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The Ethnogenesis of the Uighur

DRU C. GLADNEY

Past studies of the peoples of Xinjiang have often been marred by over-attention to geopolitical manoeuvrings on the Inner Asian frontiers, to the neglect of the complex identities of the multi-ethnic players in that game.¹ Minority nationality studies have generally examined ethnic change in terms of Han cultural assimilation, or "sinification" as it has often been termed (Dreyer, 1976, pp. 264-265; Lal, 1970).² Yet, despite over one hundred years of varying degrees of political incorporation, these people have not only retained much of their ethno-religious identities, but new expressions of identity have evolved in interaction with nationality policy and socio-economic change. The peoples of Inner Asia have been particularly resistant to Han cultural assimilation, even as Xinjiang itself has been brought fully into the Chinese nation-state.³

Traditional approaches to the study of Inner Asian history and ethnography generally accepted the often state-imposed categories around which the peoples who populate the frontier were labelled, numbered and organised. Drawing upon outmoded ethnicity theories and accepted cultural configurations, few of these works fully considered the shifting nature and created identities of the peoples concerned. Following Hobsbawm's (1983, pp. 1-14) insightful analysis of the "invention of tradition" by groups of people seeking to define themselves and be re-defined by local powers of domination, in this article the ethnogenesis of the Uighur is analysed as a rather recent ethnic collectivity re-created in dialectical interaction with imagined historical traditions and modern geopolitical necessities.

Classic surveys of Xinjiang's complex history during the "Great Game" era by Lattimore (1950) and Whiting and Sheng (1958), which portrayed Xinjiang as either "pivot" or "pawn", neglected to reflect deeply upon the shifting nature of those most affected by the geopolitical machinations which took place in their neighbourhood, analysing the Uighur, Kazakh, Dungan (Hui), Han and other so-called groups as socially quantifiable populations inhabiting the complex ethnographic landscape. Recent research on Uighur history

and ethnicity theory will be employed to argue a re-assessment of the very nature of these ethnic categories themselves, and thus the way we have viewed them in the past and the present, in historical accounts, ethnographies, geopolitical analyses, and tourist brochures.

THE POLITICISATION OF INNER ASIAN ETHNONYMS

The generalised acceptance of the ethnonym "Uighur" was most dramatically problematised for me in the Turkish capital of Istanbul. Just south of the Old City along the Marmaris Sea in the Zeytin Burnu district, a close-knit collection of housing developments, leather factories and small shops is inhabited primarily by 1940s migrants from what is now the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous district of northwest China. One rarely hears any of these terms, however, when ethnic origins are discussed. "I am a Kashgarlik", is the general formula, "from the oasis of Kashgar". Other ethnonyms include: Turfanlik, Khotanlik, Aksulik, or additional native place terms indicating the oasis towns surrounding the Tarim Basin and the Taklamakan Desert.⁴ While travelling in Turkey, one student asserted she was from "Turkestan", though her home is in Urumqi, and she is identified by the Chinese state as a member of the Uighur nationality. This ambiguity recalls the well-known statement by Bartold:

When you ask a Turkistani what his identity is, he will answer that he is, first of all, a "Muslim", then an inhabitant of such or such city or village . . . , or if he is a nomad, member of such or such tribe (in Shahrani, 1984, p. 27).

At the same time, statistics published by population bureaus make explicit reference to a well-defined people referred to as the Uighurs, numbering almost six million (Banister, 1987, p. 322; Population Census Office, 1987, p. 28; Zhongguo, 1981). The Uighurs are listed as the second largest of ten Muslim peoples in China, primarily inhabiting the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (see Table 1).

Uighurs in Xinjiang often make reference to their long-term origins in that place. While visiting the Astana tombs in Turfan recently, a local Uighur official of the Chinese International Travel Service said:

The Uighur people are the descendants of a high civilisation of Central Asian nomadic people who had a kingdom based here in Turfan. The elegant paintings and wrapping in this tomb date to the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.) and are comparable in beauty and sophistication. A mummy in the Xinjiang Provincial Tombs also found in this area dates over 6000 years old and

proves the Uighur people are even older than the Han Chinese (personal interview).

Table 1. Population of Muslim minorities in China and Xinjiang

Minority ethnonym	Location	Language family	1982 census population	Population in Xinjiang
Hui	All China, esp. * Ningxia, Gansu, Henan, Xingjiang, Qinghai, Yunnan, Hebei, Shandong	Sino-Tibetan	7,219,352	570,788
Uighur	Xinjiang	Altaic (Turkic)	5,957,112	5,949,661
Kazakh	Xinjiang, Gansu, Qinghai	Altaic (Turkic)	907,582	903,370
Dongxiang	Gansu, Xinjiang	Altaic (Turkic)	279,397	—
Kirghiz	Xinjiang, Heilongjiang	Altaic (Turkic)	113,999	112,979
Salar	Qinghai, Gansu	Altaic (Turkic)	69,102	—
Tajik	Xinjiang	Indo-European	26,503	26,484
Uzbek	Xinjiang	Altaic (Turkic)	12,453	12,433
Baonan	Gansu	Altaic (Mongolian)	9027	—
Tatar	Xinjiang	Altaic (Turkic)	4127	4106

* Listed in order of size.

Source: 1982 Census (*Minzu Tuanjie*, 1984).

Many Uighurs in Turfan and Kashgar argue persuasively that they are the autochthonous people of this region. The fact that over 99.8 per cent of the Uighur population are located in Xinjiang, whereas the other Muslim peoples of China have significant populations in other provinces and outside the country, contributes to this important sense of belonging to the land. The Uighurs continue to conceive of their ancestors as originating in Xinjiang, claiming to outsiders that "it is our land, our territory" (Mann, 1985, p. 10), despite the fact that the early Uighur Kingdom was based in what is now Outer Mongolia and the present region of Xinjiang is under the control of the Chinese state.

Inner Asian historians also generally trace the origins of the present Uighurs to the formerly nomadic, then settled oasis-dwelling people who spoke a Turkic dialect and formed the Uighur Kingdom based in Karakhoram, 745–840 A.D. (Mackerras, 1972; McMillen, 1979; Sinor, 1969, pp. 113–122; Schwarz, 1984, pp. 1–26; Zhongguo, 1981, p. 174). Professor Geng Shimin, the pre-eminent Chinese Turkologist, argues that the Uighur identity did not coalesce until the 15th century (Geng, 1984, p. 13). Yet the foremost Japanese Inner

Asian historian, Professor Toru Saguchi, states that the term “Uighur” was not used to refer to the present people under discussion until 1935 (Saguchi, 1978, p. 62). This leaves a 500 year gap in the use of the term Uighur to denote a people who most have assumed to have existed for at least 1200 years of Inner Asian history. The designation most likely was revived by Soviet advisors in Xinjiang in the 1930s, fresh from their experience of making official designations of the Soviet Central Asian population.⁵ In his history of Xinjiang, Jack Chen stated:

At a conference of emigrants from the Tarim Basin held in Tashkent in 1921 after the Russian October Revolution, it was proposed that the name “Uighur” be taken to denominate all the groups of those people who had been known hitherto by names of the localities where they lived — Kashgarlikhs, Aksulikhs, Lobniks, etc. This name was generally adopted in 1934 by the then Sinkiang provincial government. So for the future as we follow their fortunes over the next thousand years we shall refer to them by their new modern name — Uighurs (Chen, 1977, p. 100).

This approach is typical of modern nationality studies which subsume a vast amount of ethnohistorical and socio-political complexities under the current officially designated ethnonym for a specific people.⁶ Rewriting the history of subject peoples is common practice for regimes in power, but it is the recreation of tradition in response to the official historical interpretation with which this paper is concerned.

In addition to the shifting use of the term “Uighur,” and its disappearance and revitalisation after 500 years, the people referred to by that name are now primarily identified as a “Muslim” people (see Zhongguo, 1981, pp. 174–194). Yet a brief look at the history of the Uighurs will reveal a transition from traditional Central Asian shamanistic nomads, to Manichaeism, then Buddhist and Nestorian Christian believers. From the 10th to the 15th centuries, the term “Muslim” designated all those peoples who were specifically not Uighur, as the term Uighur specifically referred to those Buddhist and Nestorian oasis dwellers of the Tarim Basin who did not convert to Islam until the mid-15th century (see below).

Uighur identity as traditionally conceived, whether cultural, historical, religious or linguistic, relies on notions of ethnicity and identity that are inadequate to account for this shifting identity of the Uighurs. These approaches to ethnicity generally fail to take into account the most important development throughout the course of ethnic change in Inner Asia: the interaction of the state with the nomadic steppe peoples and the changing oppositions they entail. As we trace the evolution of Uighur identity, from steppe nomad tribal

confederation, to settled semi-nomadic kingdom, to dispersed oasis traders, and finally, to a minority nationality of the People's Republic of China, we find a story of ethnogenesis that reveals much about minority-state relations and ethnic identity in the modern nation-state.

UIGHUR ETHNOGENESIS AND THE RISE OF THE NATION-STATE

Ethnogenesis refers to the emergence of higher-order ethnic collectivities where once there were disparate peoples or dispersed populations (Bentley, 1983, pp. 7–9). Past discussions of ethnic change and identity have tended to be polarised between positions arguing for a cultural-primordial identity and those advocating a purely circumstantial, situational or politically based ethnic identity.⁷ Most theorists now conclude that ethnicity cannot be reduced to purely interest-based or primordial action, but must involve a combination or dialectical interaction of the two main aspects of ethnicity: culturally defined notions of descent and socio-political circumstance (see Keyes, 1981, p. 28). Generally absent from these discussions of ethnic change is the important role of the state in determining the context and content of modern ethnic identity. For our understanding of the transition from Buddhist steppe empire to minority nationality, the influence of the Chinese and Soviet states in Central Asia on Uighur identity is most important.

Before the rise of the nation-state, ethnic identity was not as salient for social interaction and discourse (see Francis, 1976, p. 114; Horowitz, 1985, pp. 291–293). Modern ethnicity theorists have elaborated on the important role of the state in superseding local or cultural interests for defining ethnic groups. Keyes (1984), in his seminal discussion of ethnic group relations in nation-states, argued that since the modern nation-state is predicated upon the basic idea of the nation, the ruler–subject relation is transformed to one of government by the idea of consent by the people. Whether the people have a significant role in governance is not at issue for ethnic identity. Rather, it is the notion that there are peoples requiring identification and representation that is crucial. At the founding of the Soviet and Chinese nation-states, the identification, and to a certain extent, re-creation of these peoples for the purpose of conducting national censuses and consolidating dominion were at the top of the ruling party's agenda.⁸

The vast majority of instances of ethnogenesis from undefined and loosely affiliated groups that later became fully fledged ethnic

collectivities have occurred in the context of incorporation into and identity within a larger nation-state, often dominated by another ethnic group. These ethnic identities form and reform according to articulated hierarchies of interaction with the particular oppositional power in question. Evans-Pritchard's (1940) study of the Nuer in Africa was the first to point out the unique expansive–contractive nature of hierarchical segmentary lineages among acephelas nomadic societies. When the Nuer were threatened by an outside force, they unified and organised to a high degree of political complexity in order to respond to the challenge. When the menace subsided, they diversified and atomised. While the Uighurs have at times in their history been unified for particular socio-political purposes, for the most part the people now known as the Uighurs were scattered among disparate oases and tribal confederations. Out of opposition to other tribal confederations, and most notably the Chinese state, the people recognised as the Uighurs emerged.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE UIGHURS

While a collection of nomadic steppe peoples known as “Uighurs” have existed since before the 8th century, this identity has changed and evolved through radically changing socio-political contexts. The ethnogenesis of the Uighurs is best understood as a gradual evolution through successive stages of interaction with the Chinese nation-state. Like the Xiongnu, who developed perhaps the first nomadic dynasty in reaction to the Qin-Han unification of China, Barfield (1989) has shown that establishment of the Uighur Kingdom, and their migration from the steppe to the oasis from the 7th to the 9th centuries, took place in reaction to the unification of the Chinese Empire under the Sui and Tang dynasties. In an informative summary of early Chinese sources, Geng (1984, pp. 1–6) traces the encounters by explorers and pilgrims with settled Central Asian populations from the Han to the Sui dynasties. It is not until the fall of the Turkic Khanate (552–744 C.E.) to a people reported by the Chinese historians as *Hui-he* or *Hui-hu* that we find the beginnings of the Uighur Empire described by Mackerras (1972). At this time the Uighurs were but one collection of nine nomadic tribes who initially, in confederation with other Basmil and Karlukh nomads, defeated the Second Turkic Khanate and then dominated the federation under the leadership of Koli Beile in 742 (Sinor, 1969, p. 113). As William Samolin, following the Tang histories, observes:

The term Uygur is usually employed as a political rather than a tribal or territorial designation. Later it was used as a linguistic designation to

distinguish one form of Old Turkish. Later the Chinese used Hui-hu, originally Uygur, for Muslim. This served to add to the confusion. Strictly speaking, the tribal confederation which succeeded the Turkish dynasty of the [Orkhon] Inscriptions in 742 and possessed itself of the Ötökän refugium became generally known as Uygur after the seizure of power (Samolin, 1964, p. 73).

Gradual sedentarisation of the Uighurs, and their defeating the Turkic Khanate, occurred precisely as trade with the unified Tang state became especially lucrative (Mackerras, 1969). Samolin (1964, pp. 74–75) argues that the stability of rule, trade with the Tang and ties to the imperial court, as well as the growing importance of establishing fixed Manichaean ritual centres contributed to a settled way of life for the Uighur tribes. The high Uighur civilisation that became, in Barfield's (1989) words "a bridge between the world of the nomads and surrounding civilisations", resulted from their raising the extortion of the Tang state, what the Chinese historians justified as "tribute" to a fine art. It was in the Uighur Empire's interest to assist the Tang state in order to maintain a profitable relationship — the Uighurs were more interested in exploitation than expansion. Sedentarisation and interaction with the Chinese state were accompanied by socio-religious change: the traditional shamanistic Turkic-speaking Uighurs came increasingly under the influence of Persian Manichaeism (Lieu, 1985, pp. 178–201; Sinor, 1969, pp. 114–115). Trade and military alliances with the Chinese state developed to the extent that the Uighurs gradually adopted cultural, dress and even agricultural practices of the Chinese (Mackerras, 1972, p. 37).⁹

Conquest of the Uighur Mongolian capital of Karabalghasun by the nomadic Kirghiz in 840, without rescue from the Tang, who had perhaps become threatened by the wealthy Uighur Empire, led to further sedentarisation and crystallisation of Uighur identity. According to Geng (1984, p. 6), the Uighurs were dispersed across China into three main branches: one collection of thirteen tribes fled southeast from the Mongolian steppes to just beyond the Great Wall and then later disappeared from historical record, presumably assimilating into the Northern Han population (Sinor, 1969, p. 116). The rest of the Uighurs, composed of some fifteen tribes, dispersed west and southwest from Mongolia throughout Northwest China, forming the basis for the second and third branches. The second branch eventually migrated to what is now Jiuquan, in Gansu, and are the ancestors of the people now recognised as the Yugur, or Yellow Uighurs, concentrated primarily in the Gannan Yugur Autonomous County.¹⁰ The third branch was dispersed in the oases surrounding the Tarim Basin of the Taklamakan, including Turfan, Karashahr and Kashgar, where the Uighurs may previously have had

dependencies (Mackerras, 1972, p. 12). This group took advantage of the unique socio-ecology of the glacier-fed oases surrounding the Taklamakan and were able to preserve their merchant and limited agrarian practices, gradually establishing Khocho or Gaochang, the great Uighur city-state based in Turfan for four centuries (850–1250).¹¹ It is interesting that while this group is culturally reckoned as the direct ancestors of the present-day Uighurs, and the region they inhabited became known as Uighuristan (Elias, 1972), they added Buddhist and Nestorian Christian beliefs to their Manichaean religious practice, and were the very last of the Uighurs in the oases to convert to Islam.

By the middle of the 9th century, then, we can see that the people now known as the Uighurs had become completely sedentarised. Excavations reveal a wealthy aristocratic civilisation that rivaled the Tang and Song courts in its artistic and material sophistication. Sinor (1969, p. 119) recounts the refusal of the Uighurs to be repatriated to Mongolia at the friendly suggestion of the Khitan rulers of the Liao dynasty (947–1125), whose leaders were in close contact with the Uighurs and even more familiar with a nomadic way of life that was now becoming a distant part of the Uighurs' past.

Rather than possessing any linguistic uniformity — by this time the Uighur peoples maintained their Turkic dialect while their elites had adopted Eastern Iranian with Sogdian script — the disparate Uighur peoples took on identities based on their separate oases.¹² The gradual Islamisation of the Uighurs from the 10th to the 16th centuries, while displacing their Buddhist religion, did little to bridge these oases-based loyalties. With the conversion of the Kara-Khanid (932–1165) ruler Sadik Boghra Khan in 950 A.D., the peoples of the western Taklamakan oases, especially Kashgar, rejected their Buddhist and other Central Asian religious traditions in favour of the more politically and perhaps symbolically advantageous ideology of Islam.¹³ From that time on, the people of Uighuristan centred in the Turfan depression, who resisted Islamic conversion until the mid-15th century, were the only people known as Uighurs. The others were known only by their oasis or by the generic term of Muslims (Haneda, 1978, p. 7). The Japanese Central Asian Buddhist historian, Juten Oda, depicts this transitional period:

It was Moslims who ceased to be called by the original racial name that were to play the most important part from a political and commercial point of view under the khans or the princes. Nevertheless, the reason why we use the word Uighuristan is that the Uighurs who continued to be Buddhists kept their old racial characteristics. In Hami, two groups of the Uighurs, namely, Buddhist Uighurs and Moslim Uighurs lived together in the same area (Oda, 1978, p. 23).

Once again, ethnoreligious change for the Uighurs was precipitated by socio-political incorporation. In this case, the expansion of the Kara-Khanid Islamic rule led to the gradual displacement of the Buddhist, Manichaean and Nestorian Uighurs by an Islamic identity alien and in opposition to the traditional Uighur identity to the extent that the name "Uighur" was dropped. Oda (1978, p. 42) records the loss of the use of the term Uighur by the people in Hami in 1513 with their annexation by Mansur Khan. Under the Buddhist Kara-Kitai (1137–1210 A.D.) and Mongol Empires (1209–1368), Buddhist and Nestorian scribes and administrators known as Uighurs were heavily relied upon (Allsen, 1983, p. 267; De Rachewiltz, 1983). However, while Juvayni mentions the Uighur during his travels in Turkestan in the mid-13th century, three hundred years later M. Haidar (d. 1551) had no idea who these people were. In his mid-16th century commentary on Juvayni's text, he writes "But what [the author] calls 'Uighur' is quite unknown at the present time; it is not understood which country is meant" (in Elias, 1972 [1895], p. 360). With the arrival of Islam, the people identified as the Uighur fade from the historical record.

With the fall of the Mongol Empire, the decline of the overland trade routes, and the expansion of trade relationships with the Ming (Rossabi, 1969–1970), Turfan gradually turned toward the Islamic Moghuls, and perhaps in opposition to the growing Chinese Empire, adopted Islam by the mid-15th century (Hamada, 1978). While this is the first time in the Tarim Basin's history that, according to Geng (1984, pp. 12–13), it became "unified politically, economically, religiously, culturally and linguistically" and that therefore the "time was ripe for the formation of a new ethnic community, the modern Uighur nationality", it is remarkable that the term "Uighur" is completely dropped from the region to refer to the local inhabitants (Elias, 1972 [1895], p. 100). The Uighurs, who were identified as the non-Muslim mainly Buddhist rulers of Turfan, converted and the local inhabitants no longer preferred to be known by the non-Islamic term. Instead, we find the proliferation of such localisms as "yerlik" (persons of the land), "sart" (caravaneer), "taranchi" (agriculturalists from the Tarim Basin transplanted to Yili under the Qian Long Emperor), and other oasis-based localisms (see Fletcher, 1978, p. 69). We do not find a significant unification of these disparate oases populations until the late Qing Empire conquered the Mongolian Zungarian rule (1653–1754 A.D.). Until this time, the Tarim Basin was riven with political succession struggles among the Moghul leaders and divided by religious disputes (Rossabi, forthcoming).

During the 17th and 18th centuries a brief period of unification of

eastern Xinjiang under the Yarkant Khanate was broken up when religio-political factionalism between two competing Naqshbandiia Sufi orders, the “White Mountain” Afaqiia in Kashgar and the “Black Mountain” Ishiqiia in Yarkant, led to intervention by the Mongolian Zungars in the late 17th century. Isenbike Togan-Aricanli argues that throughout this period oases-based local governments prevailed:

The seventeenth–eighteenth century Khwaja rule in general showed tendencies of centralisation without developing them into a centralised government. At this juncture this seems to be inevitable, as the Khwajagan played only a centripetal role to counterbalance the centrifugal tendencies of the local begs — eliminated during the Muslim rebellions of 1864 (Togan-Aricanli, 1988, p. 14).¹⁴

The late Joseph Fletcher (1978, p. 90) has argued that despite their conquering Xinjiang in 1754 and driving out the Zungar Mongolian overlords of the Turkic peoples, the Qing did not begin to attempt to incorporate the region into the Han Chinese realm until 1821, when massive migration of Han Chinese was encouraged. According to Kim Ho-dong’s (1986, p. 5) definitive study of 19th century Xinjiang, it was only during this early period that the Qing maintained any secure hold on the region. The Yakub Beg rebellion that established the 13 year Kashgar Emirate (1864–1877) crystallised Uighur resistance against what they perceived to be a cultural as well as political Chinese threat to their identity.¹⁵ While the Uighurs involved in this rebellion were divided into the usual local, ideological, and socio-economic factions that previously disunited them — which Kim (1986) argues contributed to their downfall — the rebellion nevertheless played an important role in setting all Uighurs apart from the Chinese state, similar to the events I discussed above that are contributing to the rise of pan-ethnic identities in other nation-states. While Uighurs were divided internally during periods of oppression and revolt, many began to conceive of themselves as united *vis-à-vis* the dominant hegemony. For the Uighurs of Xinjiang today, Yakub Beg is thought of as a folk hero, no matter what their oasis, social, or religious orientation.

During the Republican period, Uighur identity was again marked by factionalism along locality, religious and political lines. Andrew Forbes (1986), in his detailed and fascinating analysis of the complex warlord politics of Republican Xinjiang, finds important continuing distinctions between the three macro-regions of Xinjiang: the northwestern Zungaria, southern Tarim Basin, and eastern Kumul-Turfan (“Uighuristan”) areas. While this provides a much more profound analysis of local patterns of response to rapid socio-political

change, the disparate actions of the Uighurs in a weakened Han Chinese state reflect earlier patterns of disunity during times of decentralisation — a pattern not unique to nomads or former nomads (see Barfield, 1989).

CHINESE COLONISATION AND UIGHUR IDENTITY

As we have seen, the incorporation of the oases cities into the Chinese Empire with the defeat of the Zungars in the 18th century was limited and short-lived. Until the major migration of Han Chinese was encouraged in the mid-19th century, the Qing were mainly interested in pacifying the region by setting up military outposts which supported a vassal-state relationship. Colonisation began with the migrations of the Han in the mid-19th century, but this was cut short by the Yakub Beg rebellion in the second half of the 19th century, the fall of the Qing Empire in 1910, and the ensuing warlord era which dismembered the region until its incorporation as part of the People's Republic in 1949. Competition for the loyalties of the peoples of the oases in the "Great Game" played between China, Russia and Britain further contributed to divisions among the Uighurs according to political, religious and military lines (Lattimore, 1950; Whiting and Sheng, 1958). The peoples of the oases, until the challenge of nation-state incorporation, lacked any coherent sense of identity. In his socio-economic study of Chinese Turkestan, Warikoo observes:

National consciousness among the Uighurs was conspicuously absent. They were isolated amongst numerous oasis-settlements, which were backward and self-sufficient economic units. Each oasis was practically a little state having its own capital, small towns, rural settlements, a central market where all the local produce was exchanged by barter and a separate district administration, thus enabling it to maintain its own individuality. Social segregation of these settlements and their respective populations prevented the formation of a united front against oppressive regimes (Warikoo, 1985, pp. 107–108).

It is the argument of this paper that factionalism within the Uighurs reflects a segmentary hierarchy of loyalties common among ethnic groups. Uighurs are divided from within by religious conflicts, in this case competing Sufi and non-Sufi orders, territorial loyalties, whether they be oases or places of origin, linguistic discrepancies, commoner–elite alienation, and competing political loyalties. Yet these internal conflicts often became less compelling when confronted by a strong, incorporating rival power or nation-state.

Socio-political incorporation is most critical for Uighur identity. While hard evidence is lacking for the exact time when the term

“Uighur” became affixed to the settled Turkic-speaking Muslim oasis peoples, the fact that it became the accepted ethnonym in the 1940s by both the Soviet Union and the newly established Chinese nation reveals an important shift in the ethno-political make-up of the region.¹⁶ In a similar fashion, the Soviet Central Asianist, Anatoly Khazanov (personal communication), related that the Soviet Nationalities Commission Director in Tashkent noted that as late as 1926 few Uzbeks recognised that ethnonym for themselves.

As argued above, incorporation of Xinjiang for the first time into a nation-state required unprecedented delineation of the so-called nations involved. The re-emergence of the label “Uighur”, though arguably inappropriate as it was last used 500 years previously to describe the largely Buddhist population of the Turfan Basin, stuck as the appellation for the settled Turkic-speaking Muslim oasis dwellers. It has never been disputed by the people themselves or the states involved. There is too much at stake for the people labelled as such to wish to challenge that identification.

That Islam became an important, but not exclusive, cultural marker of Uighur identity is not surprising given the socio-political oppositions with which the Uighurs were confronted. Ömer Kanat (1986, pp. 113–19) disputes Denise Helly’s (1985, p. 99) hypothesis that the political mobilisation of Eastern Turkestanis along religious lines was the reaction of a feudal society to the socialist modes of production being introduced by the Chinese on the grounds that the Uighurs had been undergoing agrarian and industrial reforms over the last four decades. While the Chinese certainly were faced with a complex socio-political situation in Xinjiang, in the throes of industrial, agrarian, and political change, Helly’s (1985, p. 107) argument that Islam played an important role as a unifying ideology of resistance, rather than a pure resurgence of Islamic orthodoxy, is well-founded and important for an understanding of changing Uighur identity.¹⁷

It is also important to note, however, that Islam was only one of several unifying markers for Uighur identity, depending on those with whom they were in significant opposition at the time. To the Dungan (Hui) Muslims, the Uighurs distinguish themselves as the legitimate autochthonous minority, since both share a belief in Sunni Islam.¹⁸ In contrast to the nomadic Muslim peoples (such as the Kazakh and Kirghiz), the Uighurs stress their attachment to the land and oasis of origin. In opposition to the Han Chinese, the Uighurs will generally emphasise their Central Asian Turkic features and language. Shahrani (1984, p. 29) insightfully notes that the response given to Barthold quoted at the beginning of this article that Central Asians were Muslim first might very well have been a reflection of

their perception of opposition to him as a European Christian. Each aspect of Uighur identity gains importance depending on the hierarchy of oppositions with which they are faced. Islam is a fundamental aspect of Uighur identity, but so is their attachment to land and language. Each marker of identity takes on salience and enhanced meaning in the context of significant oppositions. The importance of socio-political opposition for defining ethnic identity in multi-ethnic contexts was first fully analysed by Sir Edmund Leach (1954) in his discussion of competing ethnic groups in highland Burma.¹⁹ It is certainly the articulated hierarchy of ethnic expression in the competition for scarce resources and local power that is most critical for our understanding of current Uighur identity.

THE INTEGRATION OF XINJIANG INTO CHINA AND MODERN UIGHUR IDENTITY

Unheralded socio-political incorporation of Xinjiang into the Chinese nation-state has taken place in the last forty years (see McMillen, 1979). While Xinjiang has been under Chinese political domination since the defeat of the Zungar in 1754, until the middle of the 20th century it was but loosely integrated into China proper. The extent of the incorporation of the Xinjiang region into China is indicated by Han migration, communication, education, and occupational shifts since the 1940s.

Han migration into Xinjiang has swelled their local population to an incredible twenty-six times that of the 1940 level, with an annual growth of 8.1 per cent (see Table 2). The increase of the Han population has been accompanied by the growth and delineation of other Muslim groups in addition to the Uighurs.²¹ Accompanying the remarkable rise of the Han population, a dramatic increase in the Hui (Dungan) population can also be seen, perhaps leading to recent tensions in Hui-Uighur relations (see Gladney, 1988). While Hui population growth in Xinjiang between 1940 and 1982 has increased over six times (averaging an annual growth of 4.5 per cent), the Uighur population has followed a more natural biological growth of 1.7 per cent.²² The dramatic rise of Han migration and increasing competition for scarce resources has been the impetus for several Uighur uprisings in recent years (see Ma Zheng, 1981; Naby, 1986; Rudelson, 1988).

Chinese incorporation of Xinjiang has led to a further development of ethnic socio-economic niches. Whereas earlier travellers reported little distinction in labour and education among Muslims other than that between settled and nomadic (Lattimore, 1950), the 1982 census

Table 2. Muslim population growth in Xinjiang, 1940–1982

Ethnic group	1940–1941	1953	1982	Population increase			Approx. annual ave. growth (per cent) 1940–1982
				1940–1953	1953–1982	1940–1982	
Uighur	2,941,000	3,640,000	5,950,000	1.24	1.63	2.02	1.7
Kazakh	319,000	492,000	904,000	1.54	1.84	2.83	2.5
Hui	92,000	150,000	571,000	1.63	3.81	6.21	4.5
Kirghiz	65,000	68,000	113,000	1.05	1.66	1.74	1.3
Tajik	9000	14,000	26,000	1.56	1.86	2.89	1.0
Uzbek	5000	14,000	12,000	2.8	0.86	2.4	2.1
Tatar	6900	6900	4100	1.0	0.59	0.59	-1.0
Han	202,000	—	5,287,000	—	—	26.17	8.1
Total population	—	4,874,000	13,082,000	—	2.68	—	—

Sources: Forbes, 1986, p. 7, 1987, p. 2; Banister, 1987, pp. 322–323; *Minzu Tuanjie*, 1984 (2), p. 38.

[Note: Military figures are not given, estimated at 275,000 soldiers and 500,000 military construction corp in 1985 (Mann, 1985, p. 10).]²⁰

has revealed vast differences in socio-economic structure (see Table 3).

It is noteworthy that 84 per cent of the Uighurs are involved in the production of agriculture and husbandry, the same as the average for all ethnic groups. The Hui, however, have only 60.7 per cent involved in farming and husbandry, with trade and commerce taking up many more of their numbers. The Uighurs rank far below the Uzbeks and Tatars in the scientific and technical occupations, primarily due to the larger proportion of the urbanised intellectuals among the Uzbeks and Tatars. This is also reflected in reports on education among Muslim minorities in China (see Table 4).

The Uighurs are about average in terms of university graduates and illiteracy in China as compared with other ethnic groups (0.2 and 45 per cent, respectively). The Tatars achieve the highest representation of university graduates among Muslims (39 per cent) as well as the lowest percentage of illiteracy (9 per cent), far below the average of all China (32 per cent). The main drawback of these figures is that they reflect only what is regarded by the state as education, namely, training in Chinese language and the sciences. However, as Naby (1986) confirmed among elderly Uighur intellectuals, there continues to be a high standard of traditional expertise in Persian, Arabic, Chagatay, and the Islamic sciences, which is not considered part of Chinese "culture" and education. Although elementary and often secondary education is provided in Uighur, Mandarin has become the language of upward mobility in Xinjiang, as well as the rest of China.²³

Many Uighurs have been trained in the 13 Nationalities Colleges scattered throughout China since they were established in the 1950s. It is these secular intellectuals trained in Chinese schools who are asserting political leadership in Xinjiang, as opposed to traditional religious elites. Many Uighurs in Urumqi point to the establishment of the Uighur Traditional Medicine Hospital and Madrassah complex in 1987 as an initial counterbalance to this emphasis on Han education.²⁴ However, most Uighurs I have spoken with feel that their history and traditional culture continue to be down-played in the state schools and must be privately re-emphasised to their children. It is through the elementary schools that Uighur children first participate formally in the Chinese nation-state, dominated by Han history and language, and most fully enter into the Chinese world. As such, the predominant educational practice of teaching a centralised, mainly Han, subject content, despite the widespread use of minority languages, continues to drive a wedge between the Uighurs and their traditions, inducting them further into the Han Chinese milieu.

Table 3. Occupational structure of Muslim minorities in China in per cent, 1982

Occupation	Hui	Uighur	Kazakh	Dong Xiang	Kirghiz	Salar	Tajik	Uzbek	Bao An	Tatar	All ethnic groups
Scientific technical staff	5.75	4.25	11.25	1.0	7.0	3.25	5.75	17.25	1.5	23.5	4.0
Administration	1.75	0.75	2.0	0.25	1.5	0.75	2.75	3.75	2.25	4.5	1.0
Office and related workers	1.75	1.0	2.0	0.25	1.75	0.75	2.0	3.25	0.75	4.25	1.0
Commercial workers	3.5	1.5	1.25	0.25	0.75	0.75	0.5	10.75	0.5	5.25	1.25
Service workers	4.0	1.5	1.5	0.25	1.0	0.75	0.75	6.5	0.5	4.5	1.25
Farming, forestry, fishing and animal husbandry	60.75	84.0	74.5	96.75	84.0	90.5	85.75	31.5	92.25	38.5	84.0
Production and transport	22.25	7.0	7.5	1.25	4.0	3.25	2.5	27.0	2.25	19.25	7.5
Others	0.25	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.25	—

Source: Adapted from the Population Census Office (1987, pp. xx, 28).

Table 4. Educational level of Muslim minorities in China in per cent, 1982

Education level	Hui	Uighur	Kazakh	Dong Xiang	Kirghiz	Salar	Tajik	Uzbek	Bao An	Tatar	All ethnic groups	All China
University graduate	0.5	0.2	0.4	0	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	39	0.2	0.5
Undergraduate	2.5	0.1	0.1	0	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.9	0.1	11	0.1	0.2
Senior middle school	7	5	5	1	5	1	4	11	2	15	5	8
Junior middle school	19	12	17	3	11	5	11	22	6	25	15	20
Primary school	30	37	49	8	40	18	38	40	12	40	37	40
*Illiterate	41	45	29	87	41	74	49	20	78	9	45	32

* Population age 6 and above who cannot read Chinese ideographs or can read very little.

Source: Adapted from the Population Census Office (1987, pp. xvi, 29).

THE NATIONALISATION AND INTERNATIONALISATION
OF UIGHUR IDENTITY

On a national scale, Xinjiang has been brought closer to the rest of China through the extensive expansion of rail and telecommunications.²⁵ While it took Zuo Zongtang six months to bring an imperial Qing army from Lanzhou to Urumqi in order to suppress the Uighur uprising led by Yakub Beg at the end of the 19th century, today Urumqi is only five hours by plane and 72 hours by train from Beijing.²⁶ Roads now link all the major towns in the region, and while travelling overland to Kashgar from Urumqi may take over four days, the buses are filled with Uighurs intent on engaging in trade and visiting relatives. Although travel is arduous and expensive to the locals, it is at least possible, and contributes to pan-Uighur identity through increased inter-oasis communication.

Uighurs travel widely not only throughout Xinjiang, but are found in every city of internal China as well. The increased incorporation of Xinjiang into the political sphere of China has led not only to the further migration of Han and Hui into the region, but opened China to an unprecedented extent for the Uighurs. Uighur men are heavily involved in long-distance trade throughout China. They go to Tianjin and Shanghai for manufactured clothes and textiles, Hangzhou and Suzhou for silk, and Guangzhou and Hainan for electrical goods and motorcycles brought in from Hong Kong. As Uighurs continue to travel throughout China they return to Xinjiang with a firmer sense of their own pan-Uighur identity *vis-à-vis* the Han and the other minorities they encounter on their travels.

International travel has also resumed for the Uighurs. An important development in recent years has been the resumption of the construction of a rail line between China and the Soviet Union through the Ili corridor to Alma Ata — a link due to be opened to international travel by 1992 that was disrupted with the breakdown in Sino-Soviet relations thirty years earlier (FBIS, 1988d, p. 9). This will be the shortest rail connection of East and Southeast Asia with Europe and trade is expected to blossom, according to the plans envisioned in the Protocol signed on 24 October 1988 (FBIS, 1988e, p. 9). With the resumption of normal Sino-Soviet relations in 1983, trade and personal contacts have already expanded enormously. The Chinese press reported a five-fold increase over the previous year, with trade valued at 100 million Swiss Francs in 1988 compared with 21 million Swiss Francs in 1987. Contracts valued at 200 million Swiss Francs have already been signed for the future (FBIS, 1988c, p. 6). This expansion has led many Uighurs to see themselves as important players in the improved Sino-Soviet exchanges. On a recent trip from

Moscow to Beijing through the Ili corridor, I was surprised to find that many of the imported Hong Kong-made electrical goods purchased by Uighurs with hard currency in Canton and Shenzhen found their way into the marketplaces and hands of relatives across the border in Alma Ata — who are also identified by the Soviet state as Uighurs.

To an extent never seen before, the continued incorporation of Xinjiang and nationalisation of Uighur identity have become inexorable, and perhaps irreversible. To be sure, the Uighurs are still oriented culturally and historically toward Central Asia in terms of religion, language, and ethnic custom, and interaction has increased in recent years due to the opening of the roads to Pakistan and Alma Ata. Certainly pan-Turkism was appealing to some, but not all Uighurs, during the early part of this century (see Forbes, 1986, pp. 112–116). Historical ties to Central Asia are strong. Turkey's Prime Minister Turgut Ozal espoused a popular Turkish belief when, on a 1985 visit to Beijing that sought to open a consulate there, he commented that the Turkish nation originated in what is now China.²⁷ Yet separatistic notions, given the current political incorporation of Xinjiang into China, while perhaps present, are not practicable. To a question regarding political separation, one prominent Uighur in a *Los Angeles Times* interview responded: "Some people would like to, but there is no hope" (Mann, 1985, p. 10).

The opening of China to the outside world has meant much for the Uighurs who may easily travel beyond China's borders through Pakistan along the Karakoram highway, through the Ili Valley into Kazakhstan, or by direct CAAC flight to Istanbul from Urumqi (opened in 1987). The Chinese press reported that Uighur pilgrims travelling on the Haj to Mecca increased to 500 in 1988, with a total of over 6500 Haji between 1980 and 1987 from Xinjiang (FBIS, 1988b, pp. 12–13). These contacts have allowed the Uighurs to see themselves as participants in the broader Islamic *Umma*, while at the same time being Muslim citizens of the Chinese nation-state (see Gladney, 1987a, pp. 497–500). As they return from the Haj, many Uighurs who generally travel together as a group have told me that they gained a greater sense of affinity with their own as one people than with the other multi-ethnic members of the international Islamic community.

State-promoted tourism of foreign Muslims and tourists to Muslim areas in China, in the hope of stimulating economic investment, is also an important trend related to this opening of Xinjiang and its borders. Urumqi, a largely Han city constructed in the last fifty years, is undergoing an Islamic facelift with the official endorsement of

Central Asian and Islamic architecture which serve to impress many visiting foreign Muslim dignitaries. The Chinese press reported that in 1987, there were 73,800 domestic and foreign tourists in Xinjiang, an increase of 52 per cent over 1986 (FBIS, 1988a, p. 4).²⁸ After the opening of the Karakoram highway border with Pakistan to individual foreign tourists in May 1986, one Chinese researcher reported that there were 2400 foreign visitors in two months, not including Pakistanis (personal interview). While passing from Kazakhstan into Xinjiang through the Sino-Soviet border near Panfilov in October 1988, I was told by the local Soviet customs official that there were over 50 groups which had crossed that year. A few days later in Kashgar, I was surprised to note that Pakistanis staying in the Qiniwake Hotel, formerly Chini Bagh, the old British Consulate, had so increased over my last visit in 1987 that there was almost no room for other foreigners, most of whom stay in the Seman Hotel, the former Russian Consulate, or the newer Kashgar Guest House.

Most of these foreigners come to see the colourful minorities and the traditional dances and costumes by which their ethnicity is portrayed in Chinese and foreign travel brochures.²⁹ One Japanese tourist I spoke to in Kashgar who had just arrived there by bicycle from Pakistan across the Karakoram highway said that a tourist brochure told him that the real Uighurs could only be found in Kashgar, whereas most Uighurs believe that Turfan is the centre of their cultural universe. Yet many of these Kashgaris will in the same breath argue that much of traditional Uighur culture has been lost to Han influence in Turfan and that since they themselves are the repositories of the more unspoiled "Uighur" traditions, tourists should spend the most time, and money, in Kashgar. The search for the so-called "real Uighur" confirms that the nationality statistics and tourism agencies have succeeded. The recreation of Uighur ethnicity has come full circle: the Chinese nation-state has identified a people who have in the last 40 years taken on that assigned identity as their own, and in the process, those who have accepted that identity have sought to define it and reconstruct it on their own terms.

THE CHINESE NATION-STATE AND THE CRYSTALLISATION OF UIGHUR IDENTITY

Studies of minority nationality integration in China have tended to stress political domination or cultural assimilation (Dreyer, 1976, pp. 264–265; Solinger, 1977). While these approaches are important for our understanding of the incorporation of China's minorities into the

current power structure, I would argue that the reification of ethnic categories employed by the state has led to the re-creation and crystallisation of previously shifting undefined identities. It is not political or cultural “Han-ification” (*Han hua*) that is at stake for ethnic identity, it is “Chinese nationalisation” (*Zhongguo hua*). To be sure, when Han culture and the Chinese state become merged as one and the same, especially during periods of a weakened central state, such as the Cultural Revolution, then ethnic and religious differences are challenged.³⁰ “Local Nationalism” (*difang minzu zhuyi*), the resurgent expression of local ethnic identities, is then portrayed as feudalistic, and education is seen as assimilation into the “higher” Han culture. While there have been periods when this has dominated the nationality programme in China, it has been officially and publicly rejected by the current regime under Deng Xiaoping, though often observed in the breach. Ethnic pluralism under the Chinese nation is the official goal of the present government — whether or not it will be fully achieved is yet to be seen. An important shift is revealed in the following statement by the Kashgar Teacher’s College President, Abdul Karim Baodin:

Now, there is recognition by the party and the government that cultural diversity does not conflict with political loyalty. This has brought tremendous changes for us (in Parks, 1983, p. 1).

Ethnicity models that seek to define Uighur identity according to purely cultural markers, such as religion or language, do not take into account the wide diversity within the Uighurs as well as their complex ethnohistory. We have seen that any adequate understanding of modern Uighur identity must take into account not only ethnohistory and political motivation, but also incorporation into and interaction with the Chinese nation-state. To a certain extent, the Uighurs are who they are because the Chinese state has registered them as such. In response to that ascription, the present Uighur identity has evolved and interacted in dialectical fashion.

It comes as no surprise that the emigrants from Xinjiang living in the Zeytin Burnu district of Istanbul do not regard themselves as Uighurs; the Turkish state does not either. This does not suggest that ethnic identity is merely a product of state creation or dissolution. Rather it reflects a complex process of the ethnogenesis of nationality identity through dialectical interaction between state definition and accepted notions of cultural tradition. The Uighurs today accept and espouse the idea of their cultural continuity with the 7th century Uighur Empire based in Mongolia. The state also does not object to this connection as long as it does not challenge its authority to rule. To the extent that it does, subtle and not-so-subtle rewriting of

nationality histories are promoted to establish the long-term subjection of minority areas to Chinese rule. Understanding of modern Uighur identity in China must take into account this dialectical re-creation and re-interpretation of the past to account for the present interactions and identities on the Inner Asian frontier.

NOTES

1. This is a revised version of a paper first presented at the symposium "Ecology and Empire: Nomads in the Cultural Evolution of the Old World" at the University of California, Los Angeles. I am grateful to the conferees' comments and to the conference organiser for permission to submit this version for publication. Funding for three years of field research on Muslims in the People's Republic of China was provided by the Fulbright-Hayes Foundation, the Committee on Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China, and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. Field research in Turkey was supported by the Ira J. Kukin Scholars Program of the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies. In China the author was hosted by the Central Institute for Nationalities, the Ningxia Academy of Social Sciences and the Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences. I would like to express my appreciation to the agencies and individuals who made this study possible. I am also grateful for helpful suggestions and insightful comments on this article by Thomas Allsen, Kahar Barat, Thomas Barfield, Dolkun Kanberi and Justin Rudelsen.
2. This idea is most epitomised by Ch'ên Yüan's (1966) classic work that argued all minority peoples which came into long-term contact with the Chinese Empire gradually sinicised to Han customs. Criticised as "Great Han Chauvinism" (*Da Han zhuyi*) by the current Chinese regime, this perspective is nevertheless popularly maintained.
3. Lucien Pye (1975, p. 497) made the astute observation that administrative integration of Xinjiang was the goal of the early communists, while cultural assimilation was regarded as unrealisable.
4. For a recent study of immigrants from Northwest China in Istanbul, see Svanberg (in press).
5. A. S. Whiting (1957, p. iv) estimates that during the heyday of the Sino-Soviet axis, over 10,000 Soviet experts served in the USSR, and up to 7000 Chinese were trained in the Soviet Union. For a discussion of the debate surrounding the politics of Lenin's defining the Central Asian peoples, see Wimbush (1985, pp. 69-78). For a summary of the Soviet influence upon early Chinese nationality policy, see Dreyer (1976, pp. 43-62).
6. Yueh-hwa Lin's discussion of the Yi (formerly Lolo) people in Sichuan also depicts a uniform history of a people which "is an old one in China. . . . Ever since ancient time, the Yis have been a member of the family of Chinese nationalities" (Lin, 1984, p. 90). This masks a wide variety of socio-culture difference among a people now labelled as the "Yi" which comprise at least three separate ethnolinguistic groups who were for the most part of their history independent of Chinese rule (Harrell, 1989).
7. For a good summary of this earlier debate, see Bentley (1983), Nagata (1981) and Despres (1984).

8. Bernard Cohn's (1987, pp. 224–254) perceptive essay, "The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia," reveals the role the British census played in creating and crystallising previously ill-defined categories of ethnicity, caste and society in India. The Chinese census required individuals to register according to one of only 56 accepted nationalities, whereas when the first investigations were conducted to identify the peoples of China, in the late 1950s Fei Xiaotong (1981) reported that over 400 groups applied. This effectively narrowed the possibilities for nationality expression in China, collapsing some groups into overarching categories, creating a national "Han" majority, and "objectifying" pre-existing accepted categories for certain nationalities (see Gladney, 1990).
9. For a review of the assistance provided by the Uighurs in suppressing the An Lushan and other rebellions in internal China, see Barfield (1989) and Sinor (1969, pp. 114–115).
10. If one were to follow most popular ethnicity theories and take a purely cultural or linguistic approach to analysing Uighur identity, the Yugur in Gansu's Hexi corridor should be the likeliest candidates. It is this modern group which most preserves the linguistic, cultural and religious ties with the Uighur Empire's past. Known as the Yellow Uighurs (*Yugur Shari Yugur*) who fled to Gansu after the Kirghiz invasion of 840, these people are the only remnants of the original Uighur Kingdom to preserve much of their former Turkish language, written with Old Uighur script until the 19th century. Manichaean influences in their Lamaist-Buddhist religion are also preserved, and they now are divided into three groups speaking Turkish, Mongolian, and Chinese dialects — all recognised as belonging to one nationality, the Yugur (see Schwarz, 1984, pp. 57–74; Zhongguo, 1981, pp. 165–173).
11. For a discussion of this fascinating and rich metropolis, see Allsen (1983), Geng (1984, pp. 6–8), Sinor (1969, pp. 118–121); and also Le Coq (1985) [1928], for a description of the four German "Turfan Expeditions".
12. Citing Mahmud Kashgari's famous 11th century dictionary, *Divan Lughat it-Turk*, Geng (1984, pp. 10–11) argues that while the basis for modern Uighur dialect of Turkish was beginning to achieve supremacy as a *lingua franca* of the Taklamakan region, other separate languages such as Sogdian, Khotanese and Tibetan continued to be well-entrenched among the local populations. As Islam expanded, Arabic gradually replaced the Uighur script (Barthold, 1956, p. 21; Geng, 1984, p. 9).
13. In his introduction to M. Haidar's mid-16th century commentary of Juvayni's travelogue covering Eastern Turkestan, Norbert Elias noted that Islam only very gradually spread throughout the western oases: "The spread of the Musulman religion tends always to the modification of manners and customs, and to the use of the Arabic, Turki or Persian language; but in spite of all, racial characteristics remain, until very gradually expunged by a course of interbreeding, that must extend over many centuries" (Elias, 1972 [1895], p. 82).
14. For a further discussion of Kwaja rule, see Schwarz (1976).
15. The perceptive Central Asianist, Paul Henze (1989), provides an informative recent reassessment of British interests in the Yakub Beg rebellion.
16. Justin Rudelson (1988, pp. 23–30), a Harvard graduate student who has conducted fieldwork in Turfan, proposes that the advice given to the Chinese Xinjiang warlord Sheng Shi-tsai by the Soviet diplomat Garegin Apresoff, invited to Xinjiang in 1933, may have included the suggestion that the term "Uighur" be used for the settled Tarim Basin peoples, based on the same linguistic-historical formulae which Lenin used to label the Soviet Central Asian

peoples in the 1920s (see also Chen, 1977, p. 21; Forbes, 1986, pp. 119–120; Wimbush, 1985). In his study of Soviet nationality policy in Central Asia, Vaidyanath (1967, p. 209) finds the term “Uighur” appearing in a 1924 Soviet registration, not present in previous Soviet accounts. The term appears to denote the oasis peoples of Xinjiang, perhaps subsuming the previously distinct terms for Kashgaris, Taranchis, Turki and Sart-Kulmuks. The Uighurs were assigned three “village soviets” within the Uzbek SSR in 1928. In the semi-official Soviet work, *Narody Srednei Azii i Kazakhstana (Peoples of Central Asia and Kazakhstan)*, the following statement regarding Uighur identification is found: “Before the Great October Social Revolution in Russia, the Uighurs did not have a common name . . . The description ‘Uighur’ was adopted at a meeting of representatives of the Uighurs in the city of Tashkent in 1921 as the general national name for all Uighur people” (*Narody* 1963, p. 489; from Thomas Allsen, personal communication). The last Republican governor of Xinjiang, the Tatar, Burhan Shahidi (1984, p. 244), records in his memoirs that at the first Xinjiang Nationalities Congress the term “Uighur” was suggested by Han officials and was welcomed by the oasis peoples, who had until that time been only referred to as “turbaned Muslims” (*Chuantou Hui*), as opposed to the Dungan Hui-hui (see Forbes, 1987; Gladney, 1988).

17. For an excellent collection of articles addressing the complex issue of the shifting meaning of Islam and its reinterpretation in the context of changing political economy, see Roff (1987).
18. Forbes (1987) describes the innumerable conflicts between Han, Uighur and Hui (Dungan) during the warlord politics of the republican period, as each sought to form alliances and survive the tumultuous period. For a study of current Uighur–Hui relations, see Gladney (1988).
19. For the use of shifting cultural symbols as markers of identity, see Gladney (1987a), Nagata (1981) and Trotter (1981).
20. It must be stressed that pre-1982 population figures in minority areas rely heavily on speculation and must be regarded as rough estimates. For a discussion of the high degree of accuracy for the 1982 Chinese national census, see Banister (1987).
21. For a study of Chinese minority identification policy, the identification of the 54 minority nationalities in the 1950s with special attention to Muslim minorities, and its reliance on a Soviet Marxist cultural model of ethnicity, see Gladney (1987a, pp. 36–43); see also Walker Connor’s (1984) description of Marxist–Leninist ethnicity theory and policy.
22. The slow growth of Uighur population between 1953 and 1982 may be due to emigration to Soviet Central Asia. Banister (1987, p. 324), based on published Soviet population studies, suggests that the Uighur excess population growth in Central Asia was from 33,000 to 41,000. The Soviet Uighur newspaper, *Kommunizm Tugi*, on 12 October 1987 reported that the current Uighur population in Soviet Central Asia is 250,000 (in Alptekin, 1988, p. 2).
23. For a discussion of commoner–elite conflict among other minorities as a result of education in the Han Chinese system, see also Dreyer (1970).
24. See Ibrahim Muti’i (1989) for an excellent historical synopsis of the role of the Central Asian Islamic Madrassah in traditional Uighur education. Professor Muti’i argues that it was the Madrassah, more than religious or cultural continuities, that most tied the Uighurs into Central Asian traditions.
25. Uighurs continue to resent the influx of Han that expanded rail and road networks have facilitated. It was one of their main complaints during the December 1986 and June 1988 student protests (see FBIS, 1988f, p. 61). A

- popular story is told that the first train into Urumqi in the 1960s made the sound “*chi chi chi*” (“eat, eat, eat”), and upon its departure sounded like “*chibaole, chibaole, chibaole*” (“I’m full, I’m full, I’m full”). Short-term rotations of Han workers for three to five years, rather than permanent residence, has both satisfied Uighurs and disgruntled Han who want to go home — the cause of a 1979 hunger strike in Aksu involving over 70,000.
26. This point was made by the Russian explorer, Valikhanov, who, dressed as a Muslim, visited Kashgaria in the late 1850s, and claimed that it would take six months for China to send a reinforcement army from Lanzhou in the event of an uprising (in Kim, 1986, p. 9).
 27. Several Uighur men in Istanbul commented that many Turkish women were interested in marrying them because they believed they possessed “pure Turkish blood”. However, most Uighurs and Kazakhs I interviewed continued to seek wives from within their own peoples, no matter how difficult (see also Svanberg, in press).
 28. For an analysis of the impact of foreign tourism and the anthropology of tourism with regard to the Hui Muslims in China, see Gladney (1987b, pp. 123–131).
 29. Kathleen Adams (1984, p. 469) has demonstrated the important role travel agencies play in creating expectations among foreign tourists for certain “cultural experiences” based on packaged preconceived notions of identity and ethnicity in Tana Toraja, Indonesia. These cultural performances often mask a host of complex expressions of identity that may bear little resemblance to the performers themselves.
 30. Though Islam was regarded with other religions as feudal superstition during the Cultural Revolution, it is protected under the constitution. While Islam is officially regarded as extraneous to the cultural and linguistic heritage of the Muslim peoples who in the census were not registered by religion but by “nationality” (see Gladney, 1987a, pp. 36–43), John Voll (1985, p. 143) makes the important point that recognition of the “special character of their national life” gives tacit recognition to the importance of Islam.

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