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EXAMING NARRATIVES OF PLACE: REPRESENTATIONS OF  
XINJIANG IN TOURISM AND GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION TEXTS

By

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Bachelors of Arts, St. Mary's College of Maryland, 2004

Thesis

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines how Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, located in northwest China, is represented in tourism and geographic education literature. The research demonstrates the limited and distorted place narratives of Xinjiang that are promoted by the government-backed tourist enterprise in China for consumption by English language speakers; as well as, the inadequate and uncritical representations of the region currently available to students in the United States. Qualitative content analysis methodology is employed to investigate the narrative representations of Xinjiang contained within tourist brochures, geography textbooks, and regionally appropriate curricular guides. The thesis includes a body of geographic lesson plans pertaining to Xinjiang I created that are informed by the research results. The purpose of this thesis is to move toward a more nuanced understanding of Xinjiang as a dynamic region of global significance, challenge prevailing stereotypes of the region, and strengthen geography literacy, particularly among school aged students.

## **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost I must thank my parents, John and Barbara Church, for their unconditional support and for having the wisdom to remind me that, when I have felt like a boy trapped at the bottom of a well, writing a thesis is just an academic exercise. I must also thank my wife, Ali, for her unconditional support and for keeping life pleasant with her unfailing humor and patience.

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

*The state is invisible: it must be personified before it can be seen, symbolized before it can be loved, imagined before it can be perceived*—Michael Walzer (see Denison, 2009, 1170).

Narrative representations of place are a precondition of geographic knowledge. The above quotation encapsulates a complex process by which we ascribe meaning onto socially and politically bound space. Space only becomes meaningful when we become aware of its presence. The process of transforming empty space into a meaningful construct necessitates first visualizing in the mind's eye what, or more importantly who, occupies that space. The cultural landscape, or social meaning, of space is rendered intelligible only when we attach to it some of the available representations while disregarding others (Davis, 2005). When stabilized over time, narrative representations of place have the potential to become deeply imbedded knowledge that have enormous implications for how we understand and interact with the world.

This thesis examines how Xinjiang Uyghur<sup>1</sup> Autonomous Region, located in northwest China, is represented in tourism and geographic education literature. The research demonstrates the limited and distorted place narratives of Xinjiang that are promoted by the government-backed tourist enterprise in China for consumption by English language speakers; as well as, the inadequate and uncritical representations of the region currently available to students in the United States. Qualitative content analysis methodology is employed to investigate the narrative representations of Xinjiang contained within tourist brochures, geography textbooks, and regionally appropriate curricular guides as well as to gathering data from teacher members of the Montana Geographic Alliance. Informed by the

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<sup>1</sup> Several spellings of Uyghur appear in the literature: Uyghur, Uygur, Uighur, Uigur, and Weigur. I have chosen to use Uyghur, except where the term is contained in direct quotation, as it is widely used in contemporary academic literature and better reflects Turkic phonology.



research results, I have created a body of geographic lesson plans pertaining to Xinjiang. The purpose of this thesis is to move toward a more nuanced understanding of Xinjiang as a dynamic region of global significance, challenge prevailing stereotypes of the region, and strengthen geography literacy, particularly among school aged students.

For students to become responsible citizens, capable of making informed decisions for personal and public good, they must be aware of the dynamic trends that have, and continue to, shape our interdependent world. Xinjiang, as a focal point of academic inquiry, offers a point of introduction to influential historic trends, ideologies, and events that have shaped our world. Importantly, knowledge of Xinjiang's incredible diversity and position on the periphery of current representations of China will help students contextualize China as a dynamic nation-state that faces challenges related to its size, heterogeneous population, and political history.

### **Contributions to Geography and Research Questions:**

This thesis makes three substantive contributions to the body of knowledge within the discipline of geography. These contributions are divided as follows: First, through qualitative content analysis of Xinjiang tourism brochures I explore the relationship between narrative representations of place and the exercise of state power as they have unraveled in Xinjiang. Continuing, I assess the extent to which Xinjiang is covered in geographic education through an extensive survey and qualitative content analysis of geography textbooks, and curriculum guides. Finally, thus informed, I create a body of lesson plans and teaching resources pertaining to Xinjiang that are available to educators via the Xinjiang Geographic Education Curriculum website.

My research has been driven by a series of questions that have guided my inquiry throughout the different stages of this thesis. These are divided into four

parts: initial framing questions; questions pertaining to tourism texts, and geographic education texts; and finally questions that guided the creation of geographic lesson plans.

Part 1: Initial questions that prompted this thesis included: What is currently known about Xinjiang? And, why is a geographic understanding of Xinjiang worth pursuing?

Part 2: During the analysis of Xinjiang tourist literature I tried to answer: How are textual and graphic representations of Xinjiang used to create discursive meanings? What are the implications of a tourism driven narrative of place presented in the brochures for geographic understanding about Xinjiang and its place within China.

Part 3: The analysis of geography textbooks and curricular resources was driven by the questions: What materials in geography and allied sciences are currently available to American teachers about Xinjiang? And, what is taught about Xinjiang in Montana?

Part 4: Finally, the lesson plans I created addressed the questions: What is important to know about Xinjiang? And, how can knowledge about Xinjiang help students challenge long-standing misconceptions about China and contextualize broader social, cultural, and political issues unfolding in Eurasia?

### **Arrangement of Thesis**

This section provides a brief synopsis of each chapter's content. Chapter II presents a review of the literature in the fields of cultural geography and geography education. The chapter outlines the theoretical position of this thesis within the geographic discussion of space and place. The discussion theoretically links the core concepts that frame this analysis: concepts of space, place, representation, discourse, power, imagined geographies, identity, and nationalism. The chapter continues by discussing the role of geography education in the reproduction of narratives of place.

Chapter III is dedicated to the methodological approach used during research. Qualitative content analysis was used to investigate the place narratives of Xinjiang embedded in tourism brochures and geographic educational materials. The chapter introduces the data sources and lays out the analytical procedure.

Chapter IV is devoted to geographic and historic background on Xinjiang that is needed to fully appreciate the discussion of research results. Xinjiang's physical and human geography are covered first, followed by discussions of Uyghur history, Chinese nationalism, the Chinese ethnic identity discourse, production of ethnic space in China, and issues at the heart of persisting ethnic tensions in the region.

Chapter V offers a discussion of initial research findings gathered from a survey of scholarly databases. The results of extensive database searches for cultural geography literature show that very little research on Xinjiang has been published in the academic field.

Chapter VI is dedicated to exploring the construction and contested nature of space in Xinjiang through a qualitative content analysis of tourism literature. The chapter reviews the ethnic tourism economy in China and tourism in Xinjiang before launching into the qualitative discourse analysis of a series of Xinjiang tourism brochures published by a Chinese government tourism authority. The research illustrates the extent to which representations of place are controlled and manipulated by the Chinese Communist Party apparatus to reinforce real and perceived boundaries at the core of the Chinese national narrative.

Chapter VII surveys currently available textbooks, curriculum guides, teaching materials, and lesson plans pertaining to Xinjiang in order to identify the extent to which Xinjiang is covered in geographic education. The results of this inquiry show that almost no content is dedicated to Xinjiang in secondary school geography textbooks, very little in the way of curriculum guides or lesson plans, and little recognition of the region among teachers. While increased content on Xinjiang in college level geography textbooks is promising, the quality of coverage at all levels is questionable. Finally, I compare representations of Xinjiang and Tibet in geographic education materials and media, and attempt to answer why Tibet is comparatively well covered while Xinjiang remains a *terra incognita* in the popular mind.

Informed by the results of the content analysis, Chapter VIII contains lesson plans I developed that are devoted to Xinjiang. At least two lesson plans were created for each grade level (K-4, 5-8, 9-12). All lesson plans have been created in line with the content standards and benchmarks set forth in the *Geography For Life: National Geography Standards* (1994).

## **Chapter II**

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter reviews the bodies of cultural and education geography literature in order to situate this thesis within the broad field of geographic knowledge. The opening section is dedicated to the considerable body of literature on space and place in cultural geography. The discussion links the concepts of space, place, representation, discourse, power, imagined geographies, identity, and nationalism.

The chapter continues with a review of literature on geographic education. The links between the production of knowledge, exercise of power, and education are discussed with regard to the reproduction of homogenized place knowledge in geography textbooks. The section cites how and why the West's geographic knowledge of China has been framed as it has. The chapter concludes with a look at current geographic literacy about China among young Americans.

#### **Cultural Geography:**

##### **Contributions to the Study of Space and Place of Xinjiang**

The geographic literature on space and place provides the foundation for cultural geography as it informs my research. Informed by Marxist critiques of capitalist spaces, feminist concepts of performance and positionality, and post-modern understandings of the subjective nature of knowledge, cultural geographers have problematized the epistemology of absolute space as an inert container. Neil Smith built upon the work of David Harvey to articulate a conventionalization of space, which holds that space, far from being fixed and passive, is dynamic and in a constant state of being created and recreated through the actions and the meanings

ascribed onto it by society (Hubbard 2009). Meaning of space comes about as a person constructs a conceptualization of a place by noticing some of the attributes of a place and attaching to it some of the meanings available while disregarding other potential meanings (Davis, 2005).

The meaning of space depends on its symbolic and social functions. Key to this understanding of space is the concept of representation, the process of rendering something intelligible or identifiable. According to Saussure (1966; see Johnston 2000), representations do not describe a pre-existing reality, but constitute “what counts and is valued as reality.” As Martin Heidegger (1962; see Johnston 2000) puts it, “the world is never that which stands before us and can be seen,” meaning our perception of the world is always mediated through *apriori* representations that inform our worldview. Accordingly, multiple competing interpretations of place are always possible.

However, when a specific series of representations and practices are stabilized over time they are understood to attain a degree of fixedness known as discourse (Butler 1993). Discursive knowledge has particular influence over how identities are constituted, social relations established, and political and ethical outcomes made possible. Discourses “shape the contours of the taken for granted world,” naturalizing and universalizing a particular subject formation and view of the world (Johnston 2000).

Concentrating on the image of the Middle East, as created in European literature and art; Edward Said demonstrated the discursive link between the production of knowledge and power to exert control over space. Power at its most basic can be understood to refer to the ability of one agent to affect the actions or attitudes of another. Here we can also understand power to mean a set of strategies, discourses, and technologies of government (John Allen cited in Johnston 2000). In his seminal work *Orientalism*, Said (1978) revealed the images and knowledge of the Orient produced by the West over many generations to be highly politicized narratives of place, created far from the physical territory they described. As Said

employed it, the term 'Orientalism' refers to the totalizing essentialism, ethnocentrism and racism imbedded in the West's 'knowledge' of the Orient. Said asserted that political and economic dominance of West over East relies on the constant maintenance and reproduction of discursive narrative knowledge, or 'imagined geographies' of the East (Hubbard 2009). In this sense, control of the production of space, real or imagined, is instrumental in the exercise of authority.

According to Benedict Anderson (1983), 'imagined geographies' are made real through the controlled representation of spaces crafted to reinforce political narratives of identity, nationalism, power, and authority. Histories of founding fathers, documents, and formative events are woven into nationalistic narratives that mobilize strong feelings of community connectedness between individuals in a way that consolidates their identification with a common historical and national inheritance.

According to Eric Hobsbawm (1983), crucial to the success of these imagined geographies are the invention of equally powerful symbolism in the form of flags, anthems, and emblems that demarcate national space that draws together feelings of belonging, solidarity, and identification between citizens. "From this perspective, national identity is decisively not a primordial gift, nor even a coincidence of geographic location, but the willed incorporation into an 'imagined community' (Johnston 2000, 364). Thus conceived state power and space are co-constructed through ongoing narrative performance of 'imagined geographies.'

### **Geographic Education**

The links between the production of knowledge, exercise of power, and education have long been recognized and much has been written about the nexus between ideology, the state, nation building, and education (Zajde 2009, Vanhulle 2009, Merrett 1999, Myers 2001). According to Merrett (1999, 598), "Public schools are one of the most important institutions of socialization and social reproduction in

the United States.” It follows then that school textbooks, as the primary curricular resource for most social science teachers in America (Bednarz 2004), play a significant role in the transmission of national values through promoting patriotism, and normative political socialization (Zajde 2009). The majority of literature on the politicization of social science textbooks focus on undemocratic and authoritarian regimes, with Russia and China frequently mentioned in the company of other autocratic states.

Nationalistic points of view have long influenced how regional social studies materials have been crafted and narratives of place deployed. Indeed historic and spatial narrative is a convenient format for creation knowledge and understanding of an event or phenomena (Vanhulle 2009). Given the audience, the epistemological character of most textbooks is drastically different than those of journals of academic readership. The author may not be compelled to justify the knowledge presented through citation and footnotes. The impact instead is the presentation of knowledge contained in the text as indisputable fact and the author as an omniscient source of knowledge (ibid 2009). The facts only take on meaning from their place in the narrative, as the narrative ending provides meaning for all proceeding events. “The narrative does not portray an event, it is not a story supported by evidence, but a statement of the evidence itself” (ibid 2009, 268). Therefore, the nature of textbooks lends them to the presentation of politicized narratives of place and history, whether intentional or not.

The uncritical reputation of these narratives may have the effect of creating ‘homogenized knowledge’ (Mirsky 1973) or “discipline defined mythologies that become highly simplified narratives which ascribe fixed and coherent meaning to selected events, people and places that help to constitute or bolster particular versions of self, society, and the world” (Bell 2009, 5). The entrenchedness of narratives of place in textbooks is thoroughly exposed in Garth Andrew Myers’s 2001 analysis of representations of Africa in introductory human geography textbooks.



Myers (2001, 522) asserts that the uncritical repetition and reproduction of particular images, figures of speech, and stereotypes in media shape an accepted understanding of Africa as a “confusing” and “distant Other” where “events do not follow any pattern recognizable to western reason.” Myers demonstrates through content analysis that these understandings of Africa are reproduced via tropes—repeated figures of speech and representations—imbedded in the texts of current human geography textbooks.

Myers (2001) notes that textbook authors place surprisingly little emphasis on the current research findings by geographers that may refute or contest the prevailing negative, ahistorical, and geographic simplifications that characterize our understanding of Africa. He goes on to suggest that perhaps these textbooks are following conventions that reflect the interests of the market.

While it is recognized that geographic literacy is imperative to preparing students to navigate an increasingly global future, supply of appropriate teaching materials has not kept pace with the heightened demand for geographic information, techniques, and perspectives. As Bednarz (2003, 462) states, “The most salient aspect of this demand is in education reform, especially K-12 where geographic education is indeed expanding rapidly.” This is certainly the case when it comes to curriculum materials pertaining to China, which generally impart homogenous, Han-centric, understandings of China.

There currently exists no research on Xinjiang’s representation in geography textbooks. However there is a body of literature that examines how China has been represented in western academic and textbook literature. Traditional narratives of China have stressed national politics, diplomacy, and the lives and thoughts of significant individuals (Wasserstrom 1992,). According to Mirsky (1973), certain characteristics of Chinese society and history have become “homogenized knowledge” in history textbooks; these include foot binding, opium, and the barbarian threat. He goes on to suggest knowledge of China is framed as one-dimensional, ahistorical and outside of the normal processes of change through the

citing oft repeated ‘facts’. Textbooks report that “The Chinese have *always* been agricultural people” and “Chinese culture *arose* in the Yellow River Valley” (Mirsky 1973, 91).<sup>2</sup> The term ‘Chinese’ is used uncritically to imply a historical, geographical, and cultural unity that is not supported by the wealth of academic literature concerning China’s diversity and heterogeneous development.

Wasserstrom (1992) postulated several reasons for the persistence of unproblematic historical narratives about China in the literature. First, he makes the astute, but obvious, observation that the difficulty and unfamiliarity of western researchers with Asian languages has limited access to information and archives. Second, he acknowledges the politicization of Chinese studies, with competing imperative ideologies of the Nationalists and Communist camps since mid-twentieth century. And finally, he refers to our understanding of Chinese ‘otherness’ as shaped by political factors particular to the western world, such as the experience of McCarthyism and the Vietnam War.

Further more, current trends indicate an alarming deficit in geographic literacy among young Americans. A report published by Roper Public Affairs (2006, 6), on behalf of the National Geographic Society, damningly states, “Americans are far from alone in the world, but from the perspective of many young Americans we might as well be.” The report goes on to state that young Americans between 18-24 years of age —the most recent graduates of our education system—are unprepared for an increasingly global future, citing findings that indicate young Americans have a limited understanding of the world beyond their country’s borders, place insufficient importance on basic geographic skills, and are ignorant on how the United States fit into the wider world (Roper 2006).

While this study found that nearly seventy percent of young Americans could find China on a map, it also found that young Americans do not recognize the significance of China in comparison to the U.S. Given a multiple choice format,

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<sup>2</sup> Emphasis added.

nearly half incorrectly believe that China has only twice the population of the United States (rather than roughly four times the population), and three-fourths believe that English is the world's most common native language. Fewer than one in five recognized that Chinese is the most commonly spoken first language in the world (Roper 2006).

Given young American's apparent low geographic literacy of China, the development of curriculum about Xinjiang is an opportunity to address significant knowledge deficiencies pertaining to China as a whole, while drawing attention to the histories and geographies of China's non-Han populations. With its extreme topography, dynamic multi-ethnic populations, and intriguing histories Xinjiang as a topic of inquiry is ripe with provocative content suitable for the development of engaging curriculum for students at all levels.

### **Summary**

This chapter reviews the cultural geography and geographic education literature that situates my research in the field of geography. The cultural geography literature on space and place illuminates the relationship between discursive narratives of place and the exercise of state power. The geographic education literature shows how geographic education has contributed to the reproduction of discursive place narratives. Building upon this theoretical and conceptual foundation, this thesis seeks to extend and apply these core concepts to an analysis of narratives of Xinjiang.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodological Approach**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter introduces the analytic methodology employed during the research phase of this thesis. Included are initial findings that contextualize the state of knowledge about Xinjiang in academia. The methodology of this thesis is qualitative content analysis of textual and visual representations of Xinjiang. The material analyzed comes from two bodies of Xinjiang place narratives texts. First, I analyze Xinjiang place narratives as they have been deployed through a series of Xinjiang tourism brochures published by a state operated Chinese tourism authority. Second, I analyze how Xinjiang is represented in geographic education materials, textbooks, and web-based curricular guides.

Ontologically speaking, qualitative content analysis assumes documents not produced specifically for social science research can be ‘read’ or interpreted for underlying themes. In this thesis the content analysis consisted of recursive and reflexive movement between data collection, concept development, and interpretation (Bryman, 2001). During research I endeavored to be systematic and analytical, but not rigid, allowing themes illustrated by textual evidence to emerge during the study. Inquiry was driven by the questions: What information is conveyed by the text? What information is conveyed by non-verbal message components—pictures, maps, graphs, tables, etc.? What issues are highlighted and what is occluded? And, how is Xinjiang related to other topics in the text?

#### **A View of Xinjiang’s Cultural Geography from Academia**

In the initial stage of preparing this thesis I attempted to ascertain to what degree Xinjiang, as a topic of inquiry, is covered in the body of published qualitative cultural geography literature. Using academic database search engines: Epsco Host, Academic Search Premier, LexisNexis Academic, SAGE Premier, OvidSP, and others, I

poured through thousands of documents, skimming articles and reading abstracts, searching for qualitative cultural geography articles that focused on Xinjiang. While search results generated considerable literature in the fields of physical geography, the body of articles devoted to human and cultural geography research in Xinjiang appears to be limited to the quantitative research analysis of official census figures. However my research did uncover a small body of qualitative research about Xinjiang from allied fields: anthropology, ethnomusicology, economics, and political science.

Academic database searches for keywords 'Xinjiang' and 'Geography' result in thousands of article citations. However, of these the vast majority are quantitative physical geography articles with titles such as, "Wavelet analysis and nonparametric test for climate change in Tarim River Basin of Xinjiang during 1959-2006" (Yaning 2007).<sup>3</sup> Of 2,281 results found using the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library at the University of Montana geography database subject search, twelve articles appear to be relevant to qualitative cultural geography. A search for "Xinjiang" in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* results in four articles: one on Tibet, two about development in China, and one on the environmental politics of China and India. A search of the *Professional Geographer* for "Xinjiang" and related topics results in five articles: two about transportation infrastructure throughout China, two about regional migration and change within China, and one about landscape change in Jiangxi Province. Of one hundred results for a search for "Xinjiang" on OvidSP, the Mansfield Library's top human geography article database, eight appear to be related to human geography.

Among the articles that appear relevant to cultural geography, the majority are in fact political science articles that focus on analysis of regional geopolitics and security issues. The journal articles in geography and allied sciences generally focus

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<sup>3</sup> This is the first result on the Mansfield Library's top human geography database, OvidSP. I did not mine for this.

on environmental, demographic, and economic change that employ abstract quantitative research paradigms (Fan 2002, Chan 2008, Pannell 2006, Toops 2004).

There are very few published articles based on qualitative fieldwork in Xinjiang. This is understandable as Xinjiang is a politically sensitive topic for the Chinese state due to the sensitivity of its border with Central Asia and the legacy of ethnic and social unrest in the area. Joanna N. Smith (2006) refers to a period between 1979, when social science was officially sanctioned in the PRC, and the 1990's when qualitative fieldwork was still possible in Xinjiang. The period of openness seems to have changed as events such as Tiananmen Square (1989), the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991), and incidents of ethnic violence took place in Xinjiang throughout the nineties (Smith 2006). One widely cited source to emerge from this era was Justin Rudelson's *Oasis Identities*, which explored contemporary Uyghur identity. However, Rudelson (1997, 15) acknowledged the "political difficulty of conducting systematic interviewing" and adopted an *ad hoc* method of street interviewing. Certainly the incidents of ethnic violence in June 2009 demonstrate Xinjiang remains a charged environment. The Chinese government is not likely to loosen control over social science research, for fear qualitative fieldwork may expose criticisms or grievances against the Chinese state.

Authors who have conducted recent, or relatively recent, qualitative fieldwork in Xinjiang are overwhelmingly anthropologists. They include: Joanne N. Smith, I. Beller-Hann, Cristina Cesaro, Gardner Bovingdon, and of course Dru Gladney, the heavy-weight in the field of Xinjiang scholars. Other scholars well represented in the literature on Xinjiang are Rachael Harris, an ethno-musicologist, and Linda Benson, a historian. The literature generally focuses on the process of negotiating ethnic identity in Xinjiang.

The sole cultural geographer I have been able to find publishing about Xinjiang is Stanley Toops. Toops' early publications, "Xingjian's Handicraft Industry" (1993) and "Tourism in Turpan" (1999), are focused on the geographies of tourism and are informed by fieldwork in Xinjiang and time he spent in Xinjiang

as a tour guide. His other published articles about Xinjiang are quantitative in nature and focus on analysis of demographics through census data and the increasing likelihood of water depletion and scarcity in the region (Toops 2004).

### **Data Sources**

The tourism brochures were gathered in Xinjiang during a July 2008 faculty field excursion. The brochures are published by the Association of Cultural Exchanges with Foreign Countries, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Although I can find no information on the publisher, I can only believe, given the organization's typically Soviet Socialist name and rather unimaginative format, the Association of Cultural Exchanges with Foreign Countries, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region must be a party-state apparatus. These brochures are divided into two categories: "The Folk Culture" of Xinjiang's ethnic minorities, and those that concentrate on Xinjiang's cities of touristic interest series.

Eight nationalities are represented within the "The Folk Culture" series: Uyghur, Tajik, Kazak, Mongolian, Daur, Hui, and Han. Constructions of minority national character are reinforced in their placement within tourist destination cities. The cities depicted in the brochure series can be divided into two distinct categories: the Han-dominated northern cities of Urumqi, Shihezi and Karamay, and the Uyghur cities around the Tarim Basin.

Data for the geographic education portion of research was generated through a survey of eleven geography textbooks and nine curriculum guides. I focused my attention on chapters or resources devoted entirely to China and Central Asia, and to the themes of ethnic minorities, religion, cross-cultural or regional interactions, physical geography, human rights, and contemporary issues in China or Central Asia. The secondary grade school textbooks included: *People Places and Change: Eastern Hemisphere* (Sager 2003); *Eastern World* (Salter 2007); *World Geography and Cultures* (Boehm 2008); *World Cultures and Geography* (Bednarz 2005); and

*World Geography: Building a Global Perspective* (Baerwald 2009). Introductory college level world regional geography textbooks were: *World Regional Geography* (Johnson 2010); *Globalization of and Diversity* (Rowntree 2011); *World Regional Geography Concepts* (Mihelic 2009); and *World Regions in Global Context* (Marston 2011). Geography of China textbooks were: *China's Geography* (Veeck 2007); *Changing China: a Geographic Appraisal* (Hsieh 2004); and *A Historical Geography of China* (Tuan 2008). The textbooks were selected mainly from the Mansfield Center's Curriculum Material Collection, bibliography searches, and teaching professionals. Criteria for selection included topic and subject matter, as well as, publication within the last ten years.

Three published curriculum guides were analyzed including *From Oil to Silk* (Amster 2005); *Teaching about the Islamic World* (Mowell 2006); and *Ethnic Minority Groups in China* (Brown 2003). Six Internet based curricular resources were examined:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/lessons/index.html>;  
<http://www.yale.edu/macmillan/pier/resources/lessons/curriculum.htm>;  
<http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/geography/>;  
[http://jsis.washington.edu/ellison/outreach\\_silk\\_curr.shtml](http://jsis.washington.edu/ellison/outreach_silk_curr.shtml);  
<http://www.einaudi.cornell.edu/curriculum/monkey/index.asp>; and  
[http://www.indiana.edu/~iaunrc/outreach/teaching\\_resources.shtml](http://www.indiana.edu/~iaunrc/outreach/teaching_resources.shtml).

My search of curriculum guides and web-based lesson plans was delimited by concentrating on content sponsored or recommended by major universities with reputations for strong Central and East Asian Studies programs. I allowed my search to snowball by investigating the bibliographies and suggested resources on university department websites that I knew to have research interests in Xinjiang. I continued to search curricular resources until my results were saturated. From the vast quantity of curricular resources available I selected lesson plans for content relevant to Xinjiang.



## Procedure

I first analyzed the tourism brochures. Analysis for all texts involved an iterative process of identifying themes of how constructs of Xinjiang are introduced and represented in the text. After a cursory reading of the texts I divided the brochures into conceptually similar categories to be analyzed together; however, an analysis across categories was necessary given the complexity and interrelatedness of representational narratives of identity and place. Among the “The Folk Culture” series, the Hui and Han brochures stood out as modern and cosmopolitan in contrast to the rather traditional representations of other ethnicities; Uyghur, Tajik, Kazak, Mongolian, and Daur. Similarly, the city brochures were divided into two categories that mirrored the ethnic division of the region. The Han-dominated northern cities of Urumqi, Shihezi, and Karamay were represented differently than the Uyghur cities of the southern Tarim Basin.

The analysis continued with the geographic education texts. I began by skimming texts to determine their relevance and to note topics of interest. Having familiarized myself with the text I continued with thorough reading of texts during which I isolated passages related to Xinjiang. Here I systematically copied relevant passages and took copious notes regarding the content, tone, bias, quality of information, and glaring omissions. I then wrote a brief summary of my impression of each text in which I began the process of teasing-out prominent themes. Initially I was deliberate about reading each text discreetly, and focused on avoiding *a priori* judgment. I coded the texts using themes that emerged, and then created tables of the results. This helped me visualize the information. As I progressed I recognized repetition of prominent themes and began to form in my mind an understanding of the body of literature.

Next, I analyzed the curricular resources and lesson plans, which proved a more heterogeneous body of literature. Analysis of these diverse resources led to the emergence of new themes. This was followed by the review of introductory level world regional geography texts. Finally I analyzed introductory college level

world regional geography textbooks. When I had studied all the curricular resources, I returned to the body of textbooks in order to reexamine passages for prevalence of themes that had emerged later.

Having read all the texts, I created a table of the themes that had emerged and the texts. I examined the themes for contextual redundancy and went about consolidating and refining the table. For example, in virtually all subsections devoted to religion in China, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism were nested together. Likewise, if there was discussion of other religions these were similarly grouped, more or less as an afterthought by the authors. Therefore, I felt comfortable combining Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism into one category titled, for lack of a better term, “Three Chinese Religions.” Similarly, I created a catchall category entitled “Other Religions.” However, given this project’s focus on Xinjiang, I maintained yet a third religious theme, “Islam,” reserved for any discussion of Islam, Muslims, or Islamic traditions. Subsequently, I divided the results into two graphs: one pertaining to Xinjiang themes and the other pertaining to representations of China more generally (See Appendix A).

The general dearth of attention paid to Xinjiang and ethnic minorities in China caused some difficulty determining a standard by which to tally texts in any given category. After several iterations I finally determined the most objective way was to utilize the most basic unit of meaning, a single word. For example, texts that include the word “Islam,” however superficial, are tallied in that category. For categories such as “Other Xinjiang Ethnic,” mention of any of Xinjiang’s non-Uyghur or Han nationalities resulted in a tally for that text.

Given this, the tables alone do not constitute a holistic representation of thematic coverage within the texts. Further, the discussion deals with the quality of representation of Xinjiang within the texts. The tables do, however, allow the reader to visualize the general state of knowledge about Xinjiang. Given the rather superficial criteria, the persistence of sparse representation, particularly among secondary school textbooks, is perhaps the most meaningful finding of this exercise.

The viewer will, for example, notice that only two secondary school textbooks contain the word “Islam” in chapters devoted to China.

Utilizing the tables as a point of reference, I continued the analysis with a thorough examination of prominent themes supported by textual evidence. In the process of writing up my findings the salience of certain themes became more apparent, contributing to the in-depth discussion below. Although the process of extracting themes is implicit, validity has been maintained through transparency in decisions made and textual evidence. In this sense, conclusions are clearly and logically supported by quotations from the text so that the results of the analysis are replicable (Patterson 1998).

### **Summary**

As the opening section of this chapter demonstrates, there is little published cultural geography research available concerning the region of Xinjiang, China. To date there are no sources available that focus on the cultural geography of Xinjiang in geography education. Overall, the review demonstrates a general void of published research in the geographic subfields of cultural geography, Xinjiang regional geography, and geographic education. The dearth of attention paid to Xinjiang in qualitative cultural geography research presents a significant opportunity to contribute to the field of geographic knowledge and to contribute to the diversity of ideas, knowledge, and skills available in geography education.

This chapter reviewed the methodological approach utilized in the research for this thesis. The research involved qualitative content analysis of tourism brochures and geography education textbooks and curricular guides. Research involved an iterative process that required movement between data collection, concept development, and interpretation. The chapter documents the selection of sources, describes the data collection process, and the procedure of analysis.

## Chapter IV

### Background Information:

### Xinjiang's Geography and History

#### Introduction

Unproblematic geographic simplicity pervades popularly available place narratives of China. Imagine asking a school-aged child what Chinese people look like and what food they eat. It is likely we all imagine a nearly identical response. However, China is not just the fast paced, economically developed, Han dominated, rice eating, coastal cities and inland industrial centers. China is also a composite of vast, ethnically diverse, western regions that have developed differently through time and space. These regions differ from eastern China significantly in terms of ethnicity, religion, language, economy, landscape, topography, and history.

Among the western regions of China is the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), the geographic representations of which are the focus of this thesis. Xinjiang is the largest political sub-division in China and one of only two provinces in China where Han Chinese do not constitute an ethnic majority.<sup>4</sup> In Xinjiang Han Chinese are outnumbered by a population that is predominantly Turkic and Muslim.

Often referred to as 'Chinese Central Asia', Xinjiang is liminal space characterized by what Bhabha (cited in Hubbard 2004) has referred to as the 'cultural translation' through which meaning is ascribed to space across contesting cultural values and traditions. In this sense, Xinjiang can be thought of as a 'third' or hybridized space that exists in neither China nor Central Asia discretely (Hubbard 2004) where definitive statements about Xinjiang's human geography and history are made difficult.

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<sup>4</sup> Xinjiang and Tibet are the only two provincial level regions in China where Han Chinese are not the majority nationality.

Partisan interests within, as well as beyond, Xinjiang have mobilized contrasting representations of Xinjiang's geography and history in efforts to legitimize their respective claims to the land and its people. The persistence of contested narratives of place has contributed to the politically charged climate in the region in which knowledge and representation are of vital significance. In this sense, virtually all statements about Xinjiang can be interpreted for their political connotations.

Given the politically charged nature of the topic, even the seemingly simple task of providing background information on the region is made difficult as each statement is open for political interpretation and must be considered for its bias and political orientation. Therefore, when conveying information about Xinjiang, here and elsewhere, I endeavor to avoid an uncritical acceptance and repetition of the political rhetoric that pervades secondary literature. I have done my best to relay factual information that is supported by solid and reliable evidence.

This chapter introduces to readers the geographic region of China contemporarily known as Xinjiang. A description of the region's physical geography is followed by a rendering of the region's human geography. A brief synopsis of the region's complex history is included in order to provide readers with historical context needed to understand the complex and contested narratives of place that emerge in later analysis.

### **Physical Geography**

Xinjiang, which borders Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China, comprises roughly one sixth of China's total area (See Figure 1.). Being at the heart of the Eurasian landmass, within Xinjiang is the 'continental pole of inaccessibility'—the point on earth furthest from open water—about two hundred miles north of Urumchi (Garcia-Castellanos 2007). Furthermore, Xinjiang is home to

both the second highest and second lowest points on the earth—K2 at 8,611 meters above sea level and the Turpan Depression at 154 meters below sea level.



Figure 1. Xinjiang's Location in Eurasia (Source: <http://thechinabeat.blogspot.com/2008/04/growing-up-han-reflections-on-xinjiang.html>)

Topographically, Xinjiang is usually divided into three areas. The Dzungar Basin, an arid steppe region bordered by the Altai Mountains to the east, is divided from the Tarim Basin in the south by the Tian Shan Mountains. The Tarim Basin is dominated by the Taklimakan Desert—the second largest drifting sand desert in the world—and contained by the Altun and Kunlun Mountains to the south and the Pamir and Karakorum to the southwest and west. Oasis towns that surround the desert were important stopovers and staging points on the historic 'Silk Roads'. To the east is the Turpan Depression, which contains the important oasis cities of Turpan and Hami. Yet another geographically distinct sub-region of Xinjiang is the Ili Valley, which opens to the west into Kazakhstan (See Figure 2).

Xinjiang's watersheds are almost entirely closed systems; rivers that descend from the mountains disappear into the desert or flow into lakes. Only one of Xinjiang's rivers is connected to open water. The Irtysh River flows out of northern Xinjiang before meeting the Ob River on its way to the Arctic Ocean. The oasis towns of the Tarim are watered by glacier fed springs and rivers from the surrounding mountains. Ancient subterranean aqueducts known as *karez* made possible the expansion of irrigated oasis agriculture that allowed for the urbanization and stratification of oasis population centers.

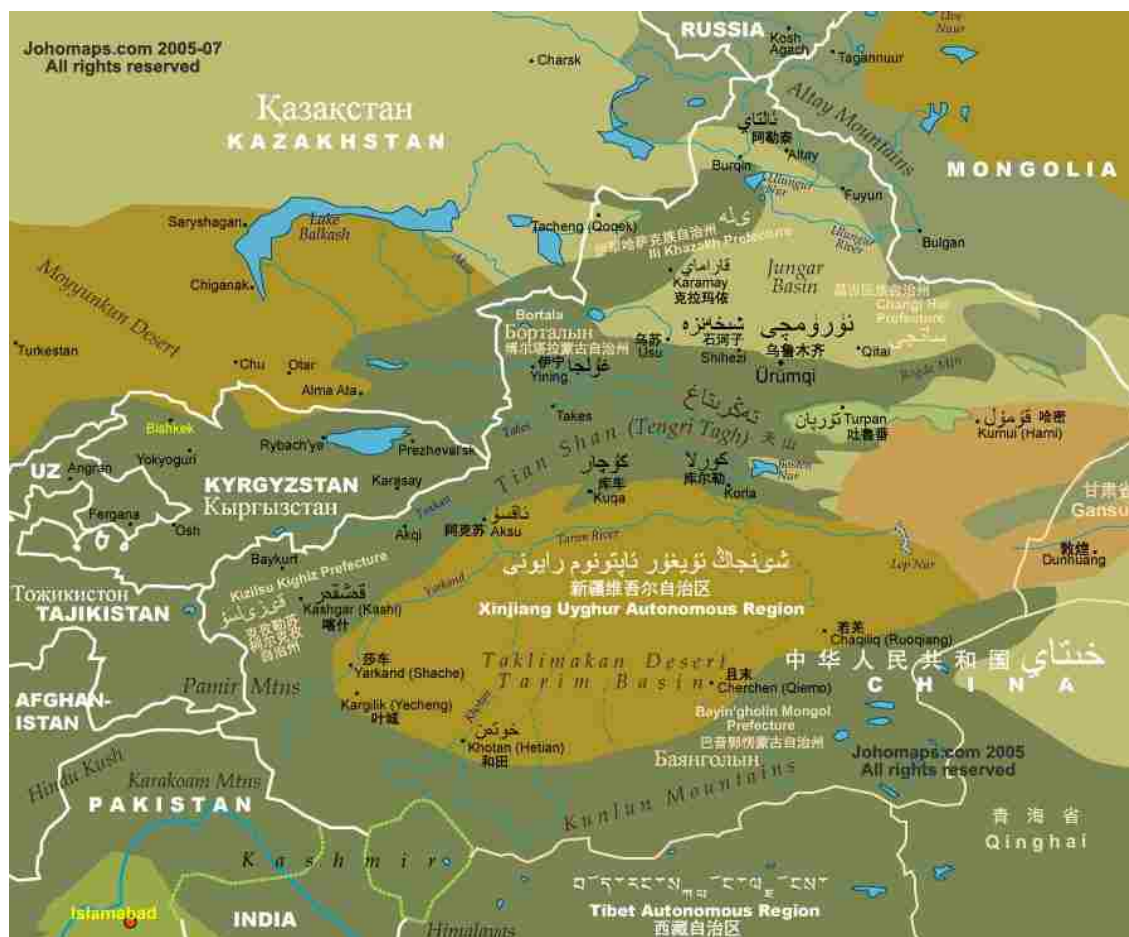


Figure 1. Multilingual Map of Xinjiang (Source: <http://johomaps.com/as/china/xinjiang/xinjiang1.html>)

## Human Geography

The complexities of Xinjiang's human geography can be illustrated well by the multiple titles used variously to refer to this region. The name 'Xinjiang' literally translates into "New Frontier" and came into use in 1888 when the Qing Dynasty conquered and colonized northern Xinjiang in the area of the Dzungar Basin (Millward 2007). Before that the region was known in Chinese sources simply as 'Xiyu', or "Western Regions" (Toops 412). The name change tells us something about the relationship between the region and the rest of China. First, the region was located to the west of the rest of China. And second, the region was part of a frontier zone that Chinese territory expanded into and occupied.

The region is also known by the names 'Chinese Turkistan' and 'East Turkistan.' 'Turkistan' was the term used by medieval Islamic scholars to refer to the parts of Central Asia dominated by Turkic speaking nomads—as opposed to sedentary Persian speakers. After the Tsarist conquest of much of Central Asia in the nineteenth century European writers continued to refer to the region as Turkistan, but differentiated between the part controlled by the Qing in the east, 'Chinese Turkistan' and 'Russian Turkistan' (Millward 2007). The origins of the name 'East Turkistan' are quite obvious; however, contemporarily the term is associated with two short-lived independent republics from the first half of the twentieth century, as well as more recent Uyghur separatist groups. Referring to the politically charged term 'Turkistan' Millward (2007, ix) states rather mildly, "Since the PRC officially maintains that Xinjiang has been part of China since the first century C.E., any allusion to the region's other past political and ethnic identities is unwelcome."

Southern Xinjiang is occasionally referred to as 'Uyghuristan,' a reference to the ancient Uyghur kingdom whose capital was near present day Turpan, and an overt claim that the region is the natural homeland of the Uyghur people—sedentary, oasis dwelling, Turkic Muslims. The title is significant in that by



inference it excludes all other Turkic and non-Turkic ethnic groups, including the Han Chinese.

By the end of the nineteenth century and into the early part of the twentieth century, nationalism became an important ideology that challenged prevailing geopolitical arrangements. Empires, dynasties, and kingdoms were rapidly transformed into modern nation-states with discrete political borders and republican governments. Just as reform minded politicians in China orchestrated the founding of the Republic of China out of the ashes of the Qing Empire, so did politically aware Turkic Muslim elites of Xinjiang advocate for there own independent nation-state. During the first half of the twentieth century, when the government of China was weak, the Turkic peoples of Xinjiang twice declared the independence of 'East Turkistan.' However both efforts were short lived, suffering from poor organization, lack of unity, and military weakness at a time when the rise of the Soviet Union and Communist China, the decline of the British Empire in South Asia, and both World Wars profoundly changed the world.

Today, groups that continue to advocate for an independent nation-state in Xinjiang still use the name "East Turkistan." However, as Millward (2007, ix) states rather mildly, "Since the PRC officially maintains that Xinjiang has been part of China since the first century C.E., any allusion to the region's other past political and ethnic identities is unwelcome." Groups that use the name "East Turkistan" are accused by the Chinese government of the "three evils"; separatism, terrorism, and religious extremism. The extent and intensity of Chinese claims of terrorist activity has been discredited by many scholars and human rights groups who contend that the danger is exaggerated in order to justify harsh suppression of local nationalism.

Uyghurs are the largest ethnic group in Xinjiang. They are Sunni Muslims who speak a Turkic dialect closely related to Uzbek, and who have traditionally inhabited oases around the Tarim basin. Irrigated agriculture has been the mainstay of their economy, while Uyghurs have also been involved in the manufacture and trade of textiles, knives, jade, and other products.

## **Uyghur History**

The term name Uyghur is derived from the powerful Uyghur Empire that existed in Inner Asia between the eighth and thirteenth centuries (Millward 2007). The ancient Uyghur were a confederation of nomadic Turkic tribes that inhabited what is today western Mongolia, and who gained power and influence during a period when other Turkic and Chinese empires were comparatively weak. Early on the Uyghur kingdom helped the Chinese Tang dynasty defeat an expanding Tibetan empire and quell a large rebellion (Millward 2007). For this the Uyghur royal house extracted extortionate tribute from the Tang, trading horses for huge quantities of silk and gold. At its height the Uyghur Empire extended into parts of present day Mongolia, northwest China, and as far west as the Fergana valley in present day Uzbekistan.

In the ninth century another Turkic confederation, the Kirghiz, challenged the Uyghur's supremacy by destroying their capital and causing the empire to fracture. A faction migrated southward and reoriented itself around a new capital at Qocho, known as Gaochang in Chinese, near present day Turpan. The new Uyghur kingdom controlled an area of eastern Xinjiang that extended from Hami in the East to Kucha in the West until the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Millward 2007). Over time the Uyghurs abandoned their nomadic way of life and adopted the sedentary way of life of the Iranian people who were then still the primary inhabitants of the Tarim. The Uyghurs of this time period were not Muslims but rather followers of Manichaeism, an ancient religion from Persia that celebrated the duality of the universe. The Uyghur state in Xinjiang tolerated Buddhism and Nestorian Christianity among its urban population. The Uyghur court adopted a Sogdian script and continued to enjoy good relations with China based dynasties via Sogdian merchant middlemen. Overtime the populations and cultures of nomad ruler and oasis ruled blended; religious, political, and cultural influences from Sogdiana, India, and China were well incorporated.

Meanwhile, in the western Tarim oases another Turkic confederation, the Qarakhanids, arose and ultimately formed the empire of Kashgaria. It was this branch of Turks who, having contact with Islamic kingdoms in Central Asia—then Transoxiana—who first converted to Islam. Thus while the modern Uyghur people take their name from the Uyghur empire, it was the Qarakhanids who spurred on the Islamicization of Xinjiang.

The Uyghur kingdom in eastern Xinjiang was subsumed by the rapid rise of the Mongol empire. Nevertheless Uyghurs and Uyghurstan occupied a unique position in the Mongol empire. The Mongol court adopted the Uyghur script and Uyghurs were employed bureaucrats and administrators in the new empire. However by the late thirteenth century the Uyghur city-states of eastern Xinjiang were devastated as they became the front line between the Mongol, China based, Yuan dynasty and powerful Turkic states to the west. Thus the ethnom 'Uyghur' fell into disuse for more than seven centuries.

In the interim the inhabitants of the Tarim basin had become Islamicized, but the waves of conquest and acculturation by Turkic, Iranian, Mongol, Indian, Russian, Tibetan Buddhist, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Chinese had all left their mark. As James Millward (2007, 53) writes, "One cannot construct a neat uni-linear narrative of Uyghur history, but that does not mean no narrative is possible or certain branches must be arbitrarily excluded." Indeed, Uyghur ethnic identity can only be understood as a unique and emergent fusion of its parts.

It was not until 1921 that the term 'Uyghur' was resurrected to refer to a distinct ethnic group by Soviet authorities at a conference in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The inhabitants of Tarim continued to use localized, oasis specific, ethnoms to refer to themselves, while all the Turkic people of Xinjiang continued to be referred to by the catch all 'Turki'.

Between the fall of the Qing Empire and the Communist victory in 1949, although nominally under the control of the Nationalist government, control of Xinjiang changed hands, and political orientation, several times. Governing Xinjiang

proved a tricky task as several Chinese warlords were assassinated (at dinner parties), and the administrations changed allegiance opportunistically between Soviet advisors, the Chinese Nationalist Party, and ultimately the Chinese Communist Party.

During this time two short-lived Independence movements were established in Xinjiang. The independence movements drew inspiration from pan-Turkic and pan-Islamic ideologies, as well as the legacy of the Yarqub Beg Rebellion, which succeeded in establishing the kingdom of Kashgaria in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Turkic Islamic Republic of East Turkistan was established in 1933 in southern Xinjiang, only to be disbanded one year later. And in 1945 the more pluralistic Republic of East Turkistan (ETR) was established in the Ili Valley of northwestern Xinjiang. Nevertheless, ideological disagreements, infighting, and infiltration prevented the fledgling republic from gaining stability.

Both independence efforts appealed to the international community for recognition. However in the midst of the complex geopolitics of WWII, in which, by degrees of separation, the Chinese Nationalists and Soviet Union were allied by their common enemy, no country was willing to become entangled in the political quagmire the nascent independence movement represented. In 1949, having very recently agreed to the terms of so called “liberation” in exchange for autonomy, the entire leadership of the ETR was killed in a plane crash on their way to Beijing to meet Mao Zedong.

Other significant ethnic groups in Xinjiang include Kazak (7%), Hui (ethnically Chinese Muslims) (5%), Mongols (1%), and Kyrgyz (1%). There are also Tajik (Pamiri), Manchu, Russian, Uzbek, Tatar, Salar, Miao, Tibetan, Xibo, and Zhuang populations in Xinjiang (Toops 2004).

## Chinese Nationalism

The success of China's Communist Party and the Chinese government can be understood as an outcome of an ethnic identity discourse that has monopolized the construction and maintenance of ethnic identity and Chinese national identity since 1949. In the contemporary period of globalization the government of China has anticipated the importance of widening its audience. The narratives of place offered by the state led tourism enterprise to domestic and foreign tourists alike reproduce the ethnic identity discourse onto the tourism landscape. In the consumption and acceptance of the Party's geographic narrative, readers participate in the reproduction and legitimization of political rhetoric at the heart of the Chinese national discourse and the Han-centric hegemony of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

In order to conquer space, space first must be created (Anderson 1983). Place, communities, and traditions are created and maintained through the repetition of historic and geographic narratives. Thus, the power to dictate historic and geographic narratives of place is central to the authority of the nation-state. China's transformation from dynastic empire to modern nation state in the early part of the twentieth century necessitated an epistemological transformation of space.

Notions of Chineseness historically were based on a worldview in which the *zhongguoren*, roughly translated as Chinese race or people, were understood to be the direct cultural bearers of a continuous, unified, and central Chinese civilization, surrounded by culturally inferior barbarians at the peripheries (Wu 1991). In this, identity was considerably more fluid, with identity in Chinese society being understood more as a continuum of relationships between the core and periphery, assimilation and difference, of Chinese society than discreet ethnic and racial identities.

Susan McCarthy (2009) explains traditional conception of identity in China through a Chinese idiom. Those people who measure up to Chinese standards of

behavior, etiquette, and learning were considered civilized, or “cooked”, while those whose folkways customs, language, and actions were irredeemably foreign were viewed as barbarian, or “raw.” “A group’s place on this continuum was determined not by blood or kinship based notions of ethnicity but by its member’s adherence to behavioral standards” (McCarthy 2009, 12).

According to Yen-ho Wu (1991), China’s confrontations with the Western world in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries obliged the Chinese to deal with the foreign concepts of nation, state, sovereignty, citizenship, race, and cultural and ethnic identity. Nationalistic writings in China’s early Republican period warned people of the danger of annihilation under Western invasion (Wu 1991). The Chinese Nationalists sought to create an ethnic and territorial solidarity that stood in opposition to the ethnically exclusive Manchu aristocracy of the Qing Dynasty by transcending long-standing suspicion between northern Mandarin speakers and the southern Cantonese speakers. The concept of *zhonghua minzu*, Chinese people or Chinese nationality, emerged that carried the connotation of modern patriotism, nationalism, and connectedness with the fate of the Chinese nation. Inclusive Han ethnic identity, as mobilized first by Chinese Nationalists, came to encapsulate interchangeably the meanings: China the nation-state, Chinese the race, and China the geographic location.

Somewhat paradoxically, although far from unique, Han ethnicity was necessarily defined in contrast with other ethnic groups: Manchu, Tibetan, Mongol, and Hui. Faced by the Japanese invasion of mainland China the Nationalists attempted to shore up territorial divisions by stressing assimilation of minority nationalities, declaring all minorities were sub-varieties of an ancient Chinese race (Gladney 1999), a concept preserved in the five stars on the flag of the People’s Republic of China: one star for each of the four sub-nationalities, and one large star for the Han “Big Brother.”

### **Ethnic Identity Discourse**

China's transformation from dynastic empire to nation state necessitated an abrupt change in the way Chinese space was conceptualized. Dynastic authority, which emanated outward with diminishing intensity changed gave way to the dispassionate uniformity of national sovereignty applied evenly throughout national space. Nomadic clansmen, feudal peasants, and itinerant merchants, whose meta-geographies had previously gravitated elsewhere, where suddenly transformed into citizens, the terms of which required definition.

In contrast to the Nationalist's assimilationist approach, the Chinese Communist Party developed a multi-national platform that promised special privileges to the minority nationalities in exchange for their support. Most important of these privileges were self-autonomy and secession rights. These promises were essential to the survival of the Red Army during the Long March as it traversed the minority-dominated regions of western China.

After Communist victory in 1949 minority areas were brought under military control in a political relationship that has been described as 'internal colonialism' (Gladney 1994, Levine 2008). According to Edward Said (See Johnston 2004), cultures of imperialism construct the modernity of Euro-American nationalism by contrasting the supposedly pre-modern geographies of their colonies with the ordered and framed "civilization" of the paternal homeland. In Communist China the process of conferring citizenship on those who fell within the political territory inherited from the Qing, via the Nationalists closely resembled the ethnic identity discourse Stalin had adopted in Soviet Central Asia, informed by Marxist stage theory and the social evolutionary theory of Lewis Henry Morgan (McCarthy 2009).

The Marxist theory of history, in which societies are understood to progress through a succession of modes of production from feudalism to capitalism, easily conformed to the traditional conceptualization of central Han Chinese. Armed with the political rhetoric of Soviet-Marxist ideology, the Han-dominated Chinese Communist Party assumed the leading role of the various peoples of the periphery

who were understood to be less culturally developed. In the painting *Chairman Mao Is the Red Sun in Our Hearts*, painted by Gong Jianxin in 1964, Chairman Mao, centered in revolutionary garb, can be seen greeting the child-like ethnic groups of China (See Figure 3).

“Once it had gained complete control, the Party was free to co-opt the leading role for all the peoples, with Han majority in the vanguard” (Gladney 1999, 90). Through the Chinese-Marxist ethnic identity discourse, official ethnic identities were bestowed on 55 minority groups according to common economy, ancestry, religion, language, and territory.

Although stipulated in the People’s Republic of China’s constitution, ethnic national autonomy has never been granted, rather national integration through assimilation has dominated Communist Party policy for the past sixty years. Thus, with the exclusion of sanctioned activities, expressions of ethnic nationalism have been treated as dissident, since they undermined Communist hegemony. According to Gladney (1999, 88), “the contradiction between a policy that promotes both autonomy and assimilation is an irony that continues to plague China’s nationality policy.”



Figure 3. *Chairman Mao Is the Red Sun in Our Hearts* by Gong Jianxin, 1964  
(Source: <http://www.chinaheritageneewsletter.org/editorial.php?issue=003>)



### **Production of Ethnic Space in China**

The Chinese Communist Party and the government of the Peoples Republic of China have reinterpreted the meaning of China's ethnic-minority spaces throughout its history, skillfully producing and manipulating narrative representations to suit the needs of the party-state. The process of defining "autonomous" areas for minority nationalities replaced the indigenous cultural landscape with imposed spatial constructions. Land reforms and communes transformed socio-spatial land uses, while new place names, Communist generic catch phrases such as "Red Flag," replaced traditional place names. Communes and production brigades of the Cultural Revolution were "placeless representations of a single theme.... This might be understood as a spatial 'mass production' that erased the meaning of place all together" (Kolas 2008).

In the cultural geographic vacuum the Communist Party replaced traditional place representations with ones more closely aligned with the Chinese-Marxist narrative place. Schoolchildren were taught new place names, and new local histories were invented that celebrated the People's Liberation Army and the Communist victory. Chinese textbooks and media have suggested that before liberation minority places such as Xinjiang were feudal slave states ruled by despotic Begs and Khans. 'Backwardness' of minority people of Xinjiang and other minorities are constantly contrasted with the 'modernity' of the Han. This falls in line with the basic tenets of Chinese Marxist ideology, that of evolutionary stages of social forms, where minority nationalities represent 'less advanced', or more 'primitive', stages and Han, as members of a more advanced' and civilized nationality were responsible for helping their less fortunate compatriots develop (Gladney 2004). The following quote from *China's Minority Nationalities*, distributed by Party publisher Beijing Foreign Press, illustrates this point:

In the past, many poor Uyghur peasants lived on a diet of narrow-leaved oleaster and dried apricot and peach, mulberry and grain porridge. Now [since liberation], wheat flower, rice and maize are the staple foods.... Some like to wear Western-style suits and skirts... the Women's favorite

decorations include earrings, bracelets and necklaces.... Male chauvinism was practiced in the family, and Uyghur women, humiliated with no one to turn to, often retreated to prayer.... After liberation, feudal religious privileges were abolished, and religion was taken out of the control of the reactionary ruling class, and became a matter of individual conscience. As science and knowledge spread, many of the old feudalistic religious habits lost popularity (Ma Yin 1989).

Reading the passage Uyghur's are understood as static and child-like, fundamentally incapable of progress without Chinese intervention. Dru Gladney (1994, 98) suggests that the Chinese state, "through commodifying and representing its minorities as colorful and exotic, engages in a project familiar to the representation of colonized peoples by colonial regimes."

### **Ethnic Tensions**

The Chinese "occupation" of Tibet is well known. In recent years Tibet has become a popular topic among human rights activists who criticize the Chinese Communist government's administration of the region, claiming that government policies there are designed to erase Tibetan culture and religion, and benefit Han Chinese interests. The Chinese government, and many ordinary people, on the other hand point to the region's rising GDP, increased education, and new transportation infrastructure as tangible evidence that government policies are creating economic opportunities raising the living standards of Tibetan people.

Although much less publicized in Western Media, a similar situation exists directly north of Tibet in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Here, like in Tibet, people who are not Han Chinese are the ethnic majority. People called the Uyghur are the largest ethnic group in the region. Unlike Han Chinese, Uyghur speak a Turkic language and are Sunni Muslims. Traditionally, Uyghur people have inhabited the oases of the Tarim Basin, practicing irrigated agriculture, cottage industries, and facilitating trade along important transportation routes.

Since 1949, the Chinese government has enacted policies designed to encourage Han Chinese migration to Xinjiang. Early on this involved resettling large numbers of demobilized military personnel on newly formed collectives charged with transforming barren desert lands into huge state farms directed by the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, or *bing tuan*. Since the late 1990's the Chinese government has undertaken an initiative called "Develop the West" that is intended to bring the economic prosperity of eastern cities to western China. Tax incentives, availability of cheap labor, and lax pollution standards have encouraged the relocation of heavy machinery and petrochemical industries to the region. Meanwhile many Uyghurs have traveled to other parts of China looking for jobs and economic opportunities.

The completion of a railway all the way to Kashgar, the furthest west city in China, has helped to facilitate the migration of huge numbers of people and further integrated the economy of Xinjiang with the rest of China. Since 1949 the number of Han Chinese in the region has grown significantly: from around five percent to about forty-one percent today (Toops 2004, Millward 2007).<sup>5</sup> However the official census statistics only include those with official residency. Military personal and a significant floating population<sup>6</sup>—both assumed to be predominately Han Chinese—are not included in Xinjiang's census figures. Although it is impossible to determine the exact number, Toops (2004) estimates China's floating population to account for ten to fifteen percent of the population of many cities (Toops 2004) and Millward

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<sup>5</sup> Toops (2004, 245-246) suggests Xinjiang census data, particularly that generated during the tumultuous years of the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution, should be considered cautiously as the quality and authenticity are questionable. Toops goes as far as to declare the 1964 census "sketchy," however he notes that recent censuses (1982, 1990, 2000) figures have greater validity.

<sup>6</sup> "Floating population" refers to China's large migrant work force that moves throughout China's provinces looking for work. This population generally lacks proper residency cards, which prohibits them from legal employment and housing. China's floating population is estimated to increase by approximately 14 million a year with population estimated at 140 million in 2003 (Ford 2007).

estimates them to have comprised approximately two and a half percent of Xinjiang's total population.

The Chinese government maintains that its policies are designed to increase the well being of all people in China. They point to Xinjiang's comparatively high GDP and rapid urbanization as signs of the regions prosperity. However many Uyghurs complain that they are left out when it comes to the region's new wealth, complaining that companies prefer to employ newly arrived Han workers rather than the local population. Companies may prefer to hire Han workers for several reasons. Uyghur workers may not speak Chinese well and they may have special needs such as *hala* foods and require breaks to pray. Mean while migrant workers may be more willing to move to onsite dormitories, work longer for less, or work under less safe conditions. Thus, to compete Uyghurs are expected to learn the Chinese language, compromise their religious practices, be willing to leave their home communities, and work for meager wages.

Some Uyghurs believe that government policies constitute deliberate attacks on their distinct culture and ethnic heritage and traditional ways of life. Commonly cited policy grievances include: the prohibition of Uyghur youth from entering mosque until they are 18, thereby inhibiting their participation in the religious community; government control and censorship of Imams; the systematic reduction of native language in schools; difficult Chinese proficiency tests minority students must pass in order to be admitted into higher education; strict censored of native language newspapers and media by the party-state security apparatus; forced relocation; and Han Chinese domination of political power. They regard interference in their religious practice, limits placed on the use of their native language, censorship, disruption of traditional communities, the massive influx of Han Chinese immigrants, and the negative ecological consequences that dirty industries have had on local people as programs designed to destroy traditional community life and under mind the viability of native cultures (Rudelson 1997, Gladney 2004, Starr 2004, Smith 2006).

The rapid increase in the Han population of Xinjiang has caused Uyghurs to become alarmed that they will soon become a minority in their own homeland (Gladney 2004). Sporadic acts of ethnic violence, most recently in July 2009, are seen to be the manifestation of a pent-up frustration and suppressed ethno-territorial conflict.

### **Summary**

This chapter provides the reader with relevant background knowledge needed to understand the region and issues at play with regard to the production of knowledge about Xinjiang. The introduction to this chapter introduces the reader to the idea that Xinjiang is a complex region, knowledge of which is heavily weighted with political overtones. Next, the physical geography of Xinjiang is described, followed by an introduction to the region's contested human geography. Afterward is an account of Xinjiang's history that is focused on the historic legacies that inform the human geography of contemporary Xinjiang. Next is a discussion of the rise of Chinese nationalism in the context of China's transition from dynastic empire to modern nation state. The epistemological and ideological shifts of identity are tracked from the Qing dynasty that ended in 1911, through Republican China, and finally into China's present Communist period, 1949 onward. A section is devoted to the Chinese-Marxist ethnic identity discourse that has come to define ethnic identity politics since the 1950's, and which is fundamental to the production of narratives of ethnic space in China. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the perceived and real grievances of Xinjiang's ethnic nationalities, particularly the Uyghur.

## **Chapter VI**

### **Xinjiang's Tourism Space: Narratives of Place**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter examines the construction of place and ethnicity identity as they have unfolded in Xinjiang's tourism literature. The purpose of the chapter is to illustrate the pervasive, consummate, bias, and political reproduction of ethnic space in Xinjiang that is deployed by the Chinese government inline with the Chinese-Marxist ethnic identity discourse. To successfully demonstrate this I employ qualitative discourse analysis of Xinjiang tourist information brochures published by a state controlled tourism organization.

I argue that the state-imposed ethnic identity discourse is reproduced both for the purpose of profit-making in the tourism market, as well as deliberately deployed within the production of tourist space as a means of bolstering Han-dominant state power and the legitimacy of the Chinese government. Through the promotion of ethnic tourism the Chinese authorities advance a narrow representation of Xinjiang's ethnic nationalities and the space they inhabit. Thus conceived, Xinjiang's non-Han populations are deliberately relegated to a decidedly 'other' landscape in a process Rob Shields describes as production of 'place-myths' (cited in Davis 2005).

#### **China's Ethnic Tourism Economy**

Since its identification as a site of increased tourism investment in the mid-nineties, Xinjiang has seen a steady increase in attention from both domestic and international tourists. State controlled place narratives and representations of ethnic identity are reinforced through their repackaging as objects of tourism. State representations of minority space are characterized by the exoticisation and marketization of ahistorical tropes for the tourist economy. State sponsored place narratives foreground representations of an ethnic landscape ready for the tourists

gaze. Presented as unchanging, traditional, gendered, and authentic, these pejorative narratives of place reinforce real and perceived boundaries between China's ethnic minority periphery and the Han-Chinese core.

A favorite phrase of Chinese tourism, as found my analysis and observed in during excursions to ethnic tourism attractions in China, is "living fossil." This place-image, which ignores alternative interpretations, fixes ethnic-minority people permanently within a natural history landscape that is beyond contemporary society. As Nyiri (2006) states: "In Chinese tourism, ethnicity has been themed and the tourist gaze directed toward objects that are marked and interpreted so well that they leave little room for the imagination." Through these strategies the Chinese authorities suppress any attempt to question the political and ethnographic order of things as represented by the state.

Tourism is an effective vehicle for the transmittance and actualization of state-sponsored representations of minority people and their locations. This is particularly true in China where the state has the authority, and means, to dictate the narrative of representation. The tourist, predisposed by the state-sponsored narratives within tourism literature, un-wittingly performs the state's narrative by accepting the representation of minority landscapes as tourism destinations. As Davis (2003, 611) states, "then tourist needs a place to conceptualize as a tourist place to perform certain activities the re-affirm their identities as successful (modern) persons." Chinese and Western tourists are successfully "modern" because they are the kinds of people who travel and vacation. Local people, by inference, are something else less than modern.

The pervasive reach of the tourism destination, effecting social, economic, cultural, and spatial spaces around the narrowly defined connotation moves the representation from place-image to acknowledged place-myth (Davis 2003). Among the powers of place making are permanence and inertia that, once accepted, are slow to change. "The representative mode of [Uyghur] culture has increasingly been naturalized and taken as more real than reality itself" (Murkami 2008, 65).

Reconstruction of ancient mosques as ethicized museum sites obscures their religious and social significance, transforming them from focal points of possible resistance into spaces that conform to the state's ethnicity discourse. Local experiences of space are not represented within the state-sponsored tourism narrative, or the tourism landscape. The experience of discrimination of local ethnic people, exclusion from educational and economic opportunities, and exploitation are not likely to be reproduced on the tourist landscape.

### **Tourism on the Silk Roads**

Tourism is already a major industry in China, which is expected to continue growing as a Chinese middle class with expendable income takes shape for the first time. Government officials recognize not just the economic potential of tourism, but also the potential to reinforce the discriminative, revisionist narratives of the Chinese Communist Party, which simultaneously marginalize ethnic minority nationalities, in regions such as Xinjiang, as well as assimilate them. "When the 'nationalities identification project' defined the ethnic groups of China," writes Kolas (2008, 272), "this implied distinguishing the various 'nationalities' according to specific ethnic markers, such as typical livelihoods, architecture, festivals, religious practices, arts and crafts, and dress." Kolas continues:

With the introduction of tourism, these ethnic markers have been commodified through the making of ethnic art and handicraft products for tourists, the creation of staged ethnic tourism performances and other tourism products. In this way tourism has served to reinforce hegemonic representations of 'minority nationalities' and the places they inhabit.

Tourism in Xinjiang has grown and thrived over the past two decades for several reasons: adventure travelers were eager to visit this exotic destination long off limits to foreigners; government support and investment in the tourism sector; the quality of its attractions; and growing international interest in the Silk Roads.



Coined by the German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen in 1877, the Silk Roads have captured popular imagination with romantic associations of exotic, aromatic, mystery, primitive, solitude, remoteness, bazaar towns, Asiatic despots, and nomads. As such, semiotic value of the Silk Roads, with its wide recognition and broad appeal is an example of what Davis (2005) terms 'traveling' representations of place that do not arise from a particular place as much as are applied to it. The term "Silk Road" has come to define the place-myth that informs international and domestic tourists' expectations of Xinjiang.

The close association with, and official adoption of the "Silk Road" label by state tourism departments indicates pre-established place images that convey romantic notions of an elusive, exotic and idyllic past (and present), which play on the tourists' quest for the authentic. It has the additional effect of redefining the space and its inhabitants as conforming with pre-inscribed connotations of otherness. Furthermore the term encapsulates an explicitly Orientalist projection, which has been adopted by the Chinese in the ongoing process of what has been termed "Chinese internal Orientalism" (Schein 2000, 130) or Chinese self-Orientalism (Levine 2008).

Urbanized Han Chinese idealize the ethnic minorities and their landscapes as unspoiled reserves of nature, religiosity, and simple life styles of the past. Chinese tourists see Xinjiang as a nostalgic destination, where ethnic minorities are cast as inhabitants of an imagined past (Kolas 2008). Therefore Chinese tourists take part in what can be considered "cultural pilgrimage," in which Chinese tourists are symbolically involved in visiting their culturally 'less developed' past (Petersen 1995). The following quote is an excerpt from the Beijing Review, a weekly English language newspaper that is an organ of the Communist Party. It concerns an affluent Han Chinese "exploration" tourist who had recently participated on a state sponsored "expedition to Xinjiang." The trip included crossing the desert to the ancient ruins of Lop Nor, as well as visiting the tourist city Turpan. According to the article, "the trip was an adventure, as well as an opportunity to observe the ethnic folklore, understand the society and get acquainted with the history" (Zhiping 1997,

16). The quotation illustrates how readily the prevailing narrative is accepted. It also demonstrates the emergence of domestic Chinese tourists who are emulating exploration and adventure tourism, trends, which have hitherto been associated with foreign visitors. Finally, terming the trip “exploration tourism” implies that the local people and culture have existed beyond the veil of the known and need to be discovered...by tourists.

In the political climate of liberalization and marketization local officials, dominated by Han Chinese, have been in uniquely privileged positions to engage not just as planners, but also as ‘cultural brokers’ and entrepreneurs in tourist-related industries. A lucrative practice among local governments has been to set up private companies, paid for with public funds, to develop tourist destinations. Thus, the regulatory agencies have a vested interest in the unhindered success of tourist destinations, while the government enjoys continued revenue through charging of entrance fees to every tourist attraction (Kolas 2008).

The *Beijing Review* article “A New Taste of the Countryside” demonstrates the extent to which local people’s interests are disregarded wholesale in favor of profit and power of Han entrepreneurs and Party elite. The article details the construction of a “Kazak Folk Village”, a collection of new yurts erected in pairs on concrete slabs, east of Urumchi. Local Kazaks are invited to pay a yearly fee to the government for the opportunity to live in one yurt and act as hosts to tourists in the other. According to the article, “Guests can eat, sleep and sing karaoke in the yurts” and the host sometimes hires a dance team to perform (Jing 2005, 26). One can imagine, tourists willfully believe their hosts to be authentic Kazak nomads who once traversed this same land with their flocks, however most of the “host” Kazaks come from a nearby village that was relocated to make way for a ski resort. Thus, the Kazak hosts perform their ascribed ethnic identity in a tourist space that is ‘hyper-real.’ The article treats these developments as uncompromisingly positive elements in the economic development of the region, citing the rise in per-capita income. The interpretation fails to account for the cheap cultural commodification, continued

economic marginalization, and lack of agency experienced by the local people who are excluded from all but the most menial opportunities.

### **Qualitative Content Analysis of Xinjiang Tourism Brochures**

The prevailing Han chauvinism and deliberate objectification and commodification of ethnic groups that characterize the Communist Party's ethnic identity discourse is clearly demonstrated in a series of brochures that are targeted to tourists, published by the Association of Cultural Exchanges with Foreign Countries, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (See Appendix B). Although I can find no information on the publisher, I can only believe, given the organization's archaically Soviet Socialist name and rather unimaginative format, the Association of Cultural Exchanges with Foreign Countries, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region must be a party-state apparatus. These brochures are divided into two categories: "The Folk Culture" of Xinjiang's ethnic nationalities and Xinjiang's cities of touristic interest series. A close reading not only illuminates representations of minority nationalities but also informs the construction of Han identity.

Eight nationalities are represented within the "The Folk Culture" series: Uyghur, Tajik, Kazak, Mongolian, Daur, Hui, and Han. The brochures represent a discourse in which knowledge of the 'other' carries the power to define the reality of space. As discussed above, the representation of minority people as part of a timeless landscape, ripe for tourist consumptions, is but one representation of reality of space. One that reinforces the state-sponsored place-myth of minority people and space as inherently different than the familiar and modern in which the Han, and West envisions itself. This representation is made "real" or hyper-real in its physical manifestation at tourist destinations. Ethnicized architecture, rituals, costumes, and crafts are reproduced for tourist consumption. In this process, local minority people are compelled to play the role assigned to them within the landscape of ethnicized "other." In this way both the physical space and the local inhabitants appear to fall into the prescribed Chinese-Marxist narrative. In

discourse, tourist literature is invaluable due to its power to pre-inscribe the Chinese-Marxist narrative in the minds of tourists.

Generalizations of ethnic national character are continually constructed and reinforced, cementing the essentialized image of ethnic minorities as “noble savages.” With the exception of the Hui, the minority nationalities are all represented more or less the same: primitive, static, and exotic. In the text all the minority nationalities (other than Han and Hui) are summarily characterized as “brave”. Mongols are summarily stereotyped as “warm, uninhibited nature” and the Tajiks and Kazaks are “vigorous.”

In the series, ethnic culture is defined by primitive skills and livelihoods and inferior religious practices. According to the Mongol brochure, “Archery is a skill which every Mongol man should learn and use, by which he kills his enemy, protects himself and hunts.” Kazaks “grow up on horseback” and are particularly “suited for the cold.” These characterizations envision the ethnic nationalities as part of the primitive past, imbuing them with untamed, almost animal like, natural qualities. In this respect the minority people are represented as part of the natural landscape, and therefore as a legitimate object of the tourist gaze, to be consumed within a market driven tourist economy.

In line with the predominant Communist Marxist narrative, religion is relegated to the status of unsophisticated, unenlightened, folk-beliefs. Religion as a significant cultural and place identifier in its own right, a possible alternative to Party hegemony, is down played. Alternatively, religion is washed into the ethnicization of the people and place, an interesting antidote. The section on Uyghur’s religion, Islam—a world religion with hundreds of millions of adherents around the globe, is headed “Belief Folklore.” And of the Kazaks it disparagingly states, “Even now Kazaks still have a worshiping feeling for ancient trees.” The statements dismiss 1200 years of Islamic tradition and untold generations of shamans as little more than superstitions imbedded into the traditional landscape and culture.

The photos that illustrate the brochures universally display the minority nationalities in rustic settings. Whether Uyghurs in dusty bazaar towns, plying colorful homespun cloth and fluted copper vessels, Mongols and Kazak nomads with animals and yurts in the alpine meadows, or Tajiks tilling barren soil with yaks in the Pamir, the minority nationalities are presented as static parts of the landscape. Additional photos picture attractive minority girls in beautiful alpine settings. The minority nationalities are only shown in their traditional dress, or rather their exoticized, quasi-traditional, hyper-real costumes and head dresses; never in modern or contemporary clothing.

Interestingly, the Hui and Han are represented much differently. The Han are represented as modern, connected, and sophisticated. Photos show Han and Hui men and women in contemporary clothing, including pretty young women without headscarves. A photo next to the heading “The Cloths of Xinjiang Han people” shows thoroughly modern, fashionable silk pants suits with mandarin collars, a far cry from the strange hats of the minority nationalities. The photos display western style weddings and modern production techniques. Within the text Hui are treated as decidedly more modern, adaptable, and distinct than their minority nationality counterparts. Set apart, Hui are stated not to share their mosques with their co-religious nationalities, building their own mosques instead. The section on Hui religion is entitled “Religious Customs,” as opposed to the pejorative “Belief Folklore” of the Uyghur. The Hui are characterized by nuclear families and “modern education.” According to the text, Hui also celebrate contemporary Chinese secular holidays: Labor Day and National Day. By contrast the texts make no reference of other nationalities taking part in contemporary secular Chinese national holidays, thereby tacitly implying their exclusion from contemporary secular society. The text continues the close association of Han (and therefore modernity) and Hui with the statement, “During Spring Festival, the Hui people visit their Han colleagues and friends.”

Several reasons for this distinctly different treatment of one ethnic minority nationality among many stand out. Although not stated in the text, Hui are

ethnically and culturally Han Chinese Muslims, who were converted to Islam by seafaring Arab traders around the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Hui people spread out along important trade routes and continue to be important to transportation industries in China. As traders Hui can be found in every province and city of China and are familiar to everyday Chinese. The historical legacy of Hui in Xinjiang allies them closely with the Han overlords. During the late Qing dynasty Hui mercenaries were employed to quell local revolts in Xinjiang. In 1933, during the warlord period of Republican China, Hui armies were instrumental in suppressing a short-lived independent Uyghur state, the Turkish Islamic Republic of East Turkistan. Consequently, an opportunistic Hui warlord from neighboring Gansu became the governor-general of Xinjiang another briefly lived independent state in Xinjiang, just before Communist incorporation of Xinjiang in 1949. Needless to say, in spite of a common religion, relations between Hui and the other Muslims of Xinjiang are strained.

Without a doubt, the brochure dedicated to the “Han Nationality of Xinjiang” is the most revealing. Unlike the other nationality groups, Han ethnicity is continuously displayed as modern and connected to a contemporary globalized world. Of Han food the brochure reads, “Now, the food of every branch of Han Chinese food exists in Xinjiang and the western-style food, South Korean, and Japanese food were also introduced to the region.” It continues, “All this shows the trend that the food of Xinjiang Han people is under drastic change”. By inference the text erroneously suggests other nationalities, immobile in time and space, have not changed due to globalizing forces at work in Xinjiang, nor does it acknowledge Xinjiang’s cross-cultural and dynamic past. By contrast Han are the only nationality shown to have the ability to change or progress along a trajectory informed by modernization and industrialization.

Of religion and festivals it is stated, “some old customs are still practiced among Xinjiang Han people, but they are merely a kind of rites and religious meaning is lost,” effectively separating the Han from the “Folk Beliefs” of other ‘less developed’ nationalities. One brochure states that the Han have accepted the

Gregorian calendar and it is popular for Han to take part in “Western style” marriages. This stands in contrast to the barbaric yet eroticized ethnic marriage practices such as “Girl Chasing” among the Kazak and Tajik. Likewise the brochure emphasizes that equal status is accorded men and women enjoyed among the Han, as opposed to the “patriarchal”, and therefore feudal, family structures that appear to afflict other nationalities. For rhetorical value the fabrication of the long and continuous historic legacy of Han in Xinjiang is established by the brochure text; as the opening of the Han brochure is entitled, “A Long History of Han People in Xinjiang.” Throughout the brochures the historic legitimacy of the Han is established by the repeated mentioning of the oldest known Han settlements in the region.

Constructions of minority national character are reinforced in their placement within tourist destination cities. The cities depicted in the brochure series can be divided into two distinct categories: Han dominated northern cities of Urumqi, Shihezi and Karamay, and the Uyghur cities around the Tarim Basin.

The Uyghur cities of the Tarim are depicted as relics of the past, primitive bazaar towns of the ancient Silk Roads. Almost as if museum pieces, the term “living fossil” is repeatedly used to describe Uyghur cities. Within the photos Uyghur cities, scenery, architecture, and ethnic people become part of a seamless naturalized landscape of the old Silk Roads. The photos depict the Central Asian architecture of mosques and tombs that have been restored, or entirely rebuilt as is the case of a magnificent minaret in Turpan, with state funding for the express purpose of creating tourist destinations. The photos show very few people. The few people depicted are “ethnic”, wearing traditional clothing and hats, hard at work producing beautiful, labor intensive, handicrafts: silk weavings, jewelry, carpets, ceramics, and beautifully fluted copper vessels, in romantically languid bazaars. These images succeed in presenting the cities as ‘authentic’ tourist destinations that have essentially not changed since the days of the ancient Silk Roads.

Presented in sharp contrast are the northern Han Chinese cities: Urumqi, Shihezi and Karamay. These cities are depicted as modern, complete with manicured city parks, post-modern monuments, skyscrapers and traffic. They show modern means of production and are described in terms of their economic vibrancy, achievements of Communism, and science.

Shihezi is presented as a monumental achievement in land reclamation. Modern technical equipment is heralded along with place names that glorify the Long March, and Peoples Liberation Army. Monuments that are of touristic interest include a statue of Zhou Enlai and a socialist realism sculpture, "First Plowing of the Production and Construction Corps Engaging in Farming." Not mentioned is the fact that the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps was, and continues to be, a paramilitary organization, independent of the Xinjiang government, which settles de-mobilized military personal within Xinjiang as colonists, as well as serving as a reserve security force.

Karamay is "A Petro-industry City of China" with one of the largest oil fields in China. The name means, "black oil" in Uyghur. This is no doubt a part of the mass production of space under taken by the Communists in minority areas after liberation. The localization of an otherwise placeless name is a thin guise of Han colonialism. The city lies in the northern Dzungar Basin, far from traditional Uyghur territory. I can find no reference to it before liberation.

The largest city and administrative capital of Xinjiang, Urumqi, is treated somewhat more delicately. Ignoring its short, decidedly Han history and culture, there is an attempt to establish its integration with the rest of Xinjiang. A modern, architecturally "Islamized" shopping mall, is selectively featured along side skyscrapers. This is important for symbolic reasons, as it legitimizes an otherwise Han-Chinese city, through which virtually every tourist must pass, as part of a continuous "ethnicized" landscape. According to the brochure, Urumqi is the "Geographic Heart of Asia" and the "trade center of Central Asia". As such, this Han dominated city is presented as exceedingly cosmopolitan and modern. The claim



that Urumqi is the “cultural center of Xinjiang” ignores the historical facts that Kashgar and Khotan are the cultural centers of Uyghur culture and history. A limited integration of Urumqi is attempted: “Modernity and tradition co-exist in the city. One may see people wearing traditional ethnic dress and modern fashion dress. There are traditional Uyghur businesses and modern, international business such as Kentucky and Mac-Donalds fast food chain.” By inference ethnic dress is not fashionable and Uyghur businesses are not modern.

### **Summary**

Gladney (1994) suggests that the objectified portrayal of ethnic identity in a colorful, romanticized fashion has more to do with constructing a ‘majority discourse’ than it has to do with the construction of ‘minority’ identity as such. According to Oaks (1998), tourism to minority areas can be understood as a romantic search for unspoiled nature and the lifestyles of people who appear to be close to nature and history. When this desire is harnessed and interpreted for the viewer through an ethnic identity discourse that is framed by the Han-centric interests of the Communist Party and the Chinese government the marginalization of ethnic people and the centrality of Han Chinese interests are reinforced.

This chapter demonstrates how the Chinese government frames the prevailing place narratives of Xinjiang through the tourism economy. Xinjiang tourism texts, created and distributed by state tourism authorities, reproduce a representation of Xinjiang’s ethnic population that recreates and reinforces the Chinese-Marxist ethnic identity discourse. Through the ethnic identity discourse the terms of existence for Xinjiang’s minority ethnic nationalities are set by the state. Within the national narrative of China, non-Han ethnic nationalities are physically and conceptually relegated to a static periphery.

## Chapter VI

### Analysis of Geography Education on Xinjiang

#### Introduction

Education is a powerful element in the reproduction of narratives of place. It is widely recognized that through the selective repetition of narrative representations of place in textbooks and other educational media geographic knowledge is discursively naturalized. This chapter looks carefully at the narrative representations of Xinjiang as they have been reproduced in geography education in the United States.

Through qualitative content analysis I explore the extent and nature of content devoted to Xinjiang in secondary school geography textbooks, world regional geography textbooks, regionally appropriate curricular guides, and regionally specific lesson plans. The primary focus of the content analysis was K through 12 teaching materials. However, I also examined introductory college level world regional geography textbooks and geography of China textbooks in order to form a broader picture of the status of learning about Xinjiang's geography.

The chapter begins with a discussion that explores how Xinjiang's position within China mediates how Xinjiang is represented in secondary school geography textbooks. The chapter continues with a discussion of how, and in what narrative, Xinjiang is represented in textbooks. World regional geography textbooks followed by curricular guides and lesson plans are then analyzed. A portion of the chapter is devoted to feedback received from teachers regarding how China is presented in current geographic education and their knowledge of Xinjiang. The chapter concludes with a section comparing the place narratives of Xinjiang and Tibet as they are found in current geography education materials.

The research shows that very little attention is devoted to Xinjiang in currently available educational materials. The resources available to educators and

students about Xinjiang are distorted by the overwhelming focus on the history of Han Chinese civilization and the Han dominated population centers of eastern China. Content devoted to China's non-Han ethnic nationalities is nearly always lumped together in curt subsections that occlude China's ethnic diversity. Furthermore, those texts that do devote substantial attention to Xinjiang are marred by factual and conceptual inaccuracies and conflict tropes that fail to accurately represent the region.

### **Framing Knowledge about Xinjiang within China**

Despite the buzz in education literature concerning the need to transform our worldviews in this increasingly interconnected global era, a Kuhnian paradigm shift has failed to materialize. Persistent geographic simplification and ahistoricism perpetuate dangerous stereotypes and the status quo by occluding the historic and geographic complexities of peripheral regions and minority people. Geography textbooks and teaching materials remain overwhelmingly organized by world regions that are divided along the discrete political boundaries of modern nation-states. By default discussion of Xinjiang is relegated to chapters devoted to the region of 'East Asia', arbitrarily defined as some combination of China, Mongolia, Taiwan, the Koreas, and Japan. One high school geography textbook, *World Cultures and Geography: Eastern Hemisphere and Europe* (Bednarz 2005), goes as far as to group East Asia, Australia, Oceania, and Antarctica into a single hodgepodge chapter. Within chapters devoted to 'East Asia' attention to cross-cultural exchange, shared histories, or current events are limited to incidents within the region, that usually take place around an un-problematized 'East Asian cultural hearth' defined by the continuity of Han Chinese culture and the shared cultural legacies of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism.

In this context, Xinjiang's cultural and historic affinities with Turkic Central Asia and the Islamic world do not mesh neatly with China's established position as the cultural and political epicenter of East Asia. In the case of geographic education

and teaching materials, knowledge of Xinjiang is first and foremost mediated by its physical and conceptual location within China. As such, Xinjiang's distinct ethnic geography and disorderly history are subordinate to prevailing knowledge of 'Chinese China'; that is the central and coastal regions that are overwhelmingly inhabited by Han Chinese. As a result Han Chinese cultural geography and history are in practice understood to apply evenly throughout Chinese territory.

Occasionally texts include maps showing the historic extent of the Chinese empire in comparison to China's current area. For the most part the issue of who or what existed beyond those boundaries is never dealt with in any meaningful or sustained manner; nor is it clearly explained when or how exactly those places stopped being something other than Chinese territory. By default, the 'Chineseness' of China's peripheral areas remains unproblematicized, with the result that competing geographies and historical realities remain occluded. Even university departments that regularly include the study of Xinjiang within the boundaries of Central Asia area studies, such as Indiana University, continue to respect China's politically sensitive boundary when it comes to providing useful educational resources.

Knowledge is power and therefore production of knowledge is political. When considering the content and scope of educational materials dedicated to Xinjiang, it is worthwhile to bare in mind the layers of discursive knowledge that shape and mediate our knowledge of Xinjiang. In the geopolitical sense, Xinjiang's location and history are loaded. Here the *Orientalist* discourse and issues of contemporary Chinese national hegemony merge with Cold War rhetoric and fear mongering over the threat of Islamic radicalism. These tropes give Western readers, who are largely unfamiliar with the region, a way of understanding Xinjiang within a larger geopolitical context that is by and large informed by a Euro-centric worldview of history and geography.

Of the predominance of a European worldview Clifford (2001) writes, "History, proper history, is meant as a record of change and progress, toward the spread of human freedom seen in Whig-Liberal terms and the emergence of the modern state." When China's past is framed in reference to European milestones

and epochs, its failure to progress according to European norms only serves to highlight the contrast between an active and energetic West and the passive timelessness of the Eastern world. Said (cited in Clifford 2001) goes as far as to state, “Such a view puts the European in command of Oriental history, time, and geography, ensuring that it becomes part of ‘world history’—European history that is.”

In general geography textbooks reproduce European “world history” onto China uncritically. As such, China is understood to have been a homogeneous, immobile, and passive entity throughout history, only spurred to political and social revolution by contact with, and therefore reaction to, the imposition of Western powers and ideas in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. For example, Mihelic’s statement, “A little over 2000 years ago, the basic institutions of government that still exist across [East Asia] were established in eastern China” (2009, 338), brands the Asians as politically and socially passive. While Confucius thought may still influence the political discourse of East Asia, none of the governments of the region resemble the institutions of 2000 years ago.

Most texts do at least mention distinct cultural achievements of various dynasties: the Qin and the Great Wall, Tang bronzes, and Ming vases. However dynastic succession appears as continuous repetition, wherein politics, society, culture, and economy remain essentially the same, and fundamentally disconnected from the history of the rest of the world. Salter (2007, 571) states, “Throughout history, China often limited contact with the outside world. The Chinese saw their culture as superior and had little use for foreigners. The tall mountains, deserts, and seas around China further limited contact and isolated the region,” while Sager (2003) reports that China experienced no outside influences before 1500, except for Marco Polo. Mihelic (2009, 340) goes as far as to suggest; “It was during the [Mongol] empire that traders such as the Venetian Marco Polo made the first direct contacts between China and Europe.” Thus informed American students are instructed to understand China’s stirring from a state of natural largess to have been initiated by the arrival of 18<sup>th</sup> century European interlopers at its eastern seaports.

The persistence of this *Orientalist* narrative is perhaps best illustrated by Johnson (2010, 514) who writes, “Fundamentally challenged by Western technologies, science, and economic systems, China’s traditional view of the world with the Middle Kingdom as its center was turned upside down. The meeting of East and West did not involve a mutually interactive environment.”

The existence of a continuous Chinese civilization inhabited by Chinese people, essentially unchanged since primordial times, remains a powerful construct situated at the heart of modern Chinese nationalism (Gladney 1999). By in large, geography textbooks uncritically reproduce the rhetoric of Chinese civilization. Salter (2007, 571) states, “Today the Chinese can boast a civilization some 4,000 years old, older than any other.” Similarly Baerwald (2009, 651) writes, “Since its birth along the Huang He in northern China around 3000 B.C., Chinese civilization has been deeply rooted in agricultural way of life.” While Marston (2011, 283) adds, “China has had a continuous agricultural civilization for more then 8,000 years.” Meanwhile nearly every text embeds a photo of terraced rice patties. Give or take 4,000 years, the image that emerges is of a cohesive and naturally homogenous population at home in a fixed landscape.

Regarding ethnic diversity in China, nearly all the textbooks include an almost identical two to four sentence paragraph. One of the more informative, the Boehm (2008, 677) text states:

When people in China say someone is Chinese, they use the Chinese word for “a person of the Middle Kingdom.” About 92 percent of China’s more then 1.3 billion people belong to the Han, an ethnic group named for a powerful ancient ruling family. Han rulers developed a culture whose influence has lasted to the present. The remaining 8 percent of China’s population belongs to about 55 different ethnic groups.

Sager (2003, 551) does not even acknowledge the existence of ethnic minorities simply stating, “About 92 percent of China’s population consider themselves Han Chinese. Almost everyone can speak one of the seven major Chinese dialects. Mandarin is the official language and the most common.”

The Salter (2007, 573) text goes above and beyond others with a half page graphic inset devoted to “Ethnic Groups” in which there are three labeled photos: an attractive Han girl wearing stylish clothing; an older Hui man with bushy eyebrows and white skull cap; and a younger Zhuang man in tattered peasant hat and jacket, holding a rudimentary farm implement. Boehm (2008, 676) and Sager (2003, 542) both include photos of fashionable young people in urban settings with captions that explicitly imply they are Han Chinese. Otherwise, non-Han ‘ethnics’ are rarely visually represented in the texts; however, when they are they are dressed traditionally and are part of religious or otherwise ‘indigenous’ landscapes. Throughout all texts the terms Han and Chinese are conflated. Even those texts that distinguish Han ethnicity immediately revert to using the term Chinese unproblematically. In several texts, Bednarz and Salter, the only review devoted to ethnicity instruct teachers to ask students, “To what ethnic group do most people in China belong?” (Bednarz 514). Thus informed, students understand that Han Chinese are modern, normal, culturally the same, and the only important people to know about. The minorities, while they may exist, are traditional, poor, tied to the land, and do not merit attention.

Only Veeck and Mihelic make efforts to problematize the construct of Han ethnicity worth noting. Veeck (2007, 44) contributes:

A common mistake is to assume the Chinese and Chinese culture emerged from some single ethnic stock, the origins of which could be to a particular place in time. But rather than attesting to such a commonality, the evidence points to a pattern in which over time, many distinct groups were blended and absorbed into a composite that we now think of as Han people.

While Mihlic (2009, 357) writes:

Cultural diversity exists throughout East Asia even though most countries have one dominant ethnic group. In China, for example, 93 percent of Chinese citizens call themselves “people of the Han.” The name harks back about 2000 years to the Han empire, but it gained currency only in the early twentieth century, when nationalist leaders were trying to create a mass Chinese identity. The term Han does not denote an actual ethnic group but rather connotes people who share a general way of life, pride in Chinese culture, and a sense of superiority to ethnic minorities and outsiders.

Beyond misleading, the geographic simplification and ahistoricism that pervades most geographic education materials is factually wrong and conceptually loaded. The banality of reporting Marco Polo as the first contact between China and the “outside world” is so ludicrous it hardly warrants attention and only goes to show the lack of scholarship and academic rigour tolerated in textbooks. As reported, the narrative of an ‘imagined’ passive and homogeneous Chinese civilization not only affirms latent *Orientalist* stereotypes, but also affirms and reproduces political rhetoric employed by the Chinese Communist Party to legitimize its political hegemony over China’s diverse population.

### **Narratives of Xinjiang in Geography Textbooks**

As one might imagine, content devoted to Xinjiang in geography textbooks is rather sparse. The analysis of geography textbooks undertaken in this project has yielded some interesting findings worth examining more closely. Of the five secondary school geography textbooks I analyzed, only one, Baerwald’s (2009) *World Geography: Building a Global Perspective*, devoted any substantial attention to Xinjiang. However, attention to Xinjiang in college level textbooks was, on the whole, substantially higher, leaving an optimistic impression that perhaps as interest in Xinjiang’s unique and diverse geography grows, recognition of the importance of the region may disseminate and diffuse among educators and the public alike.

As stated above, secondary school geography textbooks do not allocate space for discussion of Xinjiang, or its minority nationalities. All but one text failed to even mention Xinjiang by name, identify Uyghur or other Xinjiang nationalities, or draw attention to longstanding issues of ethnic tension in the region. Only two texts even acknowledge the presence of Islam in China; the Salter (2007, 574) text limits its discussion to one simple sentence, “Other major religions in China include Christianity and Islam.”



The Silk Roads have become widely known as trading routes that connected Europe to China. As an educational topic the Silk Roads provides an opportunity to introduce important ideas of dynamic continuity and change across Asia's diverse landscape, and highlight Xinjiang's regional significance. Several geography textbooks reference the Silk Roads and some include simple maps (Baerwald 2009, Boehm 2008, Saltar 2007). Nevertheless, none of the sources draw significant attention to the dynamic historic and geographic processes that characterized the Silk Roads, which deserve attention in their own right; nor do they acknowledge those who inhabitant the region that the famous trading routes traversed. The Salter text (2007, 516-17) features a full two page graphic dedicated to the Silk Roads: pictures of a Roman centurion and stocky Asiatic outfitted with a mandarin coat and fu-manchu overlay a map of Eurasia. The Han and Roman Empires are highlighted and tethered by linear trade routes that traverse an empty plane, while two great arrows point east and west pointing the way to destinations across an abyss. The instructional side-bar instructs teachers to tell students:

The harsh climate of western China is only for hardy tourists. One city, Kashgar, has a market where tourists can get some idea of what trade along the old Silk Road was like long ago. At the market, people of many nationalities sell spices, wool, livestock, silver knives, and other items (2007, 516).

As it is presented, Kashgar remains rooted in an eternal past, its landscape primarily populated by visiting tourists while native inhabitants are relegated to the background. Baerwald (2009, 662) moves toward highlighting some socio-ecological complexity stating: "Along the road, way stations developed around oases fed by streams. Over time some of the way stations grew into large towns. For example, Kashgar, on the western edge of the Taklimakan, has a population of about 300,000." However Baerwald quickly returns to uncritically vague topos, terming the region with all its inhabitants a "barren landscape" (2009, 662).

As currently addressed in geography textbooks the study of the Silk Roads imposes a Sino-European perspective focused on the region's historic economic significance to China and Rome. This mode of understanding fails to recognize the

significance of the region, with its legacies of cosmopolitanism, diversity, and dynamic socio-cultural processes that deserves attention in its own right.

The one topic all textbooks appear to cover with some adequacy is Xinjiang's physical geography. While descriptions of the physical geography of northwest China are generally brief and lack depth as well as specificity, they do identify many of the region's significant topographic features; particularly the Tarim Basin, Tian Shan Mountains, Kun Lun Mountains, and Turpan Depression. Others draw attention to the Pamir Mountains, Taklimakan Desert, and Gobi Desert.

### **Baerwald's *World Cultures: Building a Global Perspective* (2009)**

In comparison to other textbooks, Baerwald's (2009) *World Cultures: Building a Global Perspective* stands out among secondary school geography textbooks for its substantial coverage of Xinjiang. Although Baerwald (2009, 663) states, "Few people find the region hospitable, and the population is low," in the subsection dedicated to China's Northwest, he makes some steps toward illustrating the complex socio-ecological adaptations that characterize the region when he states: "a system of underground irrigation canals fed by streams flowing from the Tian Shan" to oasis agriculture and, "grape growing is an important occupation." Baerwald (2009, 663) continues with the statement, "Nomadic herding, however, is the major economic activity throughout the region," going on to describe transhumance in the most basic terms. While the accuracy of this statement is open for conjecture, credit for bringing attention to the complex socio-ecological adaptations that have shaped the human geography of the region is warranted.

At the end of the chapter is a subsection entitled, "People and Geography: Human Rights in China." The section begins with a brief discussion of the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, followed by sections devoted to "Women in China, Muslims in Xinjiang Province, and Buddhists in Tibet" (Baerwald 2009, 671). The section on Xinjiang reads:

Religious and ethnic minorities face discrimination in China. In Xinjiang Province in Northwest China, the Uighurs, who practice Islam, are an ethnic minority. The Chinese government has placed strict restrictions on when and where they can practice their religion. The government has also encouraged members of the majority ethnic group, the Han Chinese, to migrate into the area. Statistically, the Han Chinese obtain higher paying jobs and own more businesses than Uighurs. Believing their rights are being violated, some Uighurs hope to win independence from China. However, the government is particularly intolerant of unrest in Xinjiang Province because it values the province as a key military location and as an important source of petroleum and other natural resources.

While attention to persecution of Uyghurs is vitally important, and otherwise unrepresented in secondary school geography textbooks, the text falls short of providing quality coverage of Xinjiang and its inhabitants. In the follow up activity the text asks students, “What evidence is there that the Uighurs do not enjoy the same rights as the majority Han Chinese? How does ethnic tension effect the economy of Xinjiang Province?” (Baerwald 2009, 671). While the answers to these two questions are not entirely clear, they do a disservice by characterizing Xinjiang and Uyghurs as more or less one-dimensional in relation to ethnic conflict with the Han and Chinese state. Furthermore, the author situates the current ethnic strife entirely in terms of contemporary socio-economic grievances, thereby denying the history of ethno-territorial resistance that is central to understanding the conflict. Highlighting facets of Xinjiang’s geography other than inter-ethnic conflict, such as language, material culture, ethnic diversity, cross-border affinities, and ecology, could strengthen the section. By focusing solely on the conflict between Uyghurs and the Chinese state, the author draws attention to the most extreme and negative attributes of the region.

Although this text should be appreciated for its coverage of Xinjiang and other sensitive issues, the text is marred with factual errors, conjecture, and frequent lack of conceptual coherence. These deficiencies draw into question the texts validity as an authoritative or useful source. Baerwald (2009: 657) reports “Chinese leaders believe their nation’s economy will be the third largest in the world by 2020 and second largest by 2050.” In contrast, it has been widely reported that

China's economy became the second largest in the world in 2009 (CIA 2010). Bearing in mind the text's publication date, one may still presume this development was forecast by economists. If the Baerwald text was utilizing current and relevant information this mistake would not have been made. The text also seems to underestimate China's floating population, reporting statistics that were surpassed in 2004, according to researchers at Columbia University (Lu 2010).

The Baerwald textbook's persistent use of broad value-weighted language is easily refuted. Regarding Tiananmen Baerwald (2009, 658) shows bias and misreports the incident when he declares the Chinese military "opened fire without warning." Regarding Tibet Baerwald (2009, 664) carelessly terms the region a "country" and continues on to state, "A proposed railroad to connect Tibet with western China is viewed as an effort to speed [Han] migration. As a result, many Tibetans are now firmer in their resolve to regain independence." Tibet's political status is a contentious and vastly important issue that ought to be dealt with carefully. Use of inappropriate terms is conceptually misleading and ultimately misinforms students to the reality of the situation. Furthermore, the railroad to Lhasa was completed in 2005.

In the subsection "Ethnic Differences" the Baerwald (2009, 666) identifies Mongols, Uyghurs, Tibetans, and Kazakhs as the largest ethnic minority groups in China when in fact they are not; the Zhuang, Manchu, Hui, and Miao are the four largest minority populations. Similarly careless, Baerwald falsely declares, "China is officially an atheist state" (Baerwald 2009, 667). While it is true that the Chinese government has discouraged organized religion and persecution of religious communities is well documented, the People's Republic of China's constitution protects freedom of religion.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Albania, under the former communist regime of Enver Hoxha, was the only officially atheist state between the end of World War II and the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Finally after introducing and discussing the concept of autonomy in reference to the official title of Tibet (Xizang Autonomous Region), Baerwald (2009, 671) persists in referring to Xinjiang incorrectly as a province, thereby missing an opportunity to establish conceptual unity among the issues surrounding the two regions and their inhabitants. Furthermore, Uyghurs constitute a majority in Xinjiang, rather than a minority as the passage on human rights confusedly indicates.

### **World Regional Geography Textbooks**

The body of college level world regional geography textbooks contains more instances that reference Xinjiang and Uyghurs, more accurate information, and greater complexity. However, the texts tend to situate the conflict entirely in the context of present-day economic inequities and religious persecution.

A quote from a young Uyghur man in Urumchi in the Mihelic (2009, 358) text does well to illustrate the lived experience in Xinjiang:

I am a strong man, and well educated. But [Han] Chinese firms won't give me a job. Yet go down to the railroad station and you can see all the [Han] Chinese who've just arrived. They'll get jobs. It's a policy to swamp us.

However, the situation in Xinjiang cannot be adequately understood without awareness of the historic legacies that underpin the present situation. Over emphasis on contemporary economic grievances denies the persistence of ethno-territorial nationalism that dates back to the Qing Dynasty.

Furthermore, the world regional geography textbooks overwhelmingly focus ethnic conflict and volatility at the exclusion of other facets of life in Xinjiang. Marston (2011, 301) writes, "Protests and bombings increased sharply in the 1990's, and the traffic of weapons, political literature, and insurgents has prompted the Chinese to increase surveillance in Xinjiang and, intermittently, to close its borders with Pakistan and neighboring Central Asian states." While it is important

that students be aware of the ethnic tension in Xinjiang, accusations of foreign financed weapons trafficking and Uyghur *jihadists* trained in *al-Qaeda* camps have largely been dismissed by experts as propaganda promoted by the Chinese government to support its 'Strike Hard' policy (Gladney 2003, Human Rights Watch 2001). Furthermore, the uncritical reproduction of sensational tropes of violence does little to dispel or dissuade students from accepting the uncritical stereotypes of Islamic extremism and Oriental backwardness.

Rowntree's et al. (2011) *Globalization and Diversity: Geography of a Changing World* is noteworthy as it is the only textbook that defies the false sacredness of the nation-state as the preferred world-ordering paradigm. Instead, the text is organized along more fluid functional regions. In this text, discussion of Xinjiang is principally contained in the chapter devoted to Central Asia. The chapter begins with a discussion of the geographic and historical similarities that justify the unity of the region, yet the text also acknowledges the contradictions that challenge regional coherence. As such, the text presents a regional geography that is conceptually quite different than that of other textbooks by highlighting the continuity of culture, history, and ecology across the boundaries that separate China and its Central Asian neighbors. Additionally, the text contains the most current information with reference to the incidents of rioting in Urumchi in July 2009. Rowntree's et al. critical approach and strong conceptual coherence informed by up to date information make this a valuable text.

### **Lesson Plans and Curricular Guides**

Lesson plans and curricular guides were found mostly through the websites of universities with regional concentrations in either China or Central Asia. Additionally, I scanned teacher resource websites dedicated to geography, social studies, or Asia for Xinjiang lesson plans. The lesson plans and curricular guides analyzed represent a more heterogeneous body of texts than the geography textbooks. Many dealt, in some way or another, with ethnicity and identity and most

highlighted, to one degree or another, the economic, cultural, and ecological connections between western China and Central Asia. Given the selective nature of my search, the low number of lesson plans dealing principally with Xinjiang is noteworthy. Of the six Internet based curricular resources I studied, only three contained lessons directly related to Xinjiang. Surprisingly, none of the lesson plans highlighted the importance of Islam in Xinjiang.

Several lesson plans and curricular guides focus attention on the Silk Roads, however most focus on the famous trade routes' occurrence in Central Asia, partitioned from China and therefore Xinjiang. Rossabi's *From Oil to Silk* (2005) succeeds in breaching the political border by focusing on the complexities and interconnectedness of the Silk Roads across Central Asia and China. Rather than a vacuous corridor, Rossabi focuses on the dynamic changes and cross-cultural impacts the Silk Roads have had across time and space, and the transmission of religious, artistic, and material innovations. The text contextualizes historic and geographic forces as ongoing and emergent processes that continue to impart meaning on place, as well as to inform multiple layers of group identity, with particular focus on Uyghur experience. Rossabi acknowledges the centrality of Uyghur agency as intermediaries and antagonists among Chinese dynasties and others empires.

Two curricular guides, *Teaching About the Islamic World* and *Ethnic Minority Groups in China*, at first glance appear as plausible sources for lesson plans pertaining to Xinjiang and its ethnic nationalities. The introduction to *Teaching About the Islamic World* correctly states, "The popular mind tends to associate the Islamic world with the Middle East, which in turn is frequently synonymous with the Arab world" (Mowell 2006, 4), while *Ethnic Minority Groups in China* begins with the statement, "While many outside of China believe that China is an ethnically homogeneous nation, it is actually quite diverse" (Brown 2003). Nonetheless, both texts fail to deliver when it comes to increasing awareness of Muslims in Xinjiang.

*Teaching About the Islamic World* (Mowell 2006) is a great resource that provides information and lesson plans driven by National Geography Standards that help dispel prevailing stereotypes about the Islamic world. This edited volume includes no discussion of Muslims in China beyond the inclusions of Hui and Uyghur on a map depicting the spatial distribution of ethnic groups and language families.

*Ethnic Minority Groups in China* is an excellent resource to aid educators to introduce complex topics of ethnicity and identity, assimilation, sovereignty, as well as representation and stereotypes, however it makes no mention of Xinjiang, Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, or other Xinjiang ethnic nationalities. Instead, the lessons focus on Hui, Tibetans, Mongols, and Miao.

Several lesson plans are notable for their overt political agenda. A lesson plan posted on Yale's "Exploring Ethnicities in China" website entitled "Xinjiang: A Bi-Cultural Perspective" focuses entirely on Han persecution of Uyghurs and more or less asks students to pit Uyghurs against Han Chinese. The stated goal of the lesson is for students to, "develop an understanding of how the Chinese nuclear testing program and the environmental health of the Uyghur minorities are interrelated" (Strelau 2002). The lesson plan links students to several websites that are mild to overt in their bias against the Chinese, then asks students to research "the motivations for the Han Chinese massive movement into Xinjiang" (Strelau 2002). Next, students are asked to write parallel diary entries that describe the experience of Han migration to Xinjiang, one from a Han and one from a Uyghur perspective. However, first the class is asked to look at a United States population projection that shows "Caucasians will not be in the majority early in this century" (Strelau 2002). The class is instructed to have a conversation around the question, "How will that fact affect politics, education, daily life right here at home?" (Strelau 2002).

The final activity is designed for the students to "learn about the Han Chinese nuclear testing through the imaginative interviewing of participants at the site" (Strelau 2002). Students are linked to a number of websites dedicated to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons that are critical of China's nuclear weapons



program. However, none of the sites are dedicated to the ecological consequences of nuclear testing in Xinjiang or their effect on local people. Students are asked to role play an exceedingly biased scenario: “You and five others have been hired by the Uighurs to design a memorial to their countrymen and women who have died or are dying as a result of nuclear testing” (Strelau 2002). Students are instructed to “interview” their fellow students who play Uyghur locals about how nuclear fall-out has affected their health and local ecology. The students then create a monument to the tragedy.

The lesson plan should be considered sophisticated at best, but more likely dismissed for its poor pedagogy and racist overtone. The lesson plan draws on nativist xenophobia to illicit sympathy among students for the plight of Uyghurs. The lesson’s reliance on “imaginative interviewing”, rather than credible research, promotes the reproduction of dangerously essentialized narratives of ethno-nationalism and racist stereo-types about immigrants and is reliant on an emotive response to nuclear testing. At the conclusion of this exercise students will likely leave with strong emotional impressions informed by stereotypes and rhetoric rather than a well-rounded understanding of the situation faced by Uyghurs that is based on substantiated facts.

Another web-based lesson plan worth exploring is entitled “Geography and Ethnic Diversity in China” provided by Cornell University. The lesson plan begins with the laudable paragraph:

To teach about China and Chinese culture, it is essential to understand the geographic and ethnic diversity in China in order to avoid creating or strengthening stereotypes of China. It is important to understand that not all Chinese are alike, or eat the same foods or talk the same way.

However, the text and lesson that follows does more to reproduce those stereotypes than refute them. In fact, the entire lesson plan follows the discourse of ethnicity promoted by the Chinese Communist Party, wherein the Han form the vanguard of Party authority. The lesson, rife with embellishing language that is subtly pejorative toward non-Han ethnics, establishes Han as paternal protectors of unthreatening

ethnics. For example in a paragraph devoted to ethnicity the text reads, “From the dawn of time.... The 55 ethnic minorities, nestled away on China’s vast frontiers maintain their own rich traditions and costumes, and all are part of Chinese culture.” Explaining the relationship between Han civilization and its neighbors the text reads:

As the Han prospered, they became the envy of the hearty horseman of the north.... Unlike the plunder and destruction characterized by the barbarian invasion of Rome, these people admired what they saw, leading them to stay and assimilate.... No matter what the story, one enduring theme of Chinese history remains the stability of Han Chinese Culture.

The pure propaganda intent of the text comes out in this passage that celebrates the Communist party:

The Nationalists denied the existence of different ethnic groups. However, after the Communist Party came to power in 1949, an earnest effort to investigate and categorize minorities began. Although over 400 minority groups answered the call to register, studies found that there was a lot of overlapping, and a significant number of groups that claimed to be separate were actually the same with different names.

The passage celebrates the Communist Party as the ‘liberator’ of China’s enthusiastic ethnics, while simultaneously it underscores the command and authority of the Communist Party through determination of the very terms of existence of ethnic minority nationalities.

The portion of the Cornell lesson plan devoted to Xinjiang utilizes the story of the Monkey King, a Han folk tale, as a vehicle to explore the region. Specifically, the section retells the story in which the Iron Fan Princess, wife of the Ox Demon who represents the native inhabitants, helps the Monkey King to extinguish the Flaming Cliffs and thereby win control. Read critically, the story can be understood to illustrate feminine submission of local customs to the overwhelming superiority of Han culture and ritual.

The text further diminishes the agency and distinct history of Xinjiang’s ethnic groups when it reports:

Xinjiang is famous for its folk dances, fruits, gems, and carpets... Urumchi is the political, economic, and cultural center of the region... Xinjiang was the hub of the Silk Road, a place where Chinese culture met Indian, Persian, Arab, Greek, and Roman cultures... Its unblemished natural beauty and its varied and colorful minority customs attract tourists from all over the world.

Conspicuously absent from the list of cultures that have influenced Xinjiang are those of its titular inhabitants. This, and the identification of Urumchi as the unqualified socio-economic center of Xinjiang, denies by inference the existence of native culture, or alternative 'ethnic' interpretations of Xinjiang's history and geography. Furthermore, celebrating the products of Xinjiang, and not the people who crafted them, while associating "unblemished nature" with "colorful minorities" simply as attractions within a touristic landscape underscore the denial of Xinjiang as a meaningful place for Xinjiang's minority inhabitants.

The University of Washington's online curricular resource, *The Visual Source Book of Chinese Civilization*, is divided into two parts: physical geography and cultural geography. The resource reproduces common tropes outlined previously, including photos of Han Chinese in contemporary dress while depicting ethnic groups exclusively in costumes. Besides a photo of a market place, the teacher guide asks, "How do you suppose people in China would recognize that buyers and sellers here are Han Chinese?" The suggested answers relate to physical appearance and clothing. This suggests ethnic minorities have somehow remained unaffected by the movements of contemporary society, perpetually stuck in a primordial pre-history. Another passage, "The majority of ethnic minority groups today live in the northeast, northwest, and southwest, undoubtedly as a consequence of the expansion of the Han Chinese over centuries," does the titular inhabitants of these regions a disservice by implying their historic marginalization, rather than their cultural centrality within their particular geographies.

Columbia University's "East Asia In Geographic Perspective" website and National Geographic's "Xpeditions" website both contain excellent, well-organized, lesson plans. However, neither addresses the region of Xinjiang or its inhabitants specifically. Indiana University, well known for its regional focus on Central and

Inner Asia that includes study of Xinjiang and Tibet, provides no lesson plans pertaining to Xinjiang, but several excellent lesson plans focusing on Tibet.

### **Xinjiang Education in Montana**

Data for this assessment was gathered from responses from a short questionnaire I emailed to 153 members of the Montana Geographic Alliance, as well as a thorough search of the Missoula County Public Schools Library Catalog. The questionnaire asked teachers to answer these questions as best they could:

1. Is education about China part of your curriculum? In what context and how is China taught?
2. On what specific themes or points having to do with China do you focus?
3. What materials (textbooks, videos, maps, brochures, etc.) do you use to teach about China? Please be specific.
4. Have you ever heard of Xinjiang? What do you know about this region? Do you teach about Xinjiang?
5. Do you have any suggestions about how to improve education about China?
6. Would you like to continue to be involved in this project? If so, how?

Fifteen teachers responded. The low response rate was likely caused by teachers failing to receive the survey due to powerful new firewall protection applied to Montana school's Internet servers. While the survey cannot be thought of as representative of all Montana teachers, results do provide a useful glimpse into the current state of teaching about China and Xinjiang in Montana schools. On the whole, the survey shows the rather poor recognition of Xinjiang within Montana education.

The first questionnaire to be returned was also the most animated. The respondent, a recent Montana Public Schools teacher retiree, opened bluntly: "To say the least our geography education was piss poor." She went on to state:

The state of Montana, in my opinion, is horribly ignorant about all countries and China does not have any exclusivity. In my county it is sports and

basketball [that are important].... The National Guard comes out here each year with climbing walls and fun activities to recruit innocents to join, and [the students] don't even know where they're going.

Other respondents were less blunt. The impression I got from reading survey responses was one of shared dismay, or at least ambivalence, over the state of geographic education in Montana schools. One respondent communicated that the geography curriculum standards adopted by the state sound very nice; however, in reality these standards are not followed. One teacher described teaching geography during her lunchtime for no compensation. Many of the teacher respondents appear very motivated and expressed their eagerness at the prospect of improved teaching resources and opportunities.

Education about China in the Montana state curriculum appears to come in the sixth, seventh, and tenth grades. In the sixth grade students study ancient civilizations, including China; however, as one teacher reported, "Egypt, Greece, and Rome take up most of the year." In seventh grade students study world regional geography. They learn that China is a country of East Asia, "and they may have to learn the capital and a few brief facts." The tenth grade is exposed to Chinese history in World History class where they learn about the dynasties and "memorize some historical facts for a test." Otherwise several teachers reported students are exposed to Chinese communities in the mining and railroad towns of Montana when they study state history and the Chinese Exclusionary Act of 1882.<sup>8</sup>

Overall my impression is that education about China is very weak, and overwhelmingly confined to learning about China through ancient histories, thus relegating China in student's minds to an exotic and pre-modern position that has very little relevance to their lives. When discussing what they teach about China, teachers used phrases such as, "contact with the outside world", as if China is somehow fundamentally separate from the rest of the globe.

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<sup>8</sup> One teacher who teaches Montana History referred to the act of congress as the "Chinese Exclusionary Act of the early 1800's."

Another teacher stated that he “always tries to make connections between world cultures and Montana’s native peoples.” Explaining that he compares how young people in China and Montana’s Native Americans “are struggling between traditional and modern life...and concepts of balance and harmony in nature that are shared in both cultures.” However good his intention, the teacher reproduces for his students a distorted view of contemporary China informed by an outdated, but persistent, Orientalist worldview. In my opinion, although many young people in China face the bewildering changes globalism and market reforms have wrought on the impoverished countryside, China’s decidedly modern cities are full of “little princes and princesses” who have never known “traditional” life. Nor do I think that the anthropocentric notion of nature in Confucius, not to mention Maoist, thought is comparable to Native American religions.

As far as teacher’s knowledge about Xinjiang goes, most were quite frank about their ignorance. Responding to the question: “Have you ever heard of Xinjiang? What do you know about this region?” one educator wrote: “Yes, I know what Wikipedia told me when I looked it up just now.” Another answered unconvincingly with the banal affirmation, “Yes, Xinjiang has a varied physical landscape.” Another answered that it came up in reference to the Tibetan Independence Movement.

Needless to say, there is room for improvement in geographic education about China and Xinjiang in Montana schools. To address this educators suggested more teacher training was an important step to improving geographic education in Montana. Several teachers reported having participated in free classes here at the University of Montana, presumably through the Mansfield Center and China Institute. One teacher suggested taking teachers to the region would be beneficial stating, “I know I am a better teacher of the Roman Empire and medieval Europe after spending time there, seeing it, and learning first hand.” Given this response, efforts by the Montana Geographic Alliance to take teachers on educational tours of Xinjiang and Central Asia should be acknowledged for their significance.

Other suggestions included working with the organization Teacher's Without Borders to have teachers exchange lesson plans with counterparts in Xinjiang, and the creation of a Xinjiang Trunk to be circulated among Montana schools. The Montana Historical Society as well as the Montana Natural History Center maintain these "traveling road-shows" that bring much needed resources and hands-on learning to rural Montana schools.

A very thorough search of the Missoula Public Schools library digital catalog yielded next to nothing directly related to Xinjiang. When a student searches for "Xinjiang" he or she will find a single entry: a page dedicated to the Dzungar Basin in *100 Natural Wonders of The World* (Yenne 1995; see Figure 4). Searches for Uyghur (in its various forms), 'Turkistan', Kashgar, Turpan, Urumchi, Rabiya Kadeer, and other terms associated with Xinjiang are fruitless. There are 21 results for "Silk Road," yet none of the documents appeared to deal directly with Xinjiang.

Searching the term 'China' yields 1018 results. A survey of pages of abstracts for sources potentially dealing with, or related to, Xinjiang produced no results. The popular topics in sources dedicated to China included: Marco Polo, Pandas, Tea, Yao Ming, and Confucianism. There are 58 results for "Tibet" and 31 for the "Dalai Lama." Interestingly, there are 85 sources containing the keyword "Buddhism" but 209 containing the keyword "Islam", a reflection of our nation's current preoccupation with understanding the Islamic world since the declaration of the 'Global War on Terror' in 2001 that launched the United States into armed conflict in two predominately Islamic nations. Why then is there an utter deficit of materials available to students dedicated to "China's restive Islamic frontier," to borrow Fredrick Starr's (2004) phrase?

## 23. DZUNGARIA

### Xinjiang Uygur, China



Most of the Earth's surface is covered by water. Seen from space, our planet has been described as "the Blue Marble." Our vast oceans, lakes and rivers are basic to the reality of our existence. Mathematically predictable, but nevertheless puzzling, is that place on the Earth's solid surface that is the most remote from any of the world's great seas.

That place is in **Dzungaria** (the **Dzungarian Basin**), which is located in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of far western China, near Kazakhstan's border. The Dzungarian Basin is a dry, windswept place, where hearty souls tend to the herds of **bactrian camels** that are their means of contact with the outside world. And the outside world, as defined by contact with oceans, is far away.

Dzungaria is 1,645 miles (2,650 kilometers) from points on three great bodies of water, and the intervening land is anything but easily navigated terrain. To reach the



The bactrian camel.

frigid **Arctic Ocean** to the north, one must cross the breadth of **Siberia**. To reach the **Indian Ocean** to the south, one faces the **Tibetan Plateau** and the **Himalayas**. To the east, across the **Gobi Desert** and the breadth of **China**, lies the **Yellow Sea**.

Figure 4. The only source in Missoula County Public Schools catalog for Xinjiang  
(Source: *100 Natural Wonders of the World*)

## Tibet and Xinjiang

While Xinjiang remains very much underrepresented in geography textbooks and teaching materials, Tibet and the plight of its titular nationality, on the other hand, is highlighted in one way or another by every text that was analyzed. This comes as little surprise given the West's long infatuation with this 'Shangri-La' and the celebrity profile of its exiled religious head of state. Ever since, and indeed long before, James Hilton's (1933) novel *Lost Horizons*, Tibet has been fixed in the popular Western imagination as an isolated and timeless utopia inhabited by innocent peasants, presided over by tantalizingly mysterious ascetics. Indeed, criticism of the Chinese occupation of Tibet has become a cause *célèbre* on college



campuses, in Hollywood, and in media with portraits of the Dalai Lama regularly appearing on the cover of grocery store checkout reading material. Of the Dalai Lama's mass appeal, Cunningham (2008, 28) writes, "Many Westerners, taking cues from Hollywood, which celebrates the underdog and is deeply hungry for anything resembling spiritual advice, and put him in the same league as Gandhi and Mandela, if not Brad Pitt and Richard Gere."

All but one secondary school textbook includes at least one passage that is critical of the Chinese government's 'occupation' of Tibet and the persecution of its people (Baerwald 2009, Boehm 2008, Salter 2007, Sager 2003). Bednarz (2005) is the exception in that her text contains no discussion of ethnic tension in China whatsoever. Likewise, nearly every textbook highlights Tibet as a site of strong Buddhist traditions and acknowledges the role of the Dalai Lama in exile (Baerwald 2009, Boehm 2008, Salter 2007). All the texts contain non-visual message components referring to Tibet, including photos of the Potala Palace, Tibetan pilgrims, and landscapes of the Himalaya (Baerwald 2009, Boehm 2008, Salter 2007, Bednarz 2005, Sager 2003).

The trend is closely followed by the other categories of teaching materials analyzed. Among college level geography of China and world regional geography textbooks decidedly more space is devoted to issues related to Tibet than any other minority topic. Among Internet sources analyzed, nearly all include at least one lesson plan devoted exclusively toward Tibet. National Geographic's "Xpeditions" contains three resources for teachers and students regarding Tibet, while searches for "Xinjiang" and related topics yield zero results. Indiana University's website contains five excellent lesson plans devoted to Tibet, but none pertaining to Xinjiang. Stanford's curriculum guide, *China's Ethnic Minorities*, has an entire chapter devoted to Tibetans, but does not even mention Uyghurs or the other titular nationalities of Xinjiang.

Some sources even appear to suggest there is not ethnic unrest in other parts of China. The chapter review in Salter's secondary school textbook instructs

teachers to ask students, “What rebellions has China’s communist government put down since coming to power?” “Tibet 1959, and Tiananmen 1989” is the answer provided (2007, 579), giving the false impression that these are the only two incidences of widespread dissent to have occurred in China in the last 60 years! Johnson’s textbook, with a 2010 publication date, mentions the 2008 riots in Lhasa in a paragraph devoted to “Challenges to China’s Future” as evidence that the “1950 annexation of Tibet, the systematic denegation of Tibetan culture, and Han Chinese economic control remain volatile issues that Beijing simply fails to recognize” (2010, 543). While the conclusion is open to conjecture, the author misses an opportunity to generalize the point with additional evidence from other parts of China, namely the inter-ethnic rioting and upheaval that took place in Xinjiang’s capital, Urumchi, in July 2009.

The prevalence of resources devoted to Tibet can be viewed positively as it contributes to a more critical awareness of China’s diversity. The lack of attention devoted to Xinjiang, as compared to Tibet, warrants questioning given their similarities: Tibet and Xinjiang are the two largest political subdivisions in China, together comprising greater than one third China’s area (China 2007); they are the first and third least densely populated regions of China; and significantly they are the only two provincial level regions where Han Chinese are not the ethnic majority. In both Tibet and Xinjiang the titular nationalities are united with communities outside of China through their devotion to Buddhism and Islam, respectively. And the vast majority of the populous are united by linguistic commonalities not shared with the rest of China. Furthermore, Tibet and Xinjiang share the experience of ethnic and religious persecution, interethnic violence, internal colonialism, and aspirations of independence, or at least autonomy (Gladney 1994).

Why then does Tibet receive significantly more attention within textbooks and curricular resources than Xinjiang? After all, Xinjiang is larger than Tibet and contains a population greater than seven times that of Tibet (China 2007). Without deviating too far I will propose a few of my thoughts to explain this trend.

Tibet's geographic inaccessibility, geopolitical isolation since before the Great Game, and its popularly accepted image as an exotic, mystical, religious destination have helped create a narrative frame accepted in the West of Tibet as an unspoiled ethereal kingdom somehow beyond the vice that is perceived to inflict "modern societies". As stated above, the Dalai Lama is an internationally recognized celebrity regularly appearing in Western print media and television. The story of Tibet as it is intermeshed with the Dalai Lama's escape from Lhasa in 1959, his highly publicized profile as a Nobel Peace Prize winner, are widely circulated and publicized in Western media. Viewed through the normative lens of cosmopolitanism—the legal, political, and ethical values of neoliberal globalization embodied in international human rights law (Mayo 2010)—Tibetan Buddhism, with its apparently unassailable reputation for compassion and non-violence, is easily, and often, juxtaposed with a reflexive revulsion against the soulless atheism of Communist China. Thus framed, Western and American media portray Tibetans as 'worthy victims' (Herman and Chomsky 1997), that is victims worthy of our support and sympathy because of persecution by a Chinese state that is perceived to threaten our neoliberal Western values.

Meanwhile in Xinjiang, there exists no charismatic leader who enjoys the same high profile recognition and unconditional sympathy as the Dalai Lama (Teague 2009). Rebiya Kadeer, the Uyghur businesswomen turned vocal political dissident in exile, is the closest figure, however she remains far from a household name. Furthermore, Islam does not enjoy the same uncritical attraction in the Western psyche as Buddhism. Much has been written on the discursive framing of Islam as a threat to Christian Europe and the West through the repeated tropes of irrational violence, backwardness, and cruelty (Said 1978, Cere 2002). Indeed Cunningham (2008, 28) writes:

The underlying key to the Dalai Lama's appeal is rooted in Western perceptions and misperceptions about Buddhism. Given similar grievances, it is hard to imagine the religious leader of a Muslim minority group, let's say in Indian Kashmir, south Thailand, or south Philippines, enjoying anything near the same degree of almost unquestioned Western support.

Cunningham's failure to recognize the salience of his point with regard to the aggrieved Muslim minorities bordering Tibet to the north underscores the invisibility of Xinjiang.

Here I would like to return to the concept of 'worthy vs. unworthy' victims. Herman and Chomsky (1997, 37) suggest that Western and American media always selectively apply human rights discourse according to their country's geopolitical alliances and interests. Herman and Chomsky (1997, 37) write, "[Media] consistently portray people abused in enemy states as worthy victims, where as those treated with equal or greater severity by their government or a client state will be unworthy victims." If we are to accept this argument, understanding the invisibility of the Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities of Xinjiang becomes more tenable. Uyghurs and their place in Xinjiang challenge the duality of this paradigm and thus their place in the geopolitical narrative of the West becomes more complicated and less certain. On the one hand, Uyghur are 'worthy victims' for the same reasons as Tibetans; they face ethnic, cultural, economic, political, and religious persecution at the hands of the Chinese state who's rise is understood to be somehow unfair and a threat to Western hegemony.

On the other hand, China's tacit cooperation, particularly in Afghanistan, is vital to US interests and continued military operation in Central Asia and beyond. China's 'Strike Hard' policy and other repressive actions taken in Xinjiang are therefore tolerated as yet another facet of the "Global War on Terror." The designation of the East Turkistan Islamic Movement as an 'international terrorist organization' with links to *al Qaida* and the high profile detainment of 22 Uyghurs in Guantanamo have helped frame Uyghurs and Xinjiang within the distorted context of the West's struggle against militant Islamic fundamentalism. The fact that experts question the significance of the East Turkistan Islamic Movement and its relationship with *al Qaida* and the fact that all the Uyghur detainees at Guantanamo have been cleared of all charges matters little.

Earlier I referenced the frequently repeated idiom “knowledge is power.” The information contained in geography textbooks regarding Xinjiang is mediated by the world ordering narrative frames of geopolitics. Here, yet again, Xinjiang is a liminal space. Reporting on Xinjiang and its people is mediated first by its position within the Chinese state. The socio-economic and political spaces of Uyghurs and China’s other non-Han nationalities are occluded by the dominance of a Chinese national discourse that stresses the unbroken spatial and temporal continuity of *Han*-Chinese civilization. In this context knowledge and awareness of Xinjiang is circumscribed. Its unique position within a larger dynamic cultural landscape is subverted by the needs of a nation-state that is preoccupied with maintaining the political status quo. Geography textbooks’ failure to address issues of cultural and ethnic diversity in Xinjiang passively reproduces the “Hanification” of Uyghur and other ethnic nationality’s space.

### Summary

This chapter is dedicated to the qualitative content analysis of currently available education materials focused on Xinjiang. The chapter explores how Xinjiang is represented in secondary school geography textbooks, world regional geography textbooks, regionally appropriate curricular materials, and regionally specific lesson plans.

The results of the analysis clearly indicate a vast deficit in knowledge and education about Xinjiang. Moreover, my research gives the impression that the current state of education about China, and geography in general, in Montana schools leaves something to be desired. Available teaching materials focus almost exclusively on the political, historic, and human geography of eastern China, with virtually no recognition given to the vast diversity of China’s population.

## **Chapter VII**

### **Xinjiang Lesson Plans**

#### **Introduction**

As knowledge and teaching about China develop, in relation to China's ascension in world politics and economy, it is vital that teachers have access to materials that demonstrate to students the diversity and complexity of social and physical processes that characterize China today and throughout history. Making available compelling geographic teaching materials that highlight the complexity of social and physical processes in Xinjiang will aid teachers in strengthening the geographic literacy of their students, while preparing them to make informed decisions in an increasingly global future.

Given young American's apparent low geographic literacy of China, the development of curriculum about Xinjiang is an opportunity to address significant knowledge deficiencies pertaining to China as a whole, while drawing attention to the histories and geographies of China's non-Han populations. With its extreme topography, dynamic multi-ethnic populations, and intriguing histories Xinjiang as a topic of inquiry is ripe with provocative content suitable for the development of engaging curriculum for Montana students at the K-12 levels.

Furthermore, development of curriculum about Xinjiang conforms to the U.S. Department of Education's 2010 Invitational Priority 4, which calls for the development of projects focusing on improving the understanding of areas with substantial Muslim populations. Few people realize China is home to approximately 20 million Muslims (Pew 2009). Learning about Xinjiang's predominantly Muslim populations will inform students about the nature and extent of the Islamic world. Knowledge of the region's historically moderate practice of Islam and tolerance shown for other religions will help students balance the sweeping generalizations and negative stereotypes applied to Islam in much popular media with a broader understanding of Islam as a diverse world religion.

Bearing all this in mind, I have endeavored to create meaningful lesson plans that for all grade levels about the locality of Xinjiang specifically, but which highlight important geographic, historic, cultural, and political questions with global applicability. Having found that much of the material available on Xinjiang focuses on ahistorical conflict tropes and unproblematized nationalistic rhetoric, I have made an effort to create lessons that both broaden the scope of knowledge about Xinjiang while asking students to think critically about commonly held assumptions and stereotypes. To this end I have included lesson plans that challenge students to think subjectively about the meanings of ethnicity, material culture, contemporary media, and place. Where appropriate I have endeavored to include the use of primary sources so that students will begin to think critically about the biases and positionality inherent to media.

In structure I modeled these lesson plans after those found on National Geographic's 'Xpeditions' curriculum website. I have developed two to three Xinjiang themed lesson plans appropriate for implementation in each of the three grade levels—K-4, 5-8, 9-12. Lesson plans reflect relevant Content Standards, particularly Content Standards 1, 3, 4, and 6, as well as, grade appropriate Benchmarks as put forth in the Montana Standards for Social Studies document. The lesson plans can be found in the appendix to this document Geographic Perspectives of Xinjiang: Narratives of Place Lesson Plans for Grades K-12 (See Appendix C) and will be made available through the Xinjiang Curriculum Project website.

### **Lesson Plans: K-4**

#### **What's in a Hat: Ethnic Diversity of Xinjiang**

This lesson plan is intended to introduce students to the concepts of identity and ethnicity through the construction of 'traditional' ethnic hats from Xinjiang. Students will begin by discussing what identity is and how it is symbolized in material culture. In the second activity students will create traditional hats of

Xinjiang's ethnic groups and assume a given identity. Teachers may extend the activity by having students write a short "autobiography" about an assumed ethnic identity.

### **Understanding Meaning Across Cultures: Understanding Uyghur Stories**

This lesson asks students to interpret the meaning of Uyghur cartoons and stories, from familiar Aesop's fables to more abstract Uyghur folktales. In the process students will analyze the materials for non-verbal information about Uyghur culture and life. Students will also become familiar with the predominant linguistic families and their relative geographic location.

## **Lesson Plans: 5-8**

### **Visualizing Xinjiang: Understanding Through Mapping**

Studying maps is a great way to begin to understand a region. There are many different types of maps that present different types of information. In this lesson, students will use physical, political, and thematic maps to investigate the geography of Xinjiang, China. Students will gather information from many maps to create their own map of Xinjiang and answer questions about its geography.

### **Xinjiangren: Ethnic Identity and Diversity in Xinjiang**

This lesson plan is intended to build student's awareness of diversity in China by focusing on Xinjiang. Students will become familiar with the concepts of ethnicity and identity, before learning more about Xinjiang's ethnic nationalities. Ultimately students will be assigned an imaginary ethnic identity that they will investigate. Students will create an "official" identity card and write a short autobiography about themselves.

### **Xinjiang's Traditional Economies: Nomads and Oasis Agriculturalists**

This lesson is intended to introduce students to the complex socio-ecological adaptations that have made life in Xinjiang's varying and extreme geography



possible. Students will explore the ecological and climactic conditions that have shaped these different ways of life. Further more students will look at how these two vary different ways of life have influenced each other.

Finally students will examine the material culture of nomads and agriculturalists. Through class discussion students will compare and contrast the utility and meaning of textiles within Xinjiang's nomad and oasis communities. They will conclude by creating their own carpet design that incorporates traditional motifs as well as personalized symbols.

### **Lesson Plans: 9-12**

#### **Opposing Views: The 2009 Xinjiang Riots**

This lesson plan is intended to introduce students to issues being faced by China's minority populations, particularly the Uyghurs of Xinjiang Province. The primary activity of the lesson has students read newspaper articles about the 2009 riots in Urumchi that diverge widely in their treatment of the events. Students are asked to use a work sheet to help them compare and contrast the differing narratives, and come to their own conclusions as to the quality of the sources.

#### **Xinjiang Music: Traditions in a Changing World**

This lesson will introduce students to the diverse musical traditions of Xinjiang, as well as facilitate conversations about the meaning and implication of globalization, traditions, meanings of place, and national identity in our contemporary era. Students will watch a short documentary about a well-known Uyghur musician and challenges that Uyghurs face. Then students will study short case studies of musical traditions of Xinjiang, analyzing them for how the forces of globalization and tradition come to bare on place.

### **Summary**

It is hoped that through geographic inquiry into Xinjiang, students will become more knowledgeable and aware of the physical, social, and political forces that have shaped this complex and geopolitically significant region of the world. Furthermore, it is hoped that through close examination of this particular region, students will be more able to apply geographic knowledge and skills to a host of related geographic topics, thus illuminating the broader interconnectedness of the world. Ultimately, if students are able to apply their skills and knowledge reflexively, they will be able to bring those lessons to bear on decisions affecting themselves and their communities. It is hoped that competence in geographic literacy will encourage students to become informed, knowledgeable, thoughtful, competitive, and tolerant global citizens and leaders.

This chapter presents a brief description of the seven lesson plans that were created as an outcome of this thesis. The lesson plans are informed by the results of the qualitative content analysis and meant to broaden student's geographic literacy of China and Central Asia by making quality Xinjiang geography lesson plans available to teachers who are interested in engaging this region of the world.

## Chapter VIII

### Conclusion

Textbooks and educational literature, although authored by “experts”, are not evaluated by the scholarly standards accepted in the academic community. Instead publishers look at marketability of materials to school districts and teachers whose preferences are chiefly influenced by familiarity, convenience, ease, and personal preference. According to Bednarz (2004, 230), “The actual substance of geography textbooks appears to have changed little over the years despite a veneer of new ideas.”<sup>9</sup> Current geographic education materials repeat homogenous knowledge and harmful stereotypes. They are rife with superficial coverage, inaccuracies, and outdated rhetoric.

The purpose of this thesis has been to explore and document the prevailing narratives of place as they have been deployed in tourism and geography education texts about Xinjiang, China. The research results show that the available place narratives for Xinjiang fail to acknowledge the region’s unique character and dynamic cultural landscape. Instead, the region is either defined in terms of the pejorative Chinese-Marxist ethnic identity project, or occluded in the singularly Han-centric place narrative of China. This thesis provides evidence that demonstrates the profound degree that Xinjiang is overlooked, ignored, or misrepresented in tourism and geographic education texts.

When tourism brochures and geography textbooks uncritically reproduce the homogenized Chinese-Marxist ethnic identity narrative, the needs and interests of China’s ethnic populations are subverted. By concentrating predominantly on Han-centric geographies and histories of China, tourist literature and educational materials tacitly condone and reproduce the hegemony of China’s Communist Party.

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<sup>9</sup> Bednarz is the author of *World Cultures and Geography: Eastern Hemisphere and Europe* (2009), one of the less imaginative textbooks that is replete with homogenized place knowledge and conceptual misrepresentations of China.

The relegation of China's minority people to peripheral sidebars and curt subsections in geography education literature reinforces their reality as second tier citizens within China.

Geographic education is an opportunity to challenge the homogenized and unproblematic narratives of China that pervade textbooks and other materials. Recognition of China's diversity and awareness of its minority people is essential to understanding contemporary China and represents an opportunity for students to think more critically about the world ordering spatial relationships between power, people, and place. The lesson plans created as part of this thesis address the current deficit of materials and knowledge within geographic education literature pertaining to Xinjiang. In creating regionally focused lesson plans I have endeavored to create awareness of Xinjiang as a dynamic home to multi-dimensional peoples faced the challenges of our rapidly globalized era. The next steps needed to implement the Xinjiang lesson plans involve field-testing by teachers and colleagues and continued feedback from educators on how geographic education can be improved. Additional materials need to be developed that educate teachers about Xinjiang so that they feel comfortable approaching a region as unfamiliar and complex as Xinjiang. Finally, as teachers have suggested the creation of a "Xinjiang Trunk" that contains educational resources and material artifacts from Xinjiang would do much to make geographic education about Xinjiang attractive to interested teachers and school districts throughout Montana.

Further research into how Xinjiang is represented, historically as well as contemporarily, by media both inside China and beyond will do much to illuminate how our understanding of the region is framed, and provide a more critical awareness of how narrative representations of place function in the region. Furthermore, the need to evaluate and critique geographic education of China at large is clearly evidenced. Geographic education about China remains marred by homogenized knowledge, political rhetoric, and outdated tropes. If the promised benefits of a truly diverse, tolerant, and just globalized era are to be actualized then students must become globally aware citizens. Education is the nexus between

knowledge and power. Students must be educated think beyond themselves, to be critically aware of misrepresentations or distortions of events, and open to the multiplicity of competing interpretations of space.

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## Appendix A: Content Analysis Tables

**Table 1: Xinjiang Themes**

<b><u>Geography Textbooks</u></b>	Xinjiang	Uyghur	Islam	Ethnic Tension	Physical Geo.	Silk Road	Kashgar Urumchi	XNJG NVMC	Central Asia	Other XJ Ethnic
World Cultures: Building a Global Perspective (Baerwald 2009)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
World Geography and Cultures (Boehm 2008)					X	X				
Eastern World (Salter 2007)			X		X	X	X			
World Cultures and Geography (Bednarz 2005)					X					
People Places and Change: Eastern Hemisphere (Sager 2003)					X	X				
<b><u>Geography of China Textbooks</u></b>	Xinjiang	Uyghur	Islam	Ethnic Tension	Physical Geo.	Silk Road	Kashgar Urumchi	XNJG NVMC	Central Asia	Other XJ Ethnic
A Historical Geography of China (Tuan 2008)										
China's Geography (Veeck 2007)	X				X	X			X	
Changing China: a Geographic Appraisal (Hsieh 2004)	X	X		X	X		X		X	X
<b><u>World Regional Geography Textbooks</u></b>	Xinjiang	Uyghur	Islam	Ethnic Tension	Physical Geo.	Silk Road	Kashgar Urumchi	XNJG NVMC	Central Asia	Other XJ Ethnic
World Regional Geography (Johnson 2010)	X					X		X	X	
<i>Globalization and Diversity</i>	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	

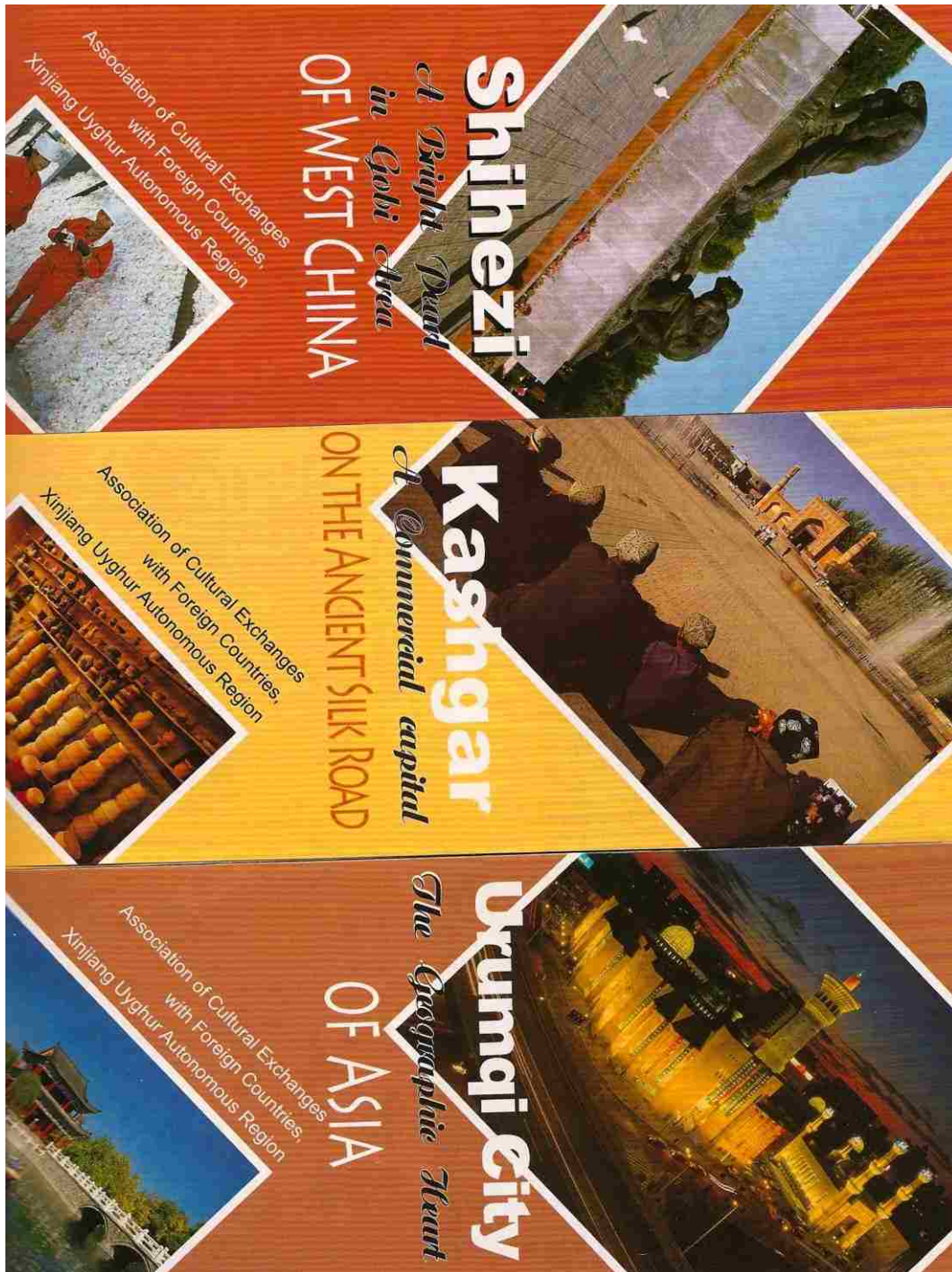


**Table 2: Human Geography Themes in Textbooks**

<b><u>Geography Textbooks</u></b>	Great Han Culture	Ethnic Others	Tibet	Three 'Native' Religions	Other Religions	1989 Tiananmen	Historic Isolation	NVMC Terraced Rice
<i>World Geography: Building a Global Perspective</i> (Baerwald 2009)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
<i>World Geography and Cultures</i> (Boehm 2008)	X	X	X	X		X		X
<i>Eastern World</i> (Salter 2007)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>World Cultures and Geography</i> (Bednarz 2005)	X	X	X	X		X		X
<i>People Places and Change: Eastern Hemisphere</i> (Sager 2003)	X		X	X		X	X	X
<b><u>World Regional Geography Textbooks</u></b>	Great Han Culture	Ethnic Others	Tibet	Three 'Native' Religions	Other Religions	1989- Tianan-men	Historic Isolation	NVMC Terraced Rice
<i>World Regional Geography</i> (Johnson 2010)	X	X	X	X			X	X
<i>Globalization of and Diversity</i> (Rowntree 2011)	X	X	X	X	X			
<i>World Regional Geography Concepts</i> (Mihalic 2009)	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
<i>World Regions in Global Context</i> (Marston 2011)	X	X	X	X	X			

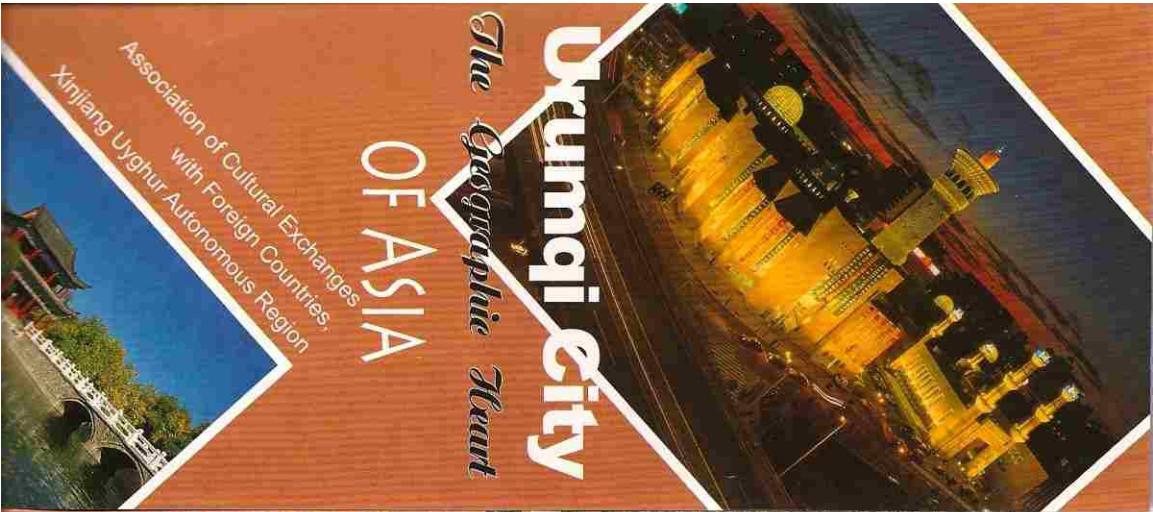
**Appendix B:**  
**Xinjiang Tourism Brochures**

**Cities:**





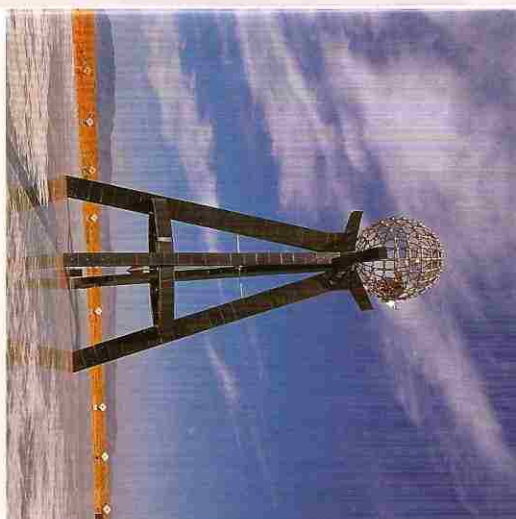
## Urumchi:



The residents of the city are from 53 ethnic nationalities, of which Han-Chinese, Uyghurs, Hui, Kazaks, Mongolians, Kirgiz and Xibo people embody the main body of the population. Han-Chinese are the majority of the population.

Some residents of Urumqi believe in religions respectively, such as Buddhism, Islamism and Christianity.

In the time of the Han Dynasty, garrison troops and peasants began to grow grain here and



in the Sui Dynasty time, a market was established for trade, which was a trade site on the Silk Road. Now the city is an important center for collecting and distributing goods and materials in Central Asia area.

Urumqi is also an important industrial base in Northwest China with petrol-industry, metallurgical industry, electricity, coalmining, textile, building materials and machinery, which have a key position in Xinjiang.

Urumqi Foreign Economy and Trade Fair, organized by Xinjiang People's Government every year in the city, is an important part of China's all-round foreign economic activities.

Echelonno Grand International Bazaar, with

## Kashgar:



Kashgar is also a birth place of the great Uyghur music set "Twelve Mugam", which has been regarded as a "mother of Uyghur music".

Meget County is the homeland of "Daolang Muqam", "Paintings of Daolang Peasants", and "Daolang Meshrep".

In the county, peasants enjoy their paintings which vividly reflects their understanding and love for life, and their paintings, plain and rich, are very famous.

For those who like tour, Kashgar offers them many natural wonders and cultural sites, such as the ruins of Stone City in Tashkurgan on the Pamirs, which is believed as one of the four ancient stone city buildings in the world, the second highest peak - Qiaoger(K2), THE Pamirs which is said as the roof of the world, Gongger Peak, Gongger-jiebie Peaks and Muragh-ata Peak, "Fragrant Concubine Tomb"(Apak Khoja Mau-

soleum), Mahmud Kashgaria Mausoleum and the Town of Banchoa.

Infrastructure of Kashgar has been greatly improved and the communication network consisting of airlines, railroad, highways and digital communications systems, which connect the area to other parts of the world.

The International Central-west Asia Market, (Kashgar Grand Bazaar) in Kashgar City is the largest market in Xinjiang, and in the Cazaar one can buy what he wants and what he never expects, from the local products to the modern commodities.



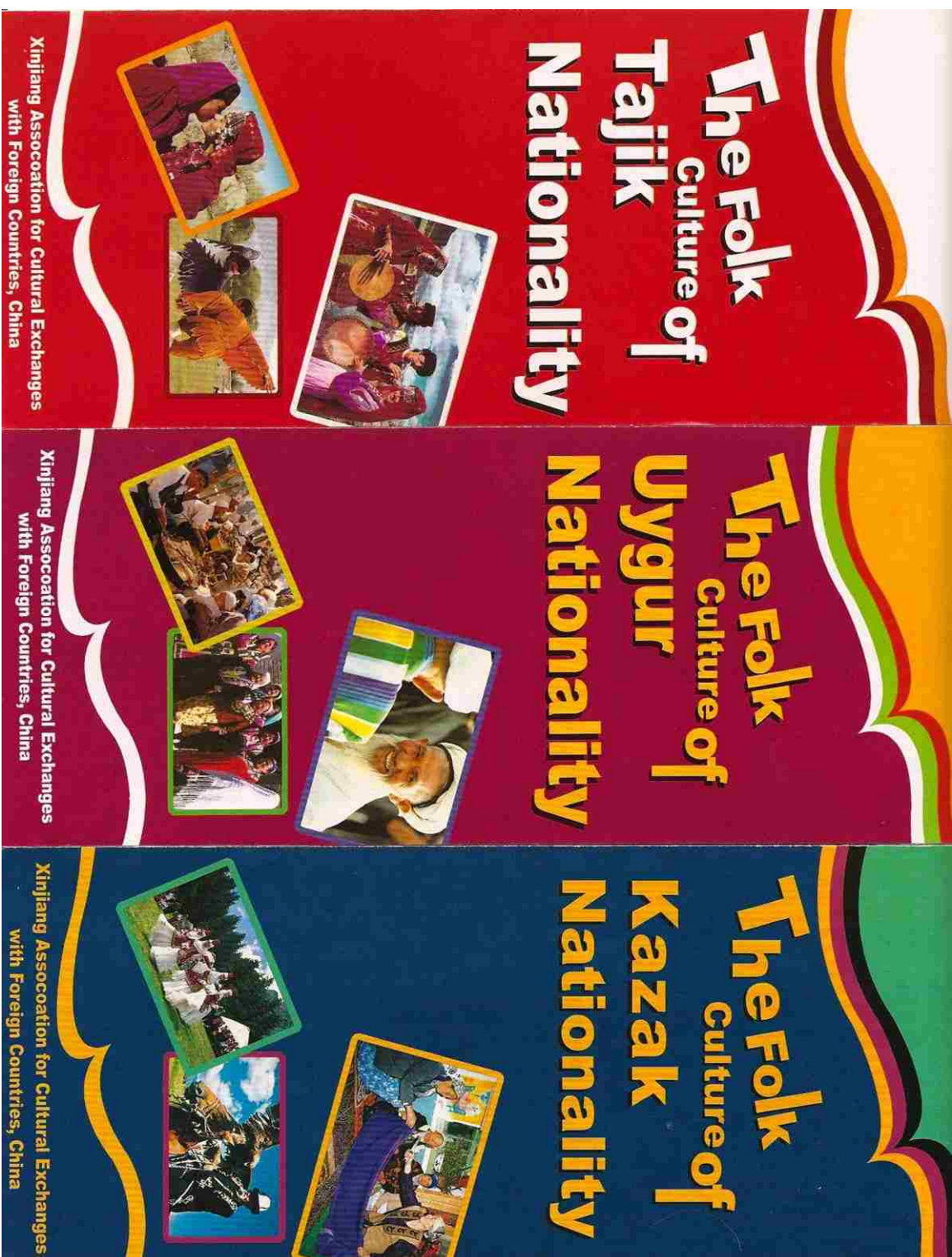
**Kashgar**  
A Commercial Capital

ON THE ANCIENT SILK ROAD

Association of Cultural Exchanges  
with Foreign Countries,  
Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

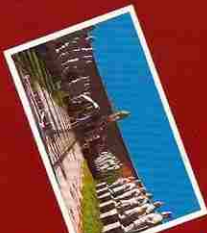


## Folk Cultures:



Han:

# The Folk Culture of Han Nationality in Xinjiang



## The Culture of Han Food



The Han food consists of many branches, such as Shandong Branch, Sichuan Branch, Guangdong Branch, Jiangsu Branch, Hunan Branch and Northwest -China Branch. The food of Xinjiang Han people belongs to a semi-branch of the Northwest -China Branch food, represented by the food of the "Old Xinjiangness".

Now, the food of every branches of Han Chinese food exists in Xinjiang and the western-style food, South-Korea food and Japanese food were also introduced to the region. At the same time the famous dish "Dapian Jiu" (Big-plate Chicken) that is special in Xinjiang is well-known in other parts of China. All this shows that trend that the food of Xinjiang Han people is undergoing a drastic change.



## Marriage Customs



From the very ancient times to the time of Republic China, the marriage of Han people was arranged between the two families that share the similar social and economic status, agreed by the parents of the both sides and match-made by go-betweens. The marriage customs include that the family of the bridegroom should offer betrothal gifts to the bride's and the bride should return their dowry to the bridegroom's. And the husband and wife have a relatively equal status in the family. Since the 70's of the 20th century, western-style wedding has been found popular among the young generations, and although going to church for wedding is not a common practice, the Han people of Xinjiang gradually accepted the western-style wedding ceremonies and a new type of wedding ceremony combining the traditional Chinese style and western style has been formed.

## The Traditional Festivals

The main festivals of Xinjiang Han people are: the Lunar New Year Festival, the New Year's Eve, Lunar New Year's Day, the Lantern Festival (the fifteenth of





## Tajiks:

# The Folk culture of Tajik Nationality

## Tajik Wedding

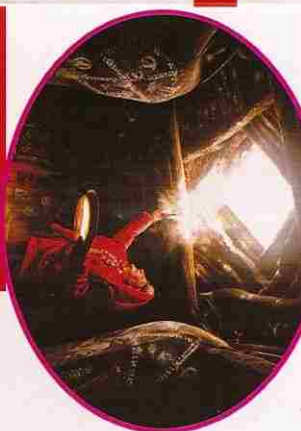
Tajiks attach great importance to wedding and the wedding is usually held in Autumn when the weather is fine and animals are fat. Generally a wedding ceremony lasts for three days.



## Festival Customs

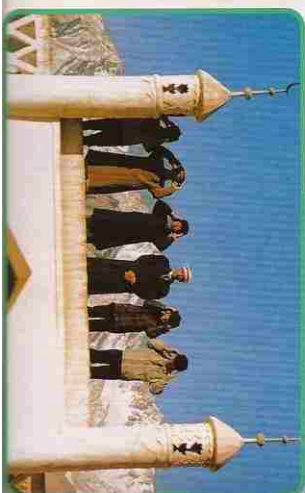
The Tajiks' Korban Festival is on the December 10 of Islamic Calendar. And they celebrate Rouze Festival which they also call "Rouze Naimaz") But they do not have the fasting days. During the Festivals, Tajiks, young and old, man and woman, wear festival dresses and visit their relatives and friends and they get together to celebrate the festivals.

There are other traditional festivals. "Pirik Festival", called "Lamp Festival", is one of them. The Tajiks spend the festival for two nights and one day, which is full of warm atmosphere and joys. Another traditional festival is called "Shogongahar Festival", meaning "welcoming the spring". Now this festival is renamed as "Navroze Festival". "Navroze" means "new day or new year or new spring" or "the beginning of the new year" in Tajik language.



## Belief Customs

Xinjiang Tajiks believe in Islamism. There are some differences in the sect of Islamism of the Pamir Tajiks in comparison with sects of Islamism that Uyghur, Kazakh, Hui, Kirgiz and Uzbek people believe in, and slight difference can be seen of the Islamism sects between the Pamir Tajiks and the plain Tajiks.



## Folk Literature

Folk oral literature is an essential part of Tajik literature, which is regarded as the core and life of Tajik literature. There are two categories of Tajik oral literature: Savage (stories) and Bish (poetry)



**Appendix C:**  
**Xinjiang Lesson Plans**



Compendium to:  
**Towards a Geographic Perspective of Xinjiang:**  
**Narratives of Place**

**Lesson Plans for Grades K-12**

By

Michael Church

2010

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## Introduction

As knowledge and teaching about China develop, in relation to China's ascension in world politics and economy, it is vital that teachers have access to materials that demonstrate to students the diversity and complexity of social and physical processes that characterize China today and throughout history. That is to say, China is not just fast-paced, economically-developed, Han-dominated, rice-eating coastal cities and inland industrial centers. China is also a composite of vast, ethnically diverse, western regions that have developed differently through time and space. These regions differ from eastern China significantly in terms of ethnicity, religion, language, economy, landscape, topography, and history.

Among the western regions of China is the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), the largest political sub-division in China. Moreover, Xinjiang is one of only two provinces where Han Chinese do not constitute an ethnic majority, being outnumbered by a population that is predominantly Turkic and Muslim. Despite the region's geographic significance, there are few materials available to American educators interested in teaching about Xinjiang, much less western China more generally.

The purpose of this document is to make available to teachers compelling geographic teaching materials and lesson plans that highlight the complexity of social and physical processes in Xinjiang. The goal is to strengthen the geographic literacy of students, while preparing them to make informed decisions in an increasingly global future. With its extreme topography, dynamic multi-ethnic populations, and intriguing histories, which challenge conventional understandings of China, study of Xinjiang is ripe with provocative content suitable for the development of engaging curriculum for Montana students at the K-12 levels. Furthermore, development of curriculum about Xinjiang conforms to the U.S. Department of Education's 2010 Invitational Priority 4, which calls for the development of projects focused on improving understanding of areas with substantial Muslim populations.



## Xinjiang Lesson Plans

### Grades K-4

#### Lesson 1:

#### What's in a Hat: Ethnic Diversity of Xinjiang

##### Overview:

Identity is the complex integration of traits, beliefs, and behaviors that define a person and their community. Identity operates at many different levels. One of the most important for understanding the human geography of the world is ethnic identity: the combination of common ancestry, history, kinship, religion, language, shared territory, nationality or physical appearance.

This lesson plan is intended to introduce students to the concepts of identity and ethnicity through the construction of 'traditional' ethnic hats from Xinjiang. Students will begin by discussing what identity is and how it is symbolized in material culture. In the second activity students will create traditional hats of Xinjiang's ethnic groups and assume a given identity.

##### Connections with the National Geography Standards:

Standard 4: The physical and human characteristics of places

Standard 6: How culture and experience influence people's perception of places and regions

**Time:** Two to three hours

##### Materials Required:

- 1) Materials for making traditional ethnic hats:  
tagboard, felt cloth, scissors, stapler, cloth scraps (felt, fur, patterned), feathers, yarn, big yarn needles, markers
- 2) *How to Make Xinjiang Hats Instructional Handout* on how to make Uyghur, Kyrgyz, and Mongol hats
- 3) Notebook paper and pencils

##### Suggested Procedure:

##### Opening:

Have you ever heard someone use the expression, "I wear many hats." Hats communicate a lot of information about their wearer. It may be possible to recognize a person's occupation, social status, the subculture they are a part of, the climate where they live, occupation, religious preference, the school they attend or

sports team they support, all from their hat. By paying attention to hats you may be able to find out a lot about a person's identity.

**Identity** is who or what a person is. One's identity is a complex combination of traits, beliefs and behaviors that define a person and define how they belong to a group. Key elements of identity can be: race, ethnicity, religion, gender, language, livelihood, place, history, nationality, or personal aesthetics.

Individuals feel connected to groups that share their beliefs. Symbols may become powerful representations of group identity that distinguish group members from outsiders. These symbols can be many things: sports team insignia, religious symbols, state or national flags, language, hairstyle, or fashion—any feature that is meaningful to the group.

**Ethnicity** is a form of identity. It is commonly understood to mean the combination of common ancestry, history, kinship, religion, language, shared territory, nationality or physical appearance. Members of an ethnic group are aware of belonging to an ethnic group, and affirm their membership through cultural symbols. Moreover, others recognize the group's distinctiveness through the visibility of their symbols.

All over the world hats, or headwear, are important symbols of identity. In Central Asia, where there are many different ethnic groups, hats are important symbols of ethnic identity. Traditionally, each ethnic group has worn distinctive headwear that symbolizes an individual's belonging to his or her particular group. Today of course the people of Central Asia wear many hats according to their needs, but traditional hats remain very important.

### **Activity 1: Thought Provoking Discussion and Brainstorming**

1. Initiate the discussion with some thought provoking questions, make a list on the board. Ask, "Why do people wear hats?" Answers may include: to stay warm, to protect their heads, because they are cold or it is raining, to support their team, as part of a uniform, or for religious purposes. Ask students for examples of hats that fit each of these reasons. Answers may include: cowboy hat, police hat, ball cap, fur hat, construction worker hardhat, skullcap, helmet. Ask students, "What does each of these hats mean?" and "What can you tell about the person from the hat he or she wears?" Answers may include things like: what their job or rank is, what region they are from, what the climate is like where they come from, what religion they belong to, or what team they support.

2. Introduce the idea of identity, followed by ethnicity. Discuss ethnic differences. Introduce a map of Xinjiang, China, and explain that many different ethnic groups live in the region. Briefly introduce the major ethnic groups using the Xinjiang PowerPoint. Explain to the students that there are differences and commonalities

among all the ethnic groups, meaning members of different ethnic groups may share common traits, beliefs, or behaviors. This makes identity very complicated.

3. Have a discussion about some of the important signifiers of ethnic identity in Xinjiang: religion, language, livelihood, ancestry, and place attachment.

**Religion:** Many religions are practiced in Xinjiang. A majority of the population practice Islam, while others practice Buddhism. Some people are atheists, and other people hold onto shamanistic beliefs.

**Language:** Many languages are spoken in Xinjiang. The majority of people speak languages that are Turkic; they are different languages, but all closely related. Other people speak Tajik, an Indo-European language similar to Persian, distantly related to English. Others speak Mongolian, Manchu, Tibetan, or Russian. Many people speak Chinese, either as their first language or because they learned it in school and it is useful in business and commerce.

**Livelihoods:** There are many different ways people make their livelihood in Xinjiang. There are nomads in the north and high pastures, who travel seasonally with their herds to find good pasture. There are oasis agriculturalists who irrigate lands surrounded by desert to produce grapes, melons, and other crops. There are large scale, state-run factory farms that grow wheat and other cereal crops. There are engineers involved in mining for minerals and oil. There are business people who work for huge factories, as well as small-scale merchants involved in trade.

**Ancestry:** There are complicated ancestries, stretching back hundreds of years. Mongols trace themselves back to the reign of Chinggis Khan in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Tajiks are proud of their Persian ancestry. Uyghurs, Kyrgyz, and Kazakhs all remember their people's history as nomads arriving from the northern steppe. Han identify with their people's ancient dynasties.

**Place Attachment:** People are attached to their places in many different ways. Some understand Xinjiang as a homeland for their people, but they may also identify with one particular town or oasis. Others may identify with several locations, or the range encompassing them, if they are nomadic. Some identify themselves with the type of settlement they live in, rural vs. urban. And others are new arrivals and may still consider their previous location home.

All these traits, beliefs, and behaviors contribute to ethnic and personal identity.

## Activity 2: Check Out My HAT

Students will construct 'traditional' Uyghur, Kyrgyz and Mongolian hats using the instructions from the *Xinjiang Hats Instructional handout*. Students should decorate their hats with traditional motifs, but they should also think of and create motifs that are appropriate for themselves.

### **Extending the Lesson:**

1. For homework students will do research and write a short “autobiography” of their person. Students should also describe their hat, and what information can be gathered from it. They should explain the importance of the symbols. Students should elaborate on the answers to these questions:

- Who am I? Include age, family, and interests.
- What languages do I speak?
- What is my religion?
- Where in Xinjiang do I live and what is it like?
- What is my livelihood?
- How long have I lived here?

Students can share their stories in class, while wearing their hats.

### **Other Resources:**

<http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/hsc/textiles/>

<https://www.kashgar.com.au/diaries/stories-from-the-silk-road-hats-off-to-the-silk-road>

<http://www.turkishfolkart.com/Central%20Asian%20Art%20Page%202.html>

[http://www.travelcentre.com.au/travel/Central\\_Asia/uzbekistan\\_hats.htm](http://www.travelcentre.com.au/travel/Central_Asia/uzbekistan_hats.htm)

<http://www.asia-planet.net/mongolia/culture.htm>



## How to Make Xinjiang Hats Instructional Handout

### Making a *Dopa*: Traditional Uyghur Hats

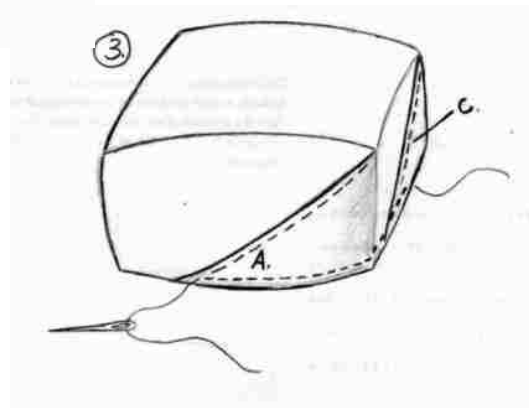
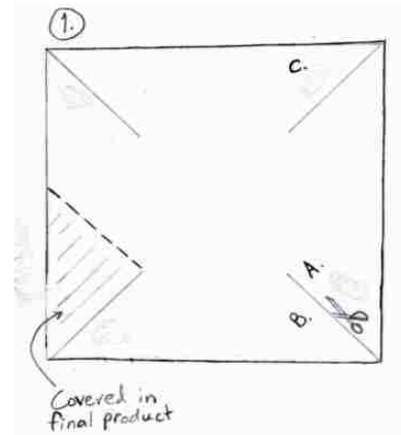
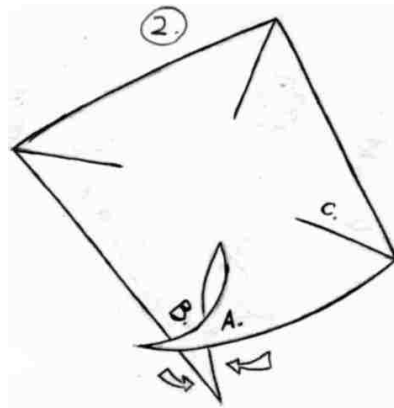
These are instructions on how to construct a pillbox *dopa*, the hat traditionally worn by Uyghur oasis agriculturalist in Central Asia. These hats can be constructed from felt or tagboard (cereal box cardboard), sewn or stapled

#### Materials:

- tagboard
- felt cloth
- scissors
- stapler
- cloth scraps (felt, fur, patterns)
- feathers
- yarn
- big yarn needles
- glue
- markers

#### Instructions:

- 1) With a ruler and pen make a square approximately 10 inches square (8 inches for small heads) a side on cloth or tagboard. The *dopa* can be made of either tagboard or felt alone; however, for more rigidity glue felt to the tagboard before cutting.
- 2) Lightly draw lines between opposite corners.
- 3) With scissors cut 3 inches in towards the center from each corner (less for smaller hats).
- 4) Without creasing the tagboard, bend one half-corner (A.) under the other half-corner (B.) until they form a right angle and the bottom edge is flush. Staple or sew together along the bottom and diagonal edges.
- 5) Repeat process for each corner.
- 6) Decorate with traditional Uyghur motifs from Motif Handout. This step could also be performed after step one, before the *dopa* is cut and folded. However, remember that a portion of each side will be covered.



## Making a Kolpak: Traditional Kyrgyz Hats

### Materials:

Four 9- by 12-inch pieces of felt  
Ballpoint pen  
Ruler  
Scissors  
Needle and thread (or stapler)

### Procedure:

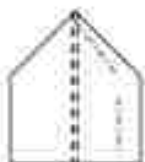
- 1) Fold each piece of felt in half the long way



- 2) On each folded piece, draw a line beginning 3.5 inches up from the bottom edge and ending at the folded edge at the top. Cut curves on the bottom as indicated by the line.



- 3) Place two pieces of felt on top of each other. On one side, sew (or staple) the slanted edges together. (Use a  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch seam allowance for all seams.) Add another piece of felt, sewing (or stapling) its slanted edge to a free edge. When you add the fourth piece of felt, sew (or staple) both slanted edges. Fold up the bottom edges three inches.



- 4) Sew (or staple) up the short, straight sides.
- 5) You're finished! Wear the seams on the outside of the hat.



Photo credit: Jonathan Lee

(Source: [www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/creees/\\_files/pdf/.../introcentasia\\_6gr.pdf](http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/creees/_files/pdf/.../introcentasia_6gr.pdf))

### Making a Louz: Traditional Mongolian Hats

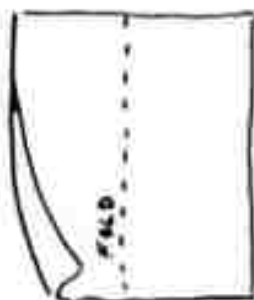
**Directions:**

Boots, hats, saddle blankets and tent covers were made from felt. To make a traditional Mongol hat, just follow the directions at the end of the Teacher Guide. You can make your hat out of felt and sew the seams together, or make it of construction paper and staple the seams.

**Materials:**

- Four pieces of piece of felt or paper that are 9" by 12".
- Pen, ruler, scissors,
- Either a needle and thread or a stapler

1. Fold each piece of felt / paper in half the long way.



2. Draw a line beginning 3 1/2" up from the bottom edge and ending at the top corner. Cut along the line (cutting off the corner as shown).



- Place two pieces of felt / paper on top of each other. Leave a 1/4" seam allowance and sew the slanted edges together along one side. If you are using paper, staple this edge. Cut the curves on the corners as shown.



- Add a third piece of felt, sewing or stapling along one slanted edge. Add the fourth piece of felt and sew or staple both slanted edges. You should now have a complete hat.



- Fold up the bottom 3 inches of your hat. Wear the seams on the outside of your hat. Traditional Mongol hats were embroidered with brightly colored designs but you may decorate your hat with markers.



Traditional Mongol Hat



## Xinjiang Lesson Plans

### Grades K-4

#### Lesson 2:

#### Understanding Meaning Across Cultures:

#### Understanding Uyghur Cartoons

##### Overview:

This lesson is intended to introduce students to language families and Uyghur language and culture. Students will first look at maps of various language families and have a discussion. The lesson continues with student's watching cartoons in the Uyghur language. Students will practice cross-cultural understanding through visual ques. Next students will create their own Uyghur cartoon based on what they have learned.

##### Connections to National Geography Standards:

Standard 4: The Physical and Human Characteristics of Places

Standard 6: How Culture and Experience Influence People's Perceptions of Places and Regions

Standard 10: The Characteristics, Distribution, and Complexity of Earth's Cultural Mosaics

**Time:** two to three hours

##### Materials Required:

- Computer and Internet access:
  - Language Family Power Point
  - Bola keldi, or 'The Boy Who Cried Wolf':  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=531hanzaA2I&feature=related>
  - Hurun bala: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akNNUmlRe3M>
- *Uyghur Storyboard Worksheet*
- Crayons or color pencils

##### Suggested Procedure:

##### Opening:

Does anyone in your class speak a second language? Ask them to say something, and then ask if anyone can guess what the speaker said. Explain to students that there are many different languages in the world. Most languages fall into several big language families on the language family tree. Spanish, French, and Italian are part of the Romance language branch. German, Norwegian, and English are part of the Germanic language branch. However all these, as well as Russian,

Persian, and Hindi, are called *Indo-European* languages. They are all related to one another and part of the major *Indo-European* language family branch.

Other major language groups are Afro-Asiatic, Amerindian, Niger-Congo, Sino-Tibetan, and Ural-Altaic. Guess the regions where each of these language families originated. Look at them on a world language map (see PowerPoint). These are all very different languages, however through the course of history people have mixed and shared things, including language. Therefore there are many foreign words in most languages. Use the accompanying Power Point to look at maps and graphics about language families.

Tell students that they will be learning about the Uyghur people of northwest China. Find China, and then Xinjiang on a map. Uyghur people speak a Turkic language, a branch of the Ural-Altaic language tree. Turkic languages are spoken all the way across Eurasia.

Review with the class new or difficult vocabulary: oasis, nomad, Islam, Muslim, ethnicity, Turkic, Silk Road, bazaar, Eurasia, Central Asia.

**Activity 1:** As a class watch the Uyghur cartoon *Bola keldi* (10 min.). Ask students if they understood the message even though it was in a foreign language. Hopefully they recognize it as Aesop's fable "The Boy Who Cried Wolf." Ask students what things they noticed in the cartoon that surprised them, what was unusual or different from the version of the story with which they are familiar. These might include the clothing and hats of the characters, the music, the writing system, etc. Make a list on the board. Some things the students may have noticed may have significant cultural or geographic significance: Uyghurs follow Islam and it is customary for Muslim men to wear something to cover their head and to grow a beard; Uyghurs are primarily *oasis farmers*, but in the past they were primarily *nomadic herders*; Uyghur music follows the traditions of Central Asian and they play horse hair stringed lutes and clarinets. Discuss significant observations and characteristics of Uyghur culture.

**Activity 2:** Distribute to the class the *Uyghur Storyboard Worksheet* and watch the cartoon *Hurun bala* (7 min.). In the space provided students should take notes on interesting clothing, architecture, customs, landscape, animals, *etc.*, they see. At the conclusion you can discuss these as a class. Now the students should use the storyboard to write and color their own Uyghur folk tale. Students should be creative, but also be sure to include what they've learned about Uyghur people in their story. Students can share their stories with the class.

### **Extending the Lesson:**

Read and discuss a Uyghur folktale in the story circle. Students can then illustrate the story they heard on their own. Two Uyghur folktales can be found at:

<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/china.html>

**Uyghur Cartoon Story Board Worksheet****Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

After watching the Uyghur cartoon, *Hurun bala*, write your own story. Remember what you've learned about Uyghur culture. Finish by coloring in the pictures.



1.



2.



3.

4.



5.



6.

## Xinjiang Lesson Plans

### Grades 5-8

#### Lesson 3:

#### Visualizing Xinjiang: Understanding Through Mapping

##### Overview:

Studying maps is a great way to begin to understand a region. There are many different types of maps that present different types of information. In this lesson, students will use physical, political, and thematic maps to investigate the geography of Xinjiang, China. Students will gather information from many maps to create their own map of Xinjiang and answer questions about its geography.

##### Connections to the National Geography Standards:

- Standard 1: How to use maps and geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information
- Standard 4: The physical and human characteristics of places
- Standard 5: That people create regions to interpret Earth's complexity
- Standard 15: How physical systems affect human systems

**Time:** Three to Four hours

##### Materials Required:

- Computer with Internet access
- Access to physical, political, and thematic maps of China and Central Asia
- One blank map of Asia for each student
- One *Visualizing Xinjiang through Maps Worksheet* for each student
- Colored pencils

##### Objectives: Students will

- identify types of maps and their purposes;
- identify major geographic features of Central Asia;
- consider what defines a region; and
- use tools of geography to find and analyze geographic information.

##### Geographic Skills:

Asking Geographic Questions  
Acquiring Geographic Information  
Answering Geographic Questions  
Analyzing Geographic Information

## Suggested Procedure:

### Opening:

Begin with a discussion of maps. Ask students what maps are used for and what kinds of information they can find on maps. Discuss the different types of maps: physical, political, and thematic.

- Physical. (Physical maps describe the landforms in a particular area. They may include mountains, deserts, rivers, seas, oceans, and plateaus.)
- Political. (Political maps show man-made boundaries. These may include countries, capitals, and other important cities. These locations can be described geographically using lines of longitude and latitude.)
- Thematic. (Thematic maps show information such as population, religion, rainfall, and natural resources.)

Ask students to explain the purpose of each kind of map. Then, ask for examples of the kinds of questions that could be answered by the particular maps. Teachers can prompt students by asking the following questions:

- If you were planning a hike, which kinds of maps would you use and why?
- If you were going to open a factory, which map would you use and why?
- If you were planning a road trip throughout China, which maps would you use and why?

Explain that they will be using these types of maps to study the northwest region of China called Xinjiang.

### Development:

Students may work in pairs or individually. Give each student one blank map of Asia and one *Visualizing Xinjiang Through Maps Worksheet*. Tell students that they may use Internet and classroom resources to find the answers to the questions on the worksheet. Review the instructions and direct students to previously bookmarked Web sites for research (found in the Related Links section of this lesson). The University of Texas Perry-Castaneda Library map collection is the best online map resource for students to begin their research (<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/china.html>). Students should first make their map and then continue research to complete the questions. The following questions and answers from the worksheet are provided for the teacher's convenience:

#### PHYSICAL MAPS

- 1) What mountain ranges form barriers between Xinjiang and other countries or provinces? What mountain range divides Xinjiang's northern and southern parts?
  - Altai (Mongolia), Kunlun (Tibet), Tian Shan (Kyrgyzstan), Pamir (Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan)
  - Tian Shan
- 2) Why are the Pamir often called a mountainous "knot"? (Hint: look at a physical map of Central and South Asia)

- This is where the tallest mountain ranges in the world converge: Himalaya-Karakorum, Pamir, Hindu Kush, Tian Shan
- 3) What are the highest and lowest points in Xinjiang? (Hint: they are also the second highest and lowest points in the world!) What is the “Pole of Inaccessibility”?
    - K2 (Godwin-Austen, Qorgin), Turpan Depression
    - The Pole of Inaccessibility is the furthest point on earth from open water.
  - 4) Where do Xinjiang’s rivers originate, what is their source? And where do most rivers terminate? What is an interesting feature of the Tarim River and lake at Lop Nor?
    - Xinjiang’s rivers begin in the mountains as glaciers and snowmelt. Almost all of Xinjiang’s rivers are “closed systems” that end in either the desert or inland lakes.
    - The Tarim River and Lop Nor have been known to “shift” throughout history, changing course and location. Hence settlements along the river have changed location.
  - 5) What rivers are trans-boundary? What is unique about the Irtysh River in Xinjiang?
    - Ili and Irtysh
    - The Irtysh is the only river in Xinjiang that eventually empties into an ocean.

*Political:*

- 6) What countries border Xinjiang?
  - Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India
- 7) What is Xinjiang’s capital? What is China’s westernmost city?
  - Urumchi
  - Kashgar
- 8) What does Karamay mean in Uyghur language? Why do you think it got that name? Culturally, what is the most significant city in Xinjiang to Uyghurs?
  - “Black Oil”
  - Kashgar
- 9) Why do you think the cities of southern Xinjiang are located where they are? Why do you think the roads and railways were built as they were?
  - They are located in a narrow band of oases that are between the desert and mountains.
  - The transportation systems avoid physical obstacles and connect the most populated cities with the rest of China and countries to the west.

*Thematic:*

- 10) What are the major ethnic groups of Xinjiang? Do they conform to the political borders? What linguistic families are found in Xinjiang?
  - Uyghur, Han Chinese, Kazakh, Mongolian (Also Kyrgyz, Tajik, Tibetan, Hui, Xibo, and Russian)
  - Some more than others
  - Ural-Altaic (includes Turkic, Mongolian, and Manchu), Indo-European (Tajik and Russian), Sino-Tibetan (Tibetan, Chinese)
- 11) What is the average rainfall in southern Xinjiang? What about the north?
  - Below 4 inches, and below 20 inches
- 12) What are the major products produced in Xinjiang? Do you notice anything about the geographic distribution of where different products are produced? What factors might explain this distribution?
  - Cotton, produce (grapes, melons), Oil, Gas
- 13) Why do large parts of Xinjiang have very low or zero population density?
  - Large drifting desert and super high mountains make much of Xinjiang uninhabitable.
- 14) What religions are practiced in Xinjiang? What is the most dominate religion?
  - Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Shamanism
  - Islam
- 15) What are the “Silk Roads” and what Xinjiang cities did they run through?
  - The “Silk Roads are ancient trade networks that carried luxury items from China westward toward the Roman Empire and Europe.
  - Kashgar was an important staging point, as were Khotan, Turpan, and Hami. Ili was a stop on one of the northern routes.

*Conclusion:*

Write a short essay on how Xinjiang’s physical geography has affected its people and the way it was settled. Before you write, make a chart or web to organize your thoughts.

The conclusion essay can be completed in class or as a homework assignment.

**Closing:**

Discuss answers to questions as a class. Talk about how Xinjiang’s physical geography has influenced its economy and settlement. Discuss the territory’s coherence as a functional region.

**Extending the Lesson:**

Younger students can download and print, or cut out pictures of Xinjiang to create a classroom collage that illustrates the features of the land, environment, and people of this region.

Older students can be asked to use maps of Central Asia to compare and contrast the physical and human geography of Xinjiang with that of its neighbors. They can then work to define the functional region Xinjiang is part of: Central Asia, East Asia, or Inner Asia.

**Related Resources:**

Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection:

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/>

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/china.html>

[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/map\\_sites/country\\_sites.html#china](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/map_sites/country_sites.html#china)

The State of China Atlas: the World's Fastest-Growing Economy:

Benewick, Robert. 2009. *The State of China Atlas: the World's Fastest-Growing Economy*. University of California



## Visualizing Xinjiang Through Maps Worksheet:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: Today you will use physical, political, and thematic maps to create a map of Xinjiang, China, then answer questions about the region. You may use the Internet, atlases, or other classroom resources.

### Part One: Create the Map of Xinjiang

On the blank map of Asia you will draw and label political boundaries, physical features, and thematic information. Create a legend so others can understand your map. Be consistent. Remember, many features do not end at borders, draw them into neighboring territories when appropriate.

Here are the items you will have to locate on your map listed by category:

#### *Physical:*

- 1) Mountains: Tian Shan, Altai, Kunlun, Pamir
- 2) Rivers and lake: Tarim, Irtys (Ertish), Ili, Hotan (Khotan), and Lop Nor
- 3) Deserts and Steppe: Taklimakan, Gobi, Dzungar (Junngar)
- 4) The Eurasian Pole of Inaccessibility
- 5) Highest and lowest points in Xinjiang

Develop a scheme for representing different types of land features, for example: small dots for desert, little vertical dashes for steppe grasslands, blue lines for rivers, and upside down V's for mountains.

#### *Political:*

- 1) The provincial boundaries of Xinjiang. Label the provinces and countries that border Xinjiang (3 provinces and 8 countries).
- 2) Cities: Urumchi, Kashgar, Khotan, Yarkand, Ili (Yining), Turpan, Hami, Karamay, Qiemo
- 3) Railroads and major highways

Mark the capital with a star. Railroads are usually solid lines with little hatch marks at regular intervals. Roads are often drawn in red.

#### *Thematic:*

- 1) Ethnic groups
- 2) Agricultural or industrial products

Shade areas that are predominantly of one ethnic group with colored pencils. Make icons for agricultural and industrial products. Remember to include these in your legend.

## Part Two: Using Map Knowledge to Answer Questions

Great work building your map of Xinjiang! Now use your knowledge to answer these questions. Some questions might require you to do a little more research. It might be helpful to skip some questions and come back to them later.

### *Physical:*

- 1) What mountain ranges form barriers between Xinjiang and other countries or provinces? What mountain range divides Xinjiang's northern and southern parts?
- 2) Why are the Pamir often called a mountainous "knot"? (Hint: look at a physical map of Central and South Asia)
- 3) What are the highest and lowest points in Xinjiang? (Hint: they are also the second highest and lowest points in the world!) What is the "Pole of Inaccessibility"?
- 4) Where do Xinjiang's rivers originate, what is their source? And where do most rivers terminate? What is an interesting feature of the Tarim River and lake at Lop Nor?
- 5) What rivers are trans-boundary? What is unique about the Irtysh River in Xinjiang?

### *Political:*

- 6) What countries border Xinjiang?
- 7) What is Xinjiang's capital? What is China's westernmost city?
- 8) What does "Karamay" mean in Uyghur language? Why do you think it got that name? Culturally, what is the most significant city in Xinjiang to Uyghurs?
- 9) Why do you think the cities of southern Xinjiang are located where they are? Why do you think the roads and railways built as they were?

### *Thematic:*

- 10) What are the major ethnic groups of Xinjiang? Do they conform to the political borders? What linguistic families are found in Xinjiang?
- 11) What is the average rainfall in southern Xinjiang? What about the north?
- 12) What are the major products produced in Xinjiang? Do you notice anything about the spatial distribution of where different products are produced? What factors might explain this distribution?
- 13) Why do large parts of Xinjiang have very low, or zero, population density?
- 14) What religions are practiced in Xinjiang? What is the most dominant religion?

### *Conclusion:*

Write an essay on how Xinjiang's physical geography has affected its people and the way it was settled. Before you write make a chart or web to organize your thoughts.

## Xinjiang Lesson Plans

### Grades 5-8

#### Lesson 4:

#### Xinjiangren: Ethnic Identity and Diversity in Xinjiang

##### Overview:

What is the first thing that pops into your head when you hear “China”? Many people think of chopsticks, rice, the Great Wall, big cities, and of course Chinese people. When we talk about ‘Chinese people’ we are most often talking about Han Chinese, the largest ethnic group in China. However China is an ethnically diverse country with 56 official ethnic groups, and hundreds of others which are not officially recognized. Furthermore, few people realize China is home to over 20 million Muslims, making it among the 20 largest Muslim populations in the world.

This lesson plan is intended to build students’ awareness of diversity in China by focusing on Xinjiang, an ethnically diverse region of northwest China. Students will become familiar with the concepts of ethnicity and identity, before learning more about Xinjiang’s ethnic nationalities. Ultimately students will be assigned an imaginary ethnic identity that they will investigate. Students will create an ‘official’ identity card and write a short autobiography about themselves.

##### Connections with the National Geography Standards:

Standard 4: The physical and human characteristics of places

Standard 6: How culture and experience influence people’s perception of places and regions

**Time:** two to four hours

##### Materials Required:

- *Official Ethnic Identity Card Worksheet*
- Internet access

##### Opening:

Begin the lesson by having a conversation about identity and ethnicity (see key terms). Ask students what ‘identity’ means and what are parts of identity. Make a list on the board and try to come up with a working definition. Do the same for ‘ethnicity.’ Identity is the complex integration of traits, beliefs, and behaviors that define a person. Identity operates at many different levels. One of the most important for understanding human geography of the world is ethnic identity: the combination of common ancestry, history, kinship, religion, language, shared territory, nationality or physical appearance.

Now ask students what they think of when you say the word China. Ask them to describe visual images that come to mind. Ask the students what Chinese people are like. Show the students photos of the ethnic people of Xinjiang (Xinjiang Ethnicity PowerPoint included). Ask them if they think that these people live in China. Inform them that in fact all of these people live in China's northwest and that they all have different languages and customs. If you wish you can watch this short video for a good visual introduction to Xinjiang and some of its people:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fm7SwjCMsMQ>

Find Xinjiang on a topographical map and have students describe its physical characteristics. Then discuss with the class these maps:

[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle east and asia/china admin 91.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle%20east%20and%20asia/china_admin_91.jpg)

[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle east and asia/china population 83.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle%20east%20and%20asia/china_population_83.jpg)

[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle east and asia/china agricultural 86.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle%20east%20and%20asia/china_agricultural_86.jpg)

[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle east and asia/china ethnolinguistic 83.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle%20east%20and%20asia/china_ethnolinguistic_83.jpg)

[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle east and asia/china ling 90.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle%20east%20and%20asia/china_ling_90.jpg)

Xinjiang, China, has been a crossroad of civilizations throughout history. Therefore it is unsurprising that Xinjiang is home to many different ethnic groups. The complex demographics of Xinjiang mean ethnic groups interact in various ways according to shared or differing traits: there are differences and commonalities between all the ethnic groups, meaning members of different ethnic groups may share common traits, beliefs, or behaviors. This makes identity very complicated. Discuss some of the most important signifiers of ethnic identity in Xinjiang: religion, language, livelihood, ancestry, and place attachment.

**Religion:** Many religions are practiced in Xinjiang. A majority of the population practice Islam, while others practice Buddhism. Some people are atheists, and other people hold onto shamanistic beliefs.

**Language:** Many languages are spoken in Xinjiang. The majority of people speak languages that are Turkic; they are different languages, but all closely related. Other people speak Tajik, an Indo-European language similar to Persian, and distantly related to English. Others speak Mongolian, Manchu, Tibetan, or Russian. Many people speak Chinese, either as their first language or because they learned it in school and it is useful in business and commerce.

**Livelihood:** There are many different ways people make a livelihood in Xinjiang. There are nomads in the north and high pastures, who travel seasonally with their herds to find good pasture. There are oasis agriculturalists who irrigate lands surrounded by desert to produce grapes, melons, and other crops. There are large scale, state-run factory farms that grow fruits, vegetables and cereal crops. There are engineers involved in mining for minerals and oil. There are business people who work for huge factories, as well as small-scale merchants involved in trade.

**Ancestry:** There are complicated ancestries, stretching back hundreds of years. Mongols trace themselves back to the rule of Chinggis Khan in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Tajiks are proud of their Persian ancestry. Uyghurs, Kyrgyz, and Kazakhs all remember their people's history as nomads arriving from the northern steppe. Han identify with ancient dynasties.

**Place Attachment:** People are attached to their places in many different ways. Some understand Xinjiang as a homeland for their people but they may also identify with one particular town or oasis. Others may identify with several locations if they are nomadic. Some identify themselves with the type of settlement they live in, rural vs. urban. And others are new arrivals and may still consider their previous location home.

**Ethnic Identity Discourse:** In the 1950's the Chinese government began a program to officially categorize all the people of China according to their ethnic group. To do this they created a model for each ethnic group based on five principles: territory, economy, ancestry (blood, race), language, and "psychological disposition" (religion). Although over 400 groups applied for official recognition, only 55 groups were determined to be distinct ethnic groups.

There are 13 officially recognized ethnic groups who are considered native to Xinjiang. They are: Uyghur, Kazakh, Hui, Kyrgyz, Mongol, Tatar, Xibo, Daur, Tajik, Uzbek, Russian, Manchu, and Han Chinese. Of these the Uyghur, Kazakh, Hui, Tatar, and Tajik are predominately Muslim. Xinjiang is one of only two provinces in China where Han Chinese do not make up the ethnic majority. The Uyghur are in fact the largest ethnic group in Xinjiang.

### **Activity 1: Identity Cards**

For the purpose of simplicity we will focus on only on the six largest ethnic groups in Xinjiang: Uyghur, Han, Hui, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Mongolian. Divide students into groups roughly proportional to the actual proportions of these ethnic groups in Xinjiang: something like Uyghur (31%), Han (30%), Kazakh (10%) Hui (10%), and 2 or 3 each for Kyrgyz and Mongolian.

Distribute to each student an *Official Ethnic Identity Card Worksheet*. Students can work in pairs or in small groups to fill in the appropriate information. They may use dictionaries, the encyclopedia, atlases, the Internet, or other sources.

### **Activity 2: Autobiography of a Xinjiangren**

For homework students will do research and write a short "autobiography" of their person. Students should stick to their character, but also there is room to be creative as they answer these questions and elaborate:

- Who am I? Include age, family, and interests.
- What language(s) do I speak?
- What is my religion?

- Where in Xinjiang do I live and what is it like?
- How long have I lived here?
- What is my livelihood?
- What do I do for fun?
- What kinds of food do I eat?

### **Activity #3: What makes a group?**

This activity will involve students forming groups based on the shared traits, behaviors or beliefs of their imagined characters. This activity may get a little chaotic, but that is part of point. Identity is a very complicated construct.

- Students will be asked to form groups based on their identity. Students will likely form into groups that correspond to their ethnic group. Ask them why they formed the groups they did?
- Next ask them to form groups based on the languages they speak. Some students will be confused because they speak multiple languages—however, they must join a group. Ask them why they chose the group they did.
- Ask the students to form groups based on religion.
- Now ask students to group-up according to their livelihood.
- Now ask students to form groups based on the region they live in.
- Ask the students to form groups according to how long they or their families have lived in Xinjiang: many generations, “My parents moved here”, or within the past ten years.
- Finally ask students to reform with their ethnic group.

### **Closing:**

In small groups students should discuss what they learned from this activity. Someone should take notes so that the group can present and share their findings. In their presentations students should consider these questions:

- What is one result from the activity that you expected?
- What is one result from the activity that surprised you?
- Was anyone’s experience the same as yours?
- What traits did you share with your ethnic group?
- What traits did you share with other groups?
- What is ethnic identity and why is it so complicated?

### **Key Terms:**

**Identity** is who or what a person is. One’s identity is a complex combination of traits, beliefs and behaviors that define the person and define how they belong to a group. Key elements of identity can be: race, ethnicity, religion, gender, language, livelihood, place, history, nationality, or personal aesthetics.

However, identity is far from fixed. A person's identity can change according to the setting, the people around them, and their needs. At times some components of one's identity may be more important than others. My loyalty to my favorite ball team is most important when I am in the stadium cheering them on to victory. Here it is OK for me to express myself by cheering and dancing, and I have a connection to the fan sitting next to me. When I am at an important meeting my loyalty to my favorite sports team is of less importance: other parts of my identity become more important.

Individuals feel connected to groups that share their beliefs. Symbols may become powerful representations of group identity that distinguish group members from outsiders. These symbols can be many things: sports team insignia, religious symbols, state or national flags, language, hairstyle, or fashion—any feature that becomes meaningful to the group.

**Ethnicity** is a form of identity. It is commonly understood to mean the combination of common ancestry, history, kinship, religion, language, shared territory, nationality or physical appearance. Members of an ethnic group are aware of belonging to an ethnic group, and affirm their membership through cultural symbols. Moreover, others recognize a group's distinctiveness through the visibility of their symbols.

#### **Other Resources:**

PBS Frontline video about Xinjiang and state censorship of minorities (8 min):  
<http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/china401/thestory.html>

Al Jazeera video about Uyghur musician and contemporary Uyghur life (25min):  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYj0CY\\_wzhY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYj0CY_wzhY)

Eurasianet special report on musical traditions in Xinjiang includes narrated slideshows and music clips: <http://www.eurasianet.org/music/intro.shtml>

Government Website with information about each Xinjiang ethnic group:  
<http://www.china.org.cn/english/139389.htm>

## Ethnic Identity Card Worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Activity 1: Xinjiang ID Card

**Instructions:** You will complete your ID by filling in all the appropriate information in all the blank areas. You will cut and paste a photo of your ethnic person in the space provided.

Photo	<h3 style="margin: 0;"><u>Official Identification Card: People's Republic of China</u></h3>
	Place of Residence, City and Province: _____
	Occupation: _____
Name: _____	Ethnic Nationality: _____
DOB: _____	Language(s): _____
	Religion: _____

### Activity 2: Autobiography of a Xinjiangren

Instructions: Now you will write an 'autobiography' about yourself. Use the Internet to gather more information about yourself. Stick to your character, but also be creative. Answer and elaborate these questions: -Who am I? Include age, family, and interests.

- What language(s) do I speak? What language family is my language a part of?
- What is my religion? How important is religion to me?
- Where in Xinjiang do I live and what is it like? (north, south, east, west...oasis, steppe, mountains, city, rural town)
- How long has my family lived here? (recent immigrant to many generations)
- What is my livelihood? (oasis farmer, nomad herder, merchant, factory worker, government official, military, etc.)
- What do I do for fun? (music, sports, literature, videogames, etc...)
- What kinds of food do I eat? (nomads eat lots of dairy, Muslims do not eat pork, etc.)



## Xinjiang Identity Card Examples

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**Name:** Mes'ud Sabri

**DOB:** 01/27/1952

**Ethnicity:** Uyghur

**Residence:** Turpan, Xinjiang

**Languages:** Uyghur

**Religion:** Islam

**Occupation:** Grape Farmer

Mes'ud is a farmer in the oasis of Turpan, famous for its grapes. He is married and has two children. He encourages his children to study Chinese and do well in school, so that they might go to college and have an easier life than his. In his free time Mes'ud plays traditional Uyghur music and attends Mosque. He has lived in Turpan all his life.

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**Name:** Mükrima

**DOB:** 05/23/1974

**Ethnicity:** Uyghur

**Residence:** Urumchi

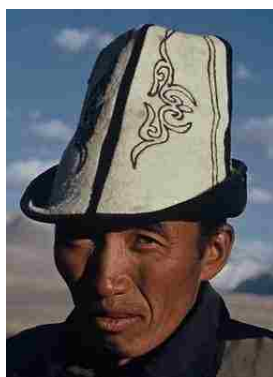
**Languages:** Uyghur, Chinese

**Religion:** Islam

**Occupation:** Teacher

Mükrima is originally from Kashgar, but moved to Urumchi when she was 20 to attend Xinjiang Teachers College. She stayed in Urumchi because there was more opportunity to work. Mükrima gets along OK with her Han coworkers, but she feels uncomfortable whenever the topics of religion or ethnicity come up. Mükrima is married to a Uyghur man, and they hope to move to his hometown, Aqsu, someday.

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**Name:** Ata Burghra

**DOB:** 10/07/1972 **Languages:** Kyrgyz, Chinese

**Ethnicity:** Kyrgyz **Religion:** Islam, Shamanistic Beliefs

**Residence:** Baykurt **Occupation:** Herder, Shop Keeper

Ata has a house in a small village, but he spends the summers high in the mountains with his herd of fat tailed sheep. Ata owns a small kiosk in his town. During the summer his wife watches the shop. Ata learned Chinese in school, but he speaks Kyrgyz everyday. Ata believes in Islam, but when he is down on his luck or needs a miracle he visits a shaman who prescribes rituals Ata should perform.

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## **Xinjiang Lesson Plans**

### **Grades 5-8**

#### **Lesson 5:**

#### **Xinjiang's Traditional Economies:**

#### **Nomads and Oasis Agriculturalists**

##### **Overview:**

Xinjiang's physical geography is complex. It is therefore not surprising that several different livelihood strategies have traditionally been practiced there. The most common and enduring of these have been nomadism in the northern Dzungar Basin and oasis agriculture around the Tarim Basin and Turpan Depression in the south and east.

Although these two livelihoods are often described as separate economies, they are in fact mutually interdependent. Together nomadism and sedentary agriculture form a complex economy wherein animal products—meat, milk, wool, skins—as well as the animals themselves, are exchanged for necessary agricultural produce, grains, manufactured and luxury goods.

This lesson is intended to introduce students to the complex socio-ecological adaptations that have made life in Xinjiang's varying and extreme geography possible. Students will explore the ecological and climactic conditions that have shaped these different ways of life. Furthermore, students will look at how these two very different ways of life have influenced each other.

Finally, students will examine the material culture of nomads and agriculturalists. Through class discussion students will compare and contrast the utility and meaning of textiles within Xinjiang's nomad and oasis communities. They will conclude by creating their own carpet design that incorporates traditional motifs as well as personalized symbols.

##### **Connections to the National Geography Standards:**

Standard 1: How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process and report information

Standard 4: The physical and human characteristics of places

Standard 12: The process, patterns, and functions of human settlement

Standard 15: How physical systems affect human systems

**Time:** One to two hours

##### **Materials Required:**

- Markers, colored pencils, or crayons for illustrating
- Physical geography wall map of China/Eurasia
- *Xinjiang Livelihoods Worksheet*
- Central Asian Textile Motifs Handout
- Computer with Internet access

### **Objectives:**

Students will

- define the terms nomadic and sedentary;
- explain what environmental factors have influenced these livelihoods;
- identify how pastoralists rely on oasis agriculturalists and vice versa;
- examine the diverse ecology and physical features of Xinjiang;
- study and reproduce the textile material culture of Xinjiang

### **Geographic Skills:**

Acquiring Geographic Information

Organizing Geographic Information

Answering Geographic Questions

Analyzing Geographic Information

### **Suggested Procedure**

#### **Opening:**

Begin by engaging students in a conversation about nomadism. Get students to describe what kind of landscape nomads live in and what nomad life must be like. On the board, try to develop a working definition for ‘nomadism’ and generate a list of conditions that make nomadism necessary. Get students to look at the map and try to figure where in Central Asia nomadism is commonly practiced. Next, discuss the term “oasis.” Get students to discuss what defines an oasis, and what life in an oasis might be like. Again develop a working definition and list of conditions.

#### **Development:**

##### **Activity 1:**

Distribute the “Xinjiang Livelihoods Worksheet” to the class. Students may work individually or in pairs to complete the assignment. Students may use the Internet, maps, atlases, and other classroom materials to complete the task.

##### **Activity 2:**

Nomads and oasis dwellers have never lived in isolation. The influence nomads have had on oasis culture can be seen through rugs and textiles. Rugs and other textiles have always been very important to nomad people. Wool is essential to the nomad way of life as it is used to make warm clothing, yurts (nomad tent), rugs, equestrian equipment, bags, and other articles. Nomads typically use a method called “felting” to create felt clothe out of raw wool. However, nomads have never had the economy of time to overly specialize their crafts.

As nomad groups have assimilated and settled with oasis dwellers the motifs and symbols of nomad life have made their way into the highly sophisticated textile arts of the settled people. If you look closely and use your imagination you can see many stylized animals in the carpet motifs of Central Asia. Other designs such as the pomegranate blossom and fruit can be attributed solely to the oasis agriculturists.

Carpet making is a fine and technically demanding art. Traditionally dyes were created from local plants and minerals. Some colors are more common then others, depending on the availability of certain plants. Additionally, many knotted carpets take over a year to complete. Therefore most carpets have traditionally been made for decoration and function in the household, not for sale. A well-made carpet will last several generations of constant use. Silk and cotton are used in combination with wool to create beautiful knotted carpets that are highly coveted by nomads and oasis dwellers alike.

There are no hard and fast rules to carpet designs. Instead carpet designs are influenced by a number of factors, not least of which is the weaver’s artistic flare. Traditional designs and motifs are important, but some carpets may contain a variety of symbols for a variety of traditions. It is important to remember that every handmade carpet is different. Khotan is the most famous city in Xinjiang for its carpet making. Khotan carpets often have a beautiful pomegranate tree motif. Kashgar carpets often feature one to three medallions. Another famous Xinjiang carpet design is the *Gul*, rose, blossom.

As a class, look at examples of Central Asian textiles on the web, in books, or the samples included in the “Xinjiang Trunk.”

Have students study the carpet motifs on the Handout. Point out and discuss how certain nomad motifs were stylized and incorporated into sedentary carpetmakers’ design palettes. Then have students create their own carpet motifs with colors on graph paper, or with construction paper and markers. Students should incorporate traditional design motifs, but also create their own symbols.

### Additional Resources:

- <http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/hsc/textiles/>
- <http://ladyvirag.wordpress.com/>
- <http://www.metmuseum.org/explore/flowers/flowers/index.htm>
- <http://www.kebabian.com/types.htm>
- <http://www.tcolettribalrugs.com/article39SingaporePowerPt.html>
- <http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/culture/ger/gersldshow.html>
- Sumner, C. (1999) *Beyond the Silk Road – Arts of Central Asia*, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney.
- Paine, Sheila. 2008 *Embroidered Textiles: A World Guide*. London: Thomas and Hudson
- O'Bannon, G. W. (1998) *From Desert and Oasis: Arts of the people of Central Asia*, Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia.
- Bidder, Hans. 1979. *Carpets from East Turkistan*. Accokeek, MD: Washington International Associates
- Thomas, Jon. 1993. *Carpets from the Tents, Cottages and Workshops of Asia*. London: Laurence King.

## Classic Turkic and Central Asian Textile Motifs



Kuz or Bird Motif

This motif has carried many meanings over the centuries. To the ancient Romans, whose empire included Anatolia, birds were used to represent the souls of the dead. Birds have also been interpreted as both good and bad luck, happiness, joy and love, women, longing, an expectation of news, power and strength.



(Source: e-book *Who Are the Turks* available at <http://www.ataturk.com/content/view/28/62/>)



#### ◀ Göz or Eye Motif

This is a stylized eye. It is believed that the best way to prevent the harm caused by the evil eye is to ward it off with another eye.

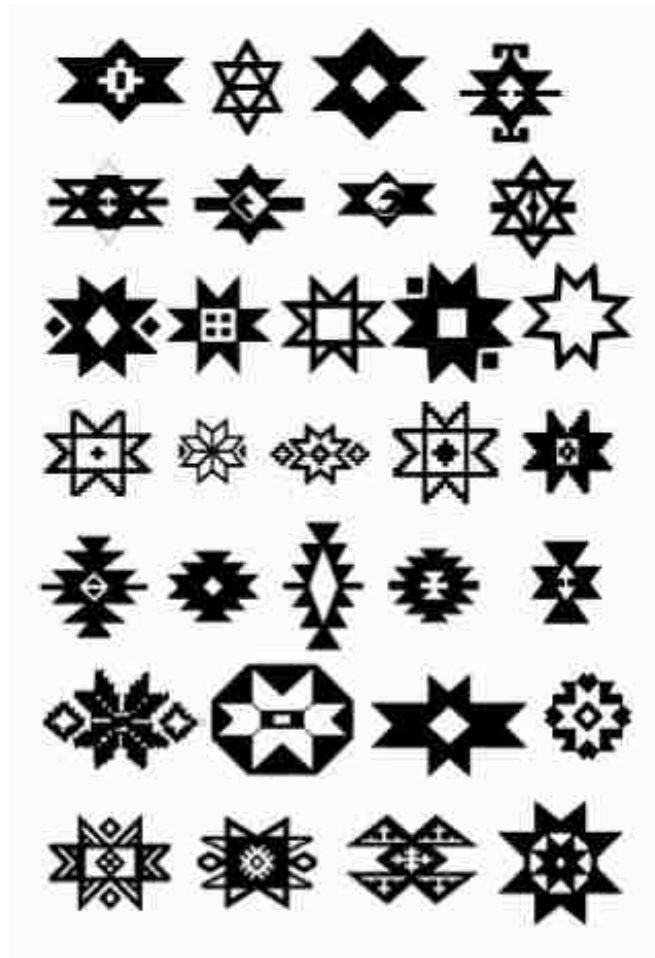
#### ▶ Su Yolu Running Water Motif

This motif shows the importance of water in the life of mankind.

Water has always had a place of special import in Middle Eastern conceptions of paradise, which is represented in both ancient tales and in Islamic art as a garden with fountains of water.



(Source: e-book *Who Are the Turks* available at <http://www.ataturk.com/content/view/28/62/>)



Yıldız or Star Motif.

This motif is an old symbol, originally expressing happiness and fertility. It dates back to pre-Islamic use as a symbol for the womb of the mother goddess. It is based on the six-pointed star, generally known as the Sema symbol. Star motifs with eight or more points are used in Anatolian weaves.



(Source: e-book *Who Are the Turks* available at <http://www.ataturk.com/content/view/28/62/>)





Yılan or Snake Motif.

This motif also has ancient roots, dating back to the earliest recorded history of mankind. It was originally thought to have protective properties. Black snakes were symbols of happiness and fertility in the ancient world.

There is also an ancient mythological theme of a winged creature, with the feet of a lion and the tail of a snake, believed to be the master of air and water, the cause of lunar eclipse, the guard of treasures and of secret objects as well as of the tree of life.

A related theme is the fight of the Dragon and the Phoenix, which was believed to produce fertile rains of spring. The Dragon was represented by a cloud.

(Source: e-book *Who Are the Turks* available at <http://www.ataturk.com/content/view/28/62/>)

## **Xinjiang Lesson Plans**

### **Grades 9-12**

#### **Lesson 6:**

#### **Opposing Views, Comparing Documents:**

#### **The 2009 Xinjiang Riots**

##### **Overview:**

This lesson plan is intended to introduce students to issues being faced by China's minority populations, particularly the Uyghurs of Xinjiang Province.

Many people have heard about the Chinese "occupation" of Tibet. In recent years Tibet has become a popular topic among human rights activists who criticize the Chinese Communist government's administration of the region, claiming that government policies there are designed to erase Tibetan culture and religion, and benefit Han Chinese interests.

The Chinese government and many ordinary people, on the other hand, point to the region's rising gross domestic product, increased education, and new transportation infrastructure as tangible evidence that government policies are creating economic opportunities raising the living standards of Tibetan people.

Although much less publicized in Western Media, a similar situation exists just north of Tibet in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Here, as in Tibet, people who are not Han Chinese are the ethnic majority. People who are Uyghur belong to the largest ethnic group in the region. Unlike Han Chinese, Uyghur speak a Turkic language and are Sunni Muslims. Traditionally, Uyghur people have inhabited the oases of the Tarim Basin, practicing irrigated agriculture, cottage industries, and facilitating trade along important transportation routes.

Since what the government describes as the "peaceful liberation of Xinjiang" by Communist forces in 1949, the Chinese government has enacted policies that encourage Han Chinese migration to Xinjiang. Early on this involved resettling large numbers of demobilized troops in newly-formed collectives whose purpose was to transform desert lands into huge state-run farms. Since the late 1990's the Chinese government has undertaken an initiative called "Develop the West" that is intended to bring the economic prosperity of eastern cities to western China. Tax incentives, availability of cheap labor, and lax pollution standards have encouraged the relocation of heavy manufacturing and petrochemical industries to the region.

Meanwhile many Uyghurs have traveled to other parts of China looking for jobs and economic opportunities. The completion of a railway all the way to Kashgar, the most western city in China, has helped to facilitate the migration of huge numbers of people and integrate the economy with the rest of China. Since 1949 the number of

Han Chinese in the region has grown significantly: from around 5% to about 40% today.

The Chinese government maintains that its policies are designed to increase the well-being of all people in China. They point to the region's relatively high GDP and rapid urbanization as signs of the region's prosperity.

Views and opinions on these changes vary. Many Uyghurs complain that they are left out when it comes to the region's prosperity, complaining that companies prefer to employ newly arrived Han workers rather than the local population. Some reasons companies may prefer to hire Han workers are that Uyghur workers may not speak Chinese well, they may have special needs such as *hala* foods and breaks to pray, and migrant workers may be more willing to move to onsite dormitories, work for less, and work under less safe conditions. Thus, to compete Uyghurs must learn the Chinese language, compromise their religious practices, be willing to leave their home communities, and work for meager wages.

Some Uyghurs believe that government policies are deliberate attacks on their distinct culture and ethnic heritage, and traditional ways of life. They regard interference in their religious practice, limits and censorship on their use of native language, the massive influx of Han Chinese immigrants, and negative ecological consequences of dirty industries on traditions agriculture and communities as policies that undermine their ways of life and cultural viability. Uyghur youth are prohibited from entering mosques until they are 18, thereby inhibiting their participation in the religious community, Uyghur students must pass difficult proficiency tests in Chinese and English in order to be admitted into higher education, and Uyghur newspapers and media are highly censored by the party-state security apparatus.

### **Connections with the National Geography Standards:**

Standard 4: The physical and human characteristics of places

Standard 6: How culture and experience influence people's perception of places and regions

Standard 13: How the forces of cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of the Earth's surface

Standard 18: How to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future

**Time:** Two to three hours

### **Materials Required:**

- Internet access
  - "The Uighur Dilemma":  
<http://www.abc.net.au/foreign/content/2009/s2639008.htm>
- *Comparing Xinjiang Documents Handout*
- "Xinjiang Riots" in the Media Worksheet

## **Geographic Skills:**

Acquiring Geographic Information  
 Analyzing Geographic Information  
 Organizing Geographic Information  
 Answering Geographic Questions

## **Suggested Procedure:**

### **Opening: Thought provoking Discussion and Brainstorming**

Watch the 25-minute ABC Foreign Correspondent news video “The Uyghur Dilemma.” Then, engage the class in a discussion about what they saw on the video. Use questions to illicit responses: What and who is the video about? What is the issue at hand? Why is it important? Are multiple points of view presented? What are the differing points of view?

At this point it might be helpful to make a chart on the board. At the top list the groups whose points of view are presented and try to define them. There are the local residents and craftsmen who are also predominantly Uyghur and Muslim. There is also the state’s position embodied by the government official. Are the positions united, or is there variation in the way people responded to the issue at hand? Is designating two positions sufficient or are more needed?

Begin to illicit the reasoning for each position down the vertical axis, and fill in each group’s response. The Chinese official’s main position for the redevelopment of Kashgar’s old town is safety. He contends that in the event of an earthquake many buildings would collapse and the government would not be able to respond to the needs of its citizens. He details the improvements that will be made, and the new modern housing the government is building for those who are displaced. Another point he mentions is tourism. There is also footage of troops training to fight an insurgency should one occur in the region.

Some of the local residents interviewed say this is part of an effort to control the Uyghur population. People speak about how much their houses mean to their traditions and community. Others acknowledge the need for improvements or resign themselves to the move as inevitable.

Ask students, “How can one event or policy be understood so differently from multiple points of view?” Emphasize that what is initially presented as an issue of public safety becomes a very political issue involving questions of control and trust. Talk about how politics can color one’s perspective, or how the biased telling of a story can effect how it is received.

### **Activity: Xinjiang Riots: Contested Narratives and Media Bias:**

The purpose of this activity is for students to practice critical reading and thinking skills to evaluate primary sources. Students will read two articles from different news sources about the same event, the July 2009 riots in Xinjiang. One from the state-controlled media and another will be from a source sympathetic with the Uyghur cause. Students will compare and contrast authors' credibility, use of "facts", argumentation styles, use of persuasive techniques, and other stylistic tools. It is hoped that students will recognize the importance of divergent viewpoints and the power of media, particularly in closed societies.

Distribute to students the *Xinjiang Riots in the Media Worksheet*. Have them read through the whole worksheet before beginning. Students are to read both articles, you should encourage them to use a highlighter or pen to mark points of particular interest. On the worksheet students will write a brief description of the event, then in the space provided document how the articles differed. In the next space students should evaluate both articles for use of evidence. Next, students are to answer the questions in short essay format.

This activity can be completed in class or as homework.

Reconvene for a class discussion. Ask students why they think the accounts vary so dramatically. What bias or agenda might be at play?

### **Extending the Lesson:**

1. Ask students to develop their findings into a more lengthy essay.
2. Ask students to take a position and defend it.

### **Other Resources:**

PBS Frontline video clip about Uyghurs and state suppression (8 min):

<http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/china401/thestory.html>

Al Jazeera program about a Uyghur musician and the challenges faced by Uyghurs today (25 min): [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYj0CY\\_wzhY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYj0CY_wzhY)

Human Rights Watch Report: <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/07/09/behind-violence-xinjiang>

Eurasianet special report on traditional Xinjiang music. Includes narrated photo essays: <http://www.eurasianet.org/music/intro.shtml>

Humorous Maps based on Ethnic Stereotypes in China:

<http://www.thenewdominion.net/170/online-humor-affirms-xinjiang-stereotypes/>

**"Xinjiang Riots" in the Media: Opposing Views Worksheet**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Part One: Observation**

Read the first article. Use a pen or highlighter to mark points of particular interest. Write a general description of the event as you understand it.

Think about the following characteristics: People, Place, Action, and Tone. Who is the article about and how are they described? What type of descriptive words are used?

**Part Two: Inference**

1. Why do you think this article was written?
2. Who do you think the intended audience is?
3. Who do you think the author is?

4. Based on what you observed, come up with three things you might infer from this article about Xinjiang and Uyghur people.

5. What questions does the article raise in your mind?

6. Where could you find the answers?

Part Three: Now read the second article.

1. How does it differ from the first article?

2. Why do you think this article was written?

3. Who do you think the intended audience is?

4. Who do you think the author is?

5. Based on what you observed, come up with three things you might infer from this article about Xinjiang and Uyghur people.

#### Part Four: Compare

Now having read both articles compare and contrast the authors' credibility, use of facts, argumentation styles, use of persuasive techniques and other stylistic tools. Think about the descriptions of how people, place, and actions.

Article #1	Article #2



## **Xinjiang Riots Documents Handout**

### **Document 1: Half-truths full of threats**

Published in: China Daily

July 18 2009

The Western media have turned the world's attention on the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. But some "facts" are missing from the flood of reports they have been filed after the July 5 Urumqi riots to "facilitate the West's understanding about the region".

These missing materials will misguide people who are not familiar with the history of China. For instance, the "Facts about China's Xinjiang region" filed by a news agency says Xinjiang has a population of 20 million, "8 million of them Uygurs, a Turkic-speaking, largely Muslim ethnic group".

What the report does not say is that there are 47 ethnic groups in Xinjiang, many of whom don't speak Uygur but have lived in the region for as long as, if not longer than, the Uygurs.

The White Paper on the History and Development of Xinjiang, issued by the State Council Information Office on May 26, 2003, puts the facts in proper perspective: "Since ancient times, Xinjiang has been inhabited by many ethnic groups who believe in a number of religions," and "it has been a multi-ethnic region since ancient times."

The word Uygur in the name of the region does not mean it is exclusively for one ethnic group. The region belongs not only to members of all ethnic groups living in Xinjiang, but also to all Chinese people. This is as true as the fact that China does not belong only to Han Chinese. It is the motherland of all the 56 ethnic groups that make up the Chinese nation.

Some history books say Xinjiang "became a formal part of China under the last imperial dynasty in the 19th century". Such sources neglect the historical fact that the Chinese central government began exercising political and military control over the region more than 2,000 years ago -- in 60 BC, to be precise, during the Han Dynasty (206 BC - AD 220). Since then succeeding governments of the numerous dynasties maintained their administration over the region in one form or other.

The fact is that the region was never granted autonomy in the name of any ethnic minority until the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region was established in 1955, and it comprised a number of autonomous prefectures and counties for other ethnic minorities, including Hui, Kazakh, Mongolian, Kyrgyz, Tajik and Xibo.

The "facts" some Western media provide don't fail to mention the short-lived "East Turkestan Republic" that the "Uygurs" set up in 1933 that was never recognized by any government in the world. But they never say that the futile attempt did not enjoy popular

support because it was not only against the will of the majority of the ethnic groups living in Xinjiang, but also ran contrary to the wishes of most of the Uygurs.

The Western media's "facts" make it seem as if "hopes for a separate Uygur homeland" have remained constant in the past few decades, but were "largely suppressed". But they deliberately withhold the fact that the majority of people in Xinjiang, including Uygurs, have identified themselves with the Chinese nation and share their fate with the other 55 ethnic groups in the country.

An evidence of this integration is the statue of Kurban Tulum, better known as Uncle Kurban, and Chairman Mao Zedong in Unity Square in the county seat of Yutian in southern Xinjiang.

Uncle Kurban was a poor farmer, and could hardly make ends meet. Before liberation, more than 90 percent of farmers were slaves of landlords, who controlled 80 percent of Xinjiang's land. After Xinjiang was liberated in 1949, the central government's land reforms policy saw it distributing land to the farmers. This is how Uncle Kurban got his first plot of land and housing. Several bumper harvests increased his desire to meet Chairman Mao and express his gratitude to the helmsman. He became so desperate to meet Mao that despite being in his 70s he set off for Beijing on his donkey in 1955. When the county officials told him that Beijing was too far and he could not reach there on a donkey, he tried to hitch a ride, but no driver could drive that far.

But by that time his wish had become well known, and touched people's hearts. Mao himself learned about the story and sent Uncle Kurban four letters. Finally, in 1958, Uncle Kurban was invited to Beijing as a model farmer. His wish of meeting Chairman Mao was fulfilled. And he also became the only person in China to share a statue with Chairman Mao. Obviously, such stories of ethnic unity and national integrity are not included in any Western media's "fact sheets" on Xinjiang. What was played up is nothing but ethnic conflict, primarily those between Uygurs and Hans.

All Chinese, irrespective of their ethnic identity, have been saddened by the incidents in Urumqi. We can reflect on the internal and external causes of the riots. But no matter what the causes are, ethnic conflict is not one of them.

All the 56 ethnic groups want to see the country prosper and have been living without disputes. But the "facts" on Xinjiang offered by some Western media are aimed at sowing the seeds of feud among China's ethnic groups. Their covert plan is to split China, as the old colonialists tried to do a century ago.

But times have changed and China is no longer a weak country. And if some people's designs to divide it did not succeed then, it is not going to succeed now.

*The author is a guest professor of journalism at the Beijing Foreign Studies University .*

## **Document 2: Behind the Violence in Xinjiang**

by Nicholas Bequelin

Published in: International Herald Tribune

July 9, 2009

HONG KONG — The eruption of ethnic violence in China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, the most deadly recorded in decades, seems to have taken both Beijing and the world by surprise. It should not have.

The violence, coming on the heels of massive protests in Tibet less than 18 months ago, reflects the profound failure of Beijing's policies toward national minorities, whose areas represent almost four-fifths of the country's landmass but whose population makes up only 8 percent of China's 1.3 billion people.

The Uighur people, much like the Tibetans, have a history, culture, religion and language distinct from the rest of China. Their homeland, the ring of oases that formed the backbone of the Silk Road in ancient times, was only incorporated into the Chinese empire in the 18th century.

And the effective colonization of Xinjiang only started after 1950s, when Beijing began to settle People's Liberation Army soldiers who had put down the short-lived independent East Turkestan Republic (1944-1949) on military state farms. The proportion of Han Chinese in the population of Xinjiang leaped from 6 to 40 percent as a result of state-sponsored population transfers from other parts of China.

A second massive assimilation drive was initiated in the 1990s, prompted in part by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and Beijing's fear of instability in the region. This time, instead of relying on forcible population transfers, Beijing created economic incentives to attract new Han settlers. In less than a decade, an ambitious program called the "Big Development of the Northwest" brought between one and two million new Chinese migrants to Xinjiang.

Economic development surged, spurred by a combination of massive subsidies, oil exploitation and rapid urbanization. But the Uighurs were not part of the rising tide. Resentment over job discrimination and loss of lands swelled, combined with anger at China's religion policies and the stream of new settlers.

The government's response was purely repressive. Already sharp limits on religious and cultural expression were further tightened. Any expression of dissent became synonymous with advocating "separatism" — a crime under Chinese law that can carry the death penalty.

Any sign of ethnic distinctiveness outside of the sanitized version promoted by the state was denounced as a plot by "separatist forces abroad." After a failed uprising in the city of Yining in February 1997, the authorities launched a massive crackdown that led to tens of thousands of arrests and dozens of executions.

For most Uighurs, Xinjiang increasingly became a police state, where they lived in fear of arrest for the slightest sign of disloyalty toward Beijing.

Even prison officials started to complain to Beijing that prison and labor camps across the region had become jam-packed. Isolated acts of anti-state violence, such as the assassination of Uighur “collaborators,” attacks against police stations and the explosion of two bombs in Urumqi buses in February 1998 only reinforced the determination of the state to increase its repression.

After the Sept. 11 attacks in the U.S., the Chinese began to justify its campaigns in Xinjiang as a contribution to the global war on terror. China also used its growing international influence to secure cooperation from neighboring states to arrest and deport Uighurs who had fled persecution.

Although there is no dispute that clandestine Uighur groups have from time to time carried out violent attacks — most recently in a series of bombings and attacks on Chinese soldiers just before the Olympic Games — the massive propaganda offensive about the threat of “East Turkestan” terrorism drove Chinese public opinion toward an even more negative perception of the Uighur people, who in turn felt increasingly ostracized and discriminated against.

Beijing’s accelerated attempt over the past few years to forcibly refashion Uighur identity has also fueled growing resentment. Following Xinjiang Party Secretary Wang Lequan’s declaration in 2002 that the Uighur language was “out of step with the 21st century,” the government started to shift the entire education system to Mandarin, replacing Uighur teachers with newly arrived Han Chinese. The authorities also organized public burnings of Uighur books. Control over religion was extended last year to prohibit traditional customs such as religious weddings, burials or pilgrimages to the tombs of local saints.

Earlier this year, the government suddenly announced plans to raze the city of Kashgar, the centuries-old cultural center of the Uighur civilization and one of the only remaining examples of traditional central Asian architecture. In a few weeks, the old city will have almost entirely disappeared, forcing out 50,000 families to newly constructed, soulless modern buildings.

This is the backdrop against which Uighurs reacted to graphic images circulating on the Internet last week of Uighur workers being beaten to death by Chinese coworkers in a Guangdong factory. They took to the streets.

Unless the government addresses the root causes of ethnic tensions and ends its systemic human rights violations, the chances of more violence will remain high.

*Nicholas Bequelin is a senior Asia researcher for Human Rights Watch.*

## Xinjiang Lesson Plans

### Grades 9-12

#### Lesson 7:

#### The Music of Xinjiang:

#### Traditions in a Changing World

##### Overview:

Xinjiang is a region of great diversity, and consequently extremely rich cultural traditions. Music has been, and remains, an important cultural signifier of ethnic identity among the many different groups who dwell in Xinjiang. Among the Kyrgyz people the ancient epic *Manas*, a history of their people central to their national myth, is passed on from generation to generation by lute-playing bards. Among the oasis dwellers of the south the *Twelve Muqam* is a musical tradition that recounts and affirms the important rites of passage of the Uyghur people.

However, as young people face the demands of the contemporary world, the viability of these traditions is called into question. Attracted to video games, international sports, media, and entertainment, and having the opportunity to travel throughout China in search of work, fewer young people are committed to learning the difficult musical traditions central to the identity of their people. Is a Kyrgyz who doesn't know the story of *Manas* still a Kyrgyz?

This lesson will introduce students to the diverse musical traditions of Xinjiang and facilitate conversations about the meaning and implication of globalization, traditions, meanings of place, and national identity in our contemporary era.

##### Connections with the National Geography Standards:

Standard 4: The physical and human characteristics of places

Standard 6: How culture and experience influence people's perception of places and regions

Standard 13: How the forces of cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of the Earth's surface

Standard 18: How to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future

**Time:** Two to four hours

##### Materials Required:

- Internet access Lost in the Muqam: <http://english.aljazeera.net/video/>
  - Music of China's Nomads: <http://www.eurasianet.org/music/index.shtml>
  - Hip Hop in China: Urumchi Rap (Part 1): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1LjTBI4sE>
- *Music in Xinjiang Work Sheet*

## Geographic Skills:

Acquiring Geographic Information  
 Analyzing Geographic Information  
 Organizing Geographic Information  
 Answering Geographic Questions

## Suggested Procedure

### Opening:

Open class with a discussion about globalization. Work with students to come up with a working definition. Then ask students how globalization has effected their lives? Ask students how globalization has effected their culture? Ask students how globalization has affected their traditions? Are the same traditions that were important to your grandfather important to you? What about place—how have the meanings of your home, neighborhood, and town changed? On a big sheet of paper record the major points the class generates.

Watch the film “Lost in the Muqam” about a well-known Uyghur musician who struggles to make ends meet playing traditional Uyghur music in a rapidly changing world. Have students take notes about what they see, what strikes them as interesting, or what questions arise from what they see. As a class, discuss the film. What challenges does the musician face? What purpose has traditional music served within the Uyghur community? Why is music so important to the Uyghur people? Describe different settings in the film and what they mean—the city is modern, the home is refuge, the desert is freedom, etc. How are the meanings of music and place linked? Think about the many different levels you can see globalization at work in this film—through the film we witness an intimate dinner party in Xinjiang and learn about the challenges of a people a world away, the musician plays Uyghur music in Beijing and abroad for international audiences, the Uyghur youth faces the allure of the same technologies and video games as American youth. What is going on in the film in terms of the tension between tradition and globalization?

### Activity:

Introduce the class to the “Music of China’s Nomads” the special feature on Eurasianet.org. As a class, listen to some of the music clips on the ‘Instruments’ page; read and discuss the sections on Myths of Origin, Landscape and Sound, and Oral History.

Now distribute the *Music of Xinjiang Worksheet* to the class. Students will use the website to complete the assignment. Students can work individually or in pairs to study three of the eight slideshows for the emergence overarching themes regarding challenges and commonalities among the communities investigated, and how tradition and globalization are affected and inform one another.

**Closing:**

After students have completed the assignment, possibly for homework, the class should reconvene for a group discussion. Students should discuss what they found and what they learned.

As a class, watch the short film “Hip Hop in China: Urumchi (Part 1).” Discuss the film. Does it appear familiar? Is it authentic? What is the implication of global youth culture on traditional cultures: does it whitewash global diversity, or is it a means of revitalizing the culture?

**Extending the Lesson:**

Students can choose one of the ethnic groups of Xinjiang to present to the class. The epic ballads of the Kyrgyz, Kazakh, and Mongolians, as well as the deeply meaningful *Muqam* tradition of the Uyghur are complex and fascinating traditions that recount the origin myths of each group and are tightly bound to distinct ethnic identities.

**Additional Resources:**

For a translation of the Kyrgyz epic *Manas*:

<http://www.silkroadfoundation.org/toc/index.html>

For discussion of the 12 *Muqam*: <http://www.uyghurensemble.co.uk/en-html/rh-canon-uy12muqam.html>

Harris, Rachel (2005) '[Reggae on the Silk Road: the Globalization of Uyghur Pop.](#)' *The China Quarterly*, 183 (1). pp. 627-43.

Harris, Rachel (2001) '[Cassettes, Bazaars and Saving the Nation: the Uyghur Music Industry in Xinjiang, China.](#)' In: Craig, Tim and King, Richard, (eds.), *Global Goes Local: Popular Culture in Asia*. University of British Columbia Press (Vancouver), pp. 265-83.

## Music of Xinjiang Worksheet:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 1.** Use the 'Instruments' and 'Traditional Cultures' tabs on 'The Music of China's Nomads' found on Eurasianet.org to answer these questions.

1. How do the musical traditions of China's nomads reflect the environment in which they were created?
2. What is the *kui*, and what does it mean? Describe it.
3. What have been challenges to Xinjiang's traditional music over the past century? What accounts for the revival of ethnic traditions?
4. What role has the Chinese government had in the preservation of traditional music? What does it gain from the preservation of ethnic traditions?



**Part 2.** Now move to the 'Slide Shows' tab. Pick and watch three of the audio-slide shows. As you watch and listen, take notes on what you see and hear. Pay particular attention to globalization, tradition, ethnic identity and meaning of place. Think about the continuity and change of each of these themes.

1. Write a general description of each slideshow. Describe everything you see and hear. Think about the following characteristics:

People: gender, age, clothing, facial expressions, posture, title, relation to one another, how they belong, local vs. outsider, etc.

Place: indoor/outdoor, urban/rural, time of day, time of year, landscape, architecture, decoration, furniture, plants, animals.

Action: What activity or events are shown? What are people doing? Does the action appear out of place, or does it appear to fit the location?

Sound: music (fast/slow, pleasant/strange, familiar/exotic), voices (old/young, serious/joyful, etc.), background noise.

2. Now think about the three slide shows together. Write an essay that answers these questions: What overarching themes emerge from all three slideshows? From what you can observe, why is traditional music important to the people of Xinjiang? How and why is their place changing? How has globalization had both positive and negative effects on the revival of traditional music of Xinjiang?