

Workshop on Beyond the “Xinjiang Problem”

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Abstracts

David Brophy, The Australian Centre on China in the World, ANU

The Language of Loyalty in Qing Xinjiang

Scholars have long had the feeling that Xinjiang was an awkward fit into the universalising Qing empire. Compared with the Qing’s fluid multilingualism towards its Mongolian, Tibetan and Chinese subjects, Xinjiang’s Muslims were only rarely addressed in Qing proclamations or inscriptions in their own language. The idea that as monoethnic Muslims, the population of Xinjiang was ultimately unassimilable into the Qing ideological order has been an attractive one, put forward by scholars such as Joseph Fletcher and Pamela Crossley. Yet such an idea rests on assumptions which are difficult to ground in actual sources: i.e. that the Qing sought, but failed, to treat the Muslims of Xinjiang as a distinct “constituency” of the empire, who were to be treated on their own terms, with a set of ideological vocabulary tailored to the Islamic worldview of these new subjects. Lacking evidence for this, we are at risk of falling back on a clichéd view of Muslims as obliged by holy law to resist the rule of the infidel. I believe a better explanation can be given for the muted nature of Qing overtures to the Muslims of Xinjiang, one which places the Qing conquest of the region within the broader dynamics both of Xinjiang’s history, and of Qing China’s relationship with the Islamic world. My approach in this paper is to examine institutions of translation—the front line in the Beijing court’s dealings with its Islamic neighbors. I argue that the Qing had an entirely different view of Central Asian Muslims to its Ming predecessors, one which derived from the role of Muslims as go-betweens in its diplomatic and trade relations with the Junghar Khans. Given the legacy of the Junghars, the Qing were able to find in Xinjiang a set of willing collaborators in their conquest who were capable of meeting the Qing on the common ground of a Mongolian vocabulary of rulership, which they shared with Mongols and Manchus alike. Beginning with these early interactions in the Kangxi reign, I explore how the Qing’s approach to Xinjiang’s Muslims as an extension of their policy towards the Mongols served to shape later institutions of translation in the Qianlong reign and beyond, and what impact these institutions had on the use of Turkic as an official language throughout the dynasty’s existence.

Chen Yangbin, La Trobe University

Towards Another Minority Educational Elite Group in Xinjiang?

Given the changing responses to a growing complexity of Uyghur issue, three streams of Uyghur ethnic educational elite groups have been emerging in China. First is those Uyghur minkaomin who exam in Uyghur in Xinjiang for university admissions. Second is those Uyghur minkaohan who also exam locally but in Han (Chinese) in university admissions. Third is the latest Uyghur youth, who exam in Chinese but in inland cities to gain access to universities in China proper area. The last group also is also called the graduates of the inland Xinjiang Classes (neidi Xinjiang gaozhongban). According to

Chinese official discourse, there are 13 indigenous ethnic groups inhabiting Xinjiang, in which Uyghur and Han are the two largest groups. The first group minkaomin undoubtedly belongs to the authentic Uyghur. The second group minkaohan has been anecdotally labelled as "the 14th ethnic group", particularly by their Uyghur-educated fellows due to their challenged ambiguous Uyghur identity.

This paper argues that those Uyghur graduates from Xinjiang neigaoban are likely forming another new ethnic educational elite group in Xinjiang. As a result of initial inquiry on some the Xinjiang neigaoban Uyghur graduates in the eastern universities. It delineates the uniqueness of their experience social mentality in university academic pursuit and as daily life in China proper area. The paper also analyses the implication of this group in Xinjiang against the background of multicultural education and national integration in China.

Michael Clarke, Griffith University

Toward a New Geopolitics of Xinjiang? Negotiating between Outside-In and Inside-Out Perspectives

As some of my recent research has focused on exploring the impact of the Xinjiang and Uyghur issues on China's foreign policy, it would be timely to reflect on some of the predominant geopolitical narratives that were encountered during that research. The paper suggests that these narratives (whether elucidated by prominent policy-makers, scholars or non-government organizations) can be characterised as predominantly 'outside-in' approaches to Xinjiang which embed the issue within broader discourses of international relations. I suggest that the presence of such conflicting narratives is itself noteworthy as it is symptomatic of Xinjiang, and Central Asia's, 'reconnection' to major currents of contemporary world history. However, while such approaches signify that Xinjiang and Central Asia are once more contested spaces, it is a contest that is envisioned as being played out at the inter-state level. Indeed, these approaches tend to ignore the possibility of 'inside-out' perspectives on Xinjiang and its place in this contested environment. The paper will attempt to explore the possibility of mediating or negotiating between 'outside-in' and 'inside-out' perspectives to provide a more nuanced understanding of Xinjiang.

Tom Cliff, The Australian National University

Legends and aspirations of the oil elite

The Tarim oil company (Tazhi)¹ is the dominant and space-defining institution of contemporary Korla, south Xinjiang. Here I investigate the legends and aspirations of the institution, and of some individuals within the institution, through official discourses and self-narrated life histories respectively. I am interested in how individuals' experiences (of life) can be simultaneously unique and speak of the broader historical-spatial context/s in which they and their contemporaries are embedded. Rhetorically, this connection between the specific and general is explicit – these individuals' life-history

¹ *Talimu youtian gongsi zhihuiibu* 塔里木油田公司指挥部.

narratives are interwoven with the state/institutional narratives of Tazhi, of the Chinese oil industry more generally, and of the frontier. The legends of the Daqing oilfield (in north-east China's Heilongjiang Province) are particularly influential, having been adopted by the Tarim oil company and adapted to fit its current self-image. Two key legends emerge – a *legend of hardship* and sacrifice and a *legend of potential*. I argue that although legends almost always include nostalgia, the dominant legends of contemporary Tazhi are oriented towards the future, not the past, even as they draw on the past to construct the future. "Using the past to serve the present" (and in an attempt to define the future) in this way is also a characteristic of the life-history narratives; the study traces *how people got to where they are* and highlights how different micro-cohorts within the oil company are privileged or disadvantaged by their pasts.

Ayxem Eli, University of Tasmania

"From Han to Uyghur: construction and dissolution of ethnic identity in Hami, Xinjiang (1880s – 1980s)"

Joshua L. Freeman

Lutpulla Mutellip: Whose Martyr?

Almost every aspect of Lutpulla Mutellip's short life (1922-1945) is disputed. Accounts diverge regarding the Uyghur poet's home town, his date of birth, and the circumstances of his death. Even more contested, though, are the meanings attached to his life and work. For a poet who lived only to his early twenties and left behind a slim oeuvre of modest literary impact, Lutpulla Mutellip has emerged since his death as a remarkably important figure in several competing narratives of modern Uyghur history.

This paper engages canonization as a social and literary process. I will consider how Lutpulla Mutellip came to be a martyr for traditions often seen as antagonistic and mutually exclusive, and attempt to trace the contingent circumstances which enabled his elevation to rival but overlapping cultural pantheons. A central concern will be the crucial role small-scale personal networks often play in determining which events are remembered as history, as well as the ways in which this history is interpreted.

I will also interrogate the concept of martyrdom, and attempts by different groups to tap long-standing cultural norms in creating and commemorating martyrs for contemporary causes. The radically divergent meanings attributed to Lutpulla Mutellip's life and death will be contextualized through a cross-cultural comparison of the construction and defense of canonical figures, particularly in instances where rival narratives have asymmetrical access to the tools of shaping discourse.

Anthony Garnaut, University of Melbourne

Whose New Dominion? A Gansu perspective on the history of Xinjiang

Joseph Fletcher glossed Xinjiang (Ch. 新疆 'New Dominion') as the New Dominion specifically of Gansu province, rather than of the Qing empire as a whole. This was

presumably due to the title of the early Qing governors responsible for maintaining peace in the Tarim basin. Gansu is a borderland province under Chinese administration with a large and politically powerful Muslim population, and Xinjiang history viewed from Gansu is distinct from the perspectives of the Chinese imperial centre, the steppe empire and the oasis city that have dominated the historiography of Xinjiang. This paper presents a survey of Xinjiang history from the perspective of Gansu, highlighting the strong political and cultural connections that were established between the Muslims the Muslims and Buddhists of the upper reaches of the Yellow River and the peoples of the Turpan and Tarim basins and Zungharia, and the prominent role played by Tungans (Chinese Muslims) in the Qing and Republican administration of Xinjiang.

Tim Grose, Indiana University

The ‘Peacocks’ are Leaving China’s Northwest, and so are some Uyghurs

This paper examines a very specific segment of the People Republic of China’s (PRC) Uyghur population – graduates of the “Xinjiang Class” (Ch. Xinjiang neidi gaozhong ban; Uy. ichkiri ölkilärdiki Xinjiang toluq ottura sinipliri), a boarding school program that educates mostly ethnic Uyghur senior-secondary (gaozhong) students at designated schools located in eastern China, and their decisions not to return to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) after completing their senior-secondary and university educations. These Uyghurs cite discrimination at the hands of Han Chinese, difficulties finding work suitable to their abilities and expertise, and opportunities to gain experience abroad or in China’s more developed eastern cities as the main motivations for not wanting to return to Xinjiang. Regardless of the differences in their reasons, I contend that by not returning to Xinjiang, which is strongly encouraged by China’s Ministry of Education and the XUAR’s provincial-level government, these Uyghur graduates of the Xinjiang Class are refusing to participate in China’s nation building project and are challenging their membership in the imagined “Chinese nation” (Zhonghua minzu).

Laura J. Newby, University of Oxford

Bondage on Qing China’s north-western frontier

Despite the extensive literature on global slavery and servitude, human bondage in Xinjiang (Eastern Turkestan) during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, has been largely neglected. Here bondage did not discriminate between ethnic, racial or religious groups and fulfilled a wide range of social, economic and political functions, reflecting both the region’s geographical position at the edge of Central Asia and its political position as first a dependency and then province of Qing China. The paper discusses the nature of the forms of bondage that emerged in this unique geo-political setting and suggests that the emancipation of Xinjiang’s ‘British’ slaves at the end of the nineteenth century and the gradual decline of bondage resulted from a convergence of local, regional and global forces.

David O'Brien, University College Cork

The mountains are high and the emperor is far away: How the misrule of Wang Lequan brought Uyghur and Han closer together.

Based on three periods of field research carried out in Urumchi in June 2009, November 2009 and November 2010, as well as a close analysis of local, national and international media; this paper will examine how in the aftermath of 7/5 many Han and Uyghur residents were united in a belief that the central and local authorities had grievously mismanaged the situation.

The removal of XUAR Party Secretary Wang Lequan was celebrated by both groups. The unprecedented scenes of September 4th 2009 when a crowd of up to 20,000 mostly Han protestors gathered in Urumchi's People's Square calling for Wang's resignation, forced the central authorities to face up to the fact that it is not just Uyghurs, but increasingly large sections of the Han population who are becoming disaffected.

This paper will examine how Wang, a member of the politburo, and his Shandong clique were accused by both ethnic groups of ruling Xinjiang as if it were their personal fiefdom and how the severe restrictions enacted after 7/5 were almost universally opposed and brought real hardship to all communities. Wang left behind a legacy of corruption, nepotism and harsh retaliation that was as much a source of anger for Han as Uyghur. While he could keep Xinjiang relatively stable a blind eye was turned to this in Beijing but by allowing him such unrestricted control over the region, this paper will ask if Beijing has provoked an unforeseen and potentially deeply destabilizing situation.

Joanne Smith-Finley, University of Newcastle, UK

'Turkestan Lovesongs', 'New Flamenco' and the Emergence of the 'World Citizen' in Urban Xinjiang

In this paper, I explore how geo-political territory (Xinjiang, tr. 'New Dominion'), identity (regional versus global) and cultural ownership are transmitted, represented and contested through lyrical texts, musical styles and instrumentation in popular song, as well as through visual texts in pop music videos and new media (e.g. YouTube). I examine two singers who enjoy popularity both within Xinjiang and more broadly across China/the East Asia region: Arken, the Uyghur 'Guitar King' who promotes a style of pop fusion known as 'New Flamenco', originally inspired by the Gypsy Kings; and Dao Lang, a Sichuanese (Han) immigrant to Ürümchi who paints himself as a *Xin Xinjiangren* ('new Xinjiangese') and draws on traditional Uyghur musical instruments to infuse his rock versions of Chinese revolutionary classics. I analyse how the production, transmission and consumption of oral, musical and visual texts is manipulated by artists and audience and comes to represent two distinct identities: Xinjiang (the territory) as a 'bounded', inalienable part of the New China vs. Xinjiang (the indigenous peoples) as part of a 'boundless', global community that is open to and influenced by Central Asian, Middle Eastern and Western cultural flows. Finally, I emphasise how Chinese - the language of the 'coloniser' - is increasingly the vehicle through which the new Uyghur 'world citizen' transmits this alternative identity, and suggest that the Uyghur language may yet turn out to be less 'fixed' a culture symbol than previously thought.

Jun Sugawara, ILCAA, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

New Approach to Xinjiang Urban History: *Beyond the "Demolition" of Old Kashgar*

In recent discourse on the “Xinjiang problem”, the so-called “demolition” of Kashgar is a topic which has captured the attention of the international community. A series of developmental projects, including “Reform and opening-up (*gaige-kaifang* 改革开放)”, “The Great Western Development Plan (*xibu da kaifa* 西部大开发)” and, most recently, Kashgar's designation as a “Special Economic Zone (*jingji tequ* 经济特区)”, have precipitated increasingly rapid transformation and upheaval in the ancient Silk Road city. In particular, the hastened redevelopment of Kashgar's old city since the beginning of 21st century caused widespread concern. Expat Uyghur organisations, the non-Chinese mass media, and individual bloggers charged that the Chinese authorities were intent on obliterating Uyghur culture, and a less outspoken but similar feeling persisted within the Xinjiang Uyghur community.

This paper will attempt to show a general picture of Old Kashgar from the standpoint of urban history studies. How has Kashgar been studied until today, and what sort of issues in Kashgar's urban history have aroused interest or controversy? The answers will be given through a comprehensive review of previous studies and available historical sources, both in foreign and local languages. First, the material issues on Old Kashgar (such as the overview of city plan or information on popular facilities) are on the whole well-recorded in travelogues dating from the late 19th century to the present day, as well as in academic surveys since the 1980s. But the availability of information on the detailed, micro-level, structures of the city and on less-popular facilities, is hardly satisfactory. For example, on individual mosques in each quarter (*mähällä*) and small sacred spots (*mazars*) in the side streets (*kocha*) of old Kashgar, complete information is scanty. Moreover, the details of urban infrastructural facilities such as ponds (*köl*, *kölchäk*) or waterways (*ustang*) are also still unknown. However, thanks to great contributions by Saguch Toru and Ildikó Bellér Hann on the matters of historical realities of Kashgar local community, we now have access to rich general knowledge about everyday religious life and religious orders prior to 1949.

The next step is for us to verify this general information by referring to specific cases in the local community. In particular, the historical reality of *mähällä*, which is possibly a minimum unit of the local community, is still countable as unexplored field. The current study aims to overcome these problems by employing a new approach, using “documentary sources” from both the official archives (*dang'an* 档案) and private family archives which have come to be partially available in recent years. Furthermore, in order to acquire fundamental and comprehensive information of the city of Old Kashgar, meticulous and systematic fieldwork should also be conducted immediately.

The Role of the Central Asian Uyghur Intellectual in Soviet Xinjiang Policy

This paper focuses on the formation of the Uyghur intellectual class in the USSR and its role in developing Soviet policy towards Xinjiang during the early 20th century. Central Asia is a region of importance to the Uyghur Diaspora due to its shared border and strong historical ties with the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China.

The Soviet Union's policy of encouraging the Muslim Turkic people of Central Asia to form separate national republics along ethnic borders began in 1924. This policy led to the formation of the republics of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Azerbaijan, and prompted the Uyghur people to seek the establishment of a national republic for themselves.

In the first half of the 20th century, Soviet Russia viewed Xinjiang as an important strategic goal. With the aim of defending its own national interests, Soviet Russia directly involved itself in the political life of the region and attempted to exert political, cultural and economic influence there.

As a result of the ethnic policies and political goals of Soviet Russia, a large number of Uyghur youth attended universities in Soviet cities, including Moscow, Leningrad, and Tashkent, during the 1920s and 1930s. This led to the creation of a sizable Uyghur intellectual class in Soviet Central Asia in the early 20th century.

The Soviet Union carefully monitored the cultural and educational development of the Uyghur Diaspora as a whole, using the information to determine the Uyghur situation in Xinjiang. Soviet Uyghur intellectuals mainly played the following two roles in creating the Soviet Union's Xinjiang policy:

- Establishing political influence
- Establishing cultural influence

During the height of Sino-Soviet relations from 1930 to 1940 and from 1960 to 1980, Moscow successfully used Soviet Uyghur intellectuals and the Soviet Uyghur Diaspora in shaping its China policy.