this exact expression in Uyghur journals in translations from Chinese of speeches made at government meetings. One could conjecture that ‘language harmony’ is an expression that seems alien or inappropriate to intellectual writing in Uyghur. But why would that be the case? Uyghur writers have certainly adopted much from Chinese-language work. As I will show in the next section, the discursive space of language and education is already occupied by a vigorous Uyghur-language written conversation – perhaps it leaves no room for new and awkward conceptions of language’s role in the process of history.

**Language in Uyghur writings on society**

Uyghur public intellectuals today also hold to the idea that the Uyghur nation and its fate are inextricably linked to the institutions of language.
Yet, their ideas seem completely dissociated from official discourse and the very notion of ‘harmony’. The most direct contemporary critic of language policy in Xinjiang, and perhaps the most influential, is Ilham Tokhti (1942–), a Minzu University professor originally from Artush whose reasoned criticism of ethnic policy has earned him domestic admiration and international attention. His now-revived website, *Uyghur Online*, includes a category devoted to ‘bilingual education’. The theme in Tokhti’s criticism is familiar from other Uyghur public intellectuals: although he never denies the status of Uyghurs and of Xinjiang as constituent parts of China, he avoids the issue of Chinese exceptionalism entirely and casts Uyghurs as a nation on a par with any independent, self-realized modern nation globally (Tu-he-ti 2012). He engages in an international discourse, as many Uyghur intellectuals aspire to do.

Setiwaldi Kerim presents a dramatic allegory of language loss and liberation through his own experience with brain damage, which caused him to lose the ability to talk. He draws an explicit parallel between the individual and the nation: ‘In today’s world, whether a person or a millät, in order to guarantee one’s own ability to stand firmly, one must work for the purpose of liberating oneself’ (Kerim 2000: 118). He comes to see his own struggle to regain the power of speech as a metaphor for a mute people who have forgotten their mother tongue (Uy.: *anta til*), and draws inspiration from the story of Mämtili, who himself had difficulty in becoming a good orator, as well as the lives of Hitler and Helen Keller – again, Uyghur intellectual tastes are quite eclectic. He frames his gradual recovery as a ‘rescuing’ (Uy.: *qutquzush*); similarly, Uyghurs will be liberated, he asserts, when they too find their voice and remember how to speak their language.

Others see language, as expressed through the lexicon, as symptomatic of intellectual deficiencies. In a 2010 essay, one writer singles out Sulayman’s *Özlük wä Kimlik* as an example both of the tendency for Uyghur public intellectuals to generalize personal experience and to create impenetrable neologisms or borrow indiscriminately from archaic Arabo-Persian vocabulary (Oghuzkhan 2010: 2–19). This writer’s background is clearly different from that of most popular writers: he is an official at an electrical power station, and he writes in the language of epochal material progress while criticizing the widespread characterization of poets as leading figures in society. Oghuzkhan argues for the
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primacy of ‘science and technology’ in the liberation and success of a nation. Still, his proposed solution for the ‘poverty of thought’ he observes relies on the awakening of consciousness and greater self-criticism when it comes to word choice, both among intellectual elites and those who consume their writing. Nevertheless, Yalqun Rozi, a well-established scholar and contributor to such periodicals, issued a strong rejoinder in the following issue (Rozi 2011: 31–32). Rozi asserts, contrary to Oghuzkhan, that science and technology are not always capable of solving society’s central problems, including the problem of personal and national freedom. Rather, he writes, people have surpassed the era of physical illness in an era of ‘spiritual illness’ that can only be attenuated through psychological satisfaction.

Apart from these more prominent writers, others regularly advance pet theories and recommendations concerning the future of the Uyghur language. These ideas similarly reflect, on the one hand, the lack of a single coherent ideology among secular authors and, on the other, the tendency of Uyghur intellectuals to produce new interpretations of ideas from Chinese-language literature or to invent new ones outside of established Chinese paradigms. Some of these are quite novel, such as one linguist’s suggestion to represent gender graphically, as is done in Chinese, when writing Uyghur, a language in which gender is not otherwise marked (Zunun 2005: 38). This sparked a debate as to which diacritics ought to be employed. Others are concerned with the revival or purification of the Uyghur lexicon; their proposals recall the national language movements of the early twentieth century.

Conclusion

Popular Uyghur intellectual writings in Xinjiang reflect a complex and eclectic field of ideas about society and progress to which interested readers have access. It would be difficult to argue that the corpus of contemporary Uyghur intellectual writing represents a coherent or innovative school of thought. Yet, these texts are interesting for their expression of ideas of what it means to write as an intellectual, particularly the sense of a duty to address social problems. From this mélange of ideas grasping for a philosophy, it is possible to discern two general concerns: firstly, there is a sense of crisis in Uyghur society, or at least among those who read and produce these texts, that comes both from a feeling of loss
and distance from the past and from a lack of direction for the nation. The writings discussed here reflect a desire to engage with the outside world on an equal footing and as part of a community of nations, but they also indicate that Uyghur authors feel inadequate or ill-equipped to do so individually or as members of a nation. Secondly, the proposed solutions rely on a modernist vision of progress that is primarily idealistic: public intellectuals diagnose Uyghurs’ problems as psychological or creative. They express, therefore, that what Uyghurs need most is a higher level of education through the medium of the Uyghur language and ‘international’ languages, and that such a change would produce a greater number of heroic artistic figures capable of driving the nation into a new era of cultural florescence.

This is not to say that Uyghur public intellectuals are strictly idealist in their outlook; rather, their ideas have emerged in a period when Chinese official discourse provides a mixture of Marxism and nationalism that often blurs the distinction between materialist and idealist theories of progress. What has happened in the Uyghur case is that contemporary intellectuals have tried to create something new out of the components provided by a Chinese education. Despite the close alliance of this new discourse with the official dogmas of the recent past, Uyghur writers have come to treat it as something distinct – external to PRC dogma, if not strictly opposed to it. Materialist writers who affirm the official stance on ethnic issues are common, of course, but they do not seem to enter into the debates in the pages of the Uyghur periodicals and books examined here.

Although both the new Uyghur intellectual discourse and the official stance on progress are overtly concerned with education, the ideal forms and goals of that education are entirely different in the two cases: the PRC’s plan for education, even as presented through the framework of ‘harmony’, is basically aimed at the creation of a single national community coextensive with the state through the erosion of linguistic boundaries and devaluation of creative production in favour of culture-neutral material progress. Uyghur public intellectuals, in contrast, envision a national community brought to its full cultural development through self-reflection, national and personal confidence, and literary production in the native tongue. These two stances reflect sets of radically different values, as well as interrelated but distinct understandings.
of the process of history. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that they coexist on the page, but never interact meaningfully in text – each has its function, as it were, in a harmonious society. Perhaps this disjointedness is the authentic expression of harmony or its absence.

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