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China's Uyghur Strategy of Education and Integration: A
Critical Analysis

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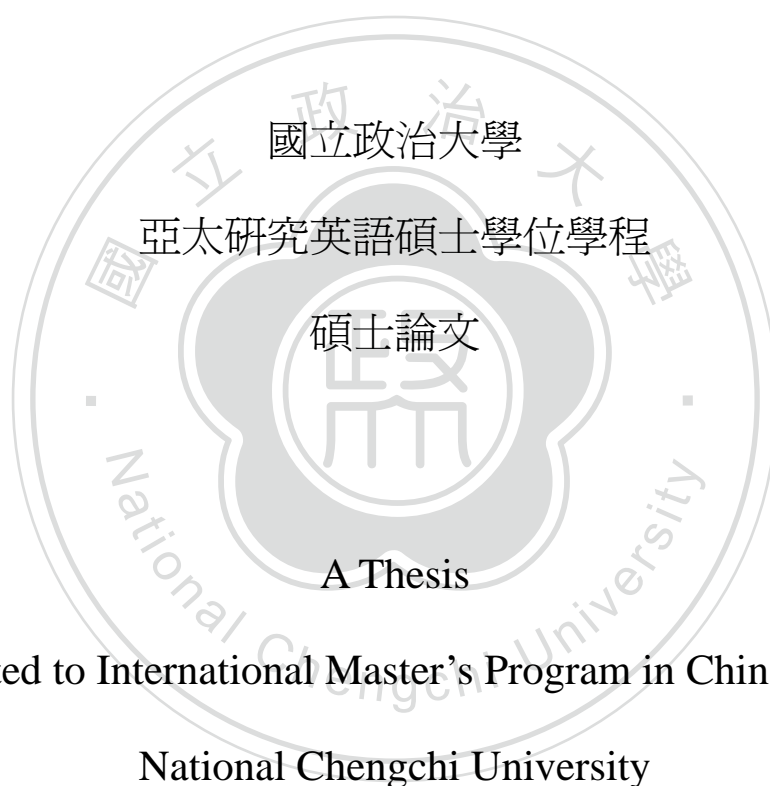
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Abstract

About eight million Uyghurs live in the People's Republic of China. Many Uyghurs are hostile to Chinese rule. Xinjiang, the province in which most Uyghurs live, has long been a spot of violence and controversy. The Chinese government has employed a variety of means to pacify the Uyghurs and integrate them into mainstream society. It has used violence, propaganda, economic incentives, and education. This thesis will examine the use of education in that strategy.

Chinese policymakers hope that education will raise Uyghur standards of living, support China's preferred historical interpretations, and make Mandarin the common language in Xinjiang. This thesis examines three parts of China's education strategy: preferential policies (傾斜政策), language education, and history education. This is done through examining Chinese White Papers, textbooks used in Chinese classrooms, publications by analysts, and studies done by academics. The goal was to discover how much success China has had in using education to integrate the Uyghurs.

This thesis has found that while progress has been made, the PRC has not achieved its goal of using education to integrate the Uyghurs into mainstream society. In fact, its attempts have often had the opposite affect, alienating and angering many Uyghurs.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore the various ways in which the People's Republic of China (hereafter: PRC) uses education to assimilate Uyghurs into Chinese society. The author has identified three important elements of the PRC's strategy to assimilate the Uyghurs: affirmative action (eg: preferential policies for the Uyghurs), language education, and the historical/political content of education in the PRC. The author will explore each of these issues, and try to understand the impact that they are having on the Uyghurs, particularly those living in Xinjiang. The author will assess whether or not the PRC is succeeding in its goal to use education as a means of turning the Uyghurs into loyal Chinese subjects.

1.1 Xinjiang

Xinjiang, also known as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, is in the northwest of the PRC. It is the largest administrative region in China, spanning more than 1.6 million square kilometers.¹ Despite its size, however, Xinjiang is sparsely populated. Its indigenous Turkic and Muslim people number about eight million, accounting for less than one percent of China's population.² It is also one of the world's most isolated places. Certainly, it is quite far from Beijing, the PRC capital. One author

¹ China Global Times, Brief Introduction
<http://www.globaltimes.cn/www/english/truexinjiang/basic-facts/2009-07/445481.html> accessed May 29th 2011

² Stanley W. Toops, *The Demography of Xinjiang*, in Xinjiang, China's Muslim Borderland (M.E. Sharpe, 2004) p. 17

points out that Xinjiang's "...western and southern borders are closer to Baghdad or New Delhi than to Beijing."³ As we will see, this distance from China proper has had a major influence on Xinjiang's development.

1.2 The Uyghurs

The largest ethnic group in Xinjiang is known as the Uyghurs. Historians generally categorize the Uyghurs as being descended from "...the formerly nomadic, later settled, oasis-dwelling people who spoke a Turkish dialect."⁴ However, it is difficult to place all of the Turkic Muslims living in Xinjiang into the broad classification of 'Uyghur.' Dru Gladney points out that people now known as 'Uyghurs' are in fact a divided group. Many so-called Uyghurs feel a stronger connection to their oasis and family lineage than to their ethnicity.⁵ The term 'Uyghur' is itself something of a misnomer. It fell into disuse around the 16th century. It was revived in 1921, when it was chosen by a delegation of local leaders at a conference in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The term, which means 'unity,' was applied to the diverse oasis dwelling peoples of Xinjiang.⁶ It has since become the common nomenclature used by the PRC, as well as a rallying point for nationalists seeking a common identity.

The origin of the Uyghur people is an endlessly controversial subject, because

³ S. Fredrick Starr, *Introduction, Xinjiang, China's Muslim Borderland* (M.E. Sharpe, 2004) p. 3

⁴ Dru Gladney, *Dislocating China* (C. Hurst & Co., 2004) p. 208

⁵ Justin Rudelsen and William Jankowiak, *Acculturation and Resistance: Xinjiang in Flux, Xinjiang, China's Muslim Borderland* (M.E. Sharpe, 2004) p. 303

⁶ Justin Rudelsen and William Jankowiak, 2004. pp. 302-303

this question relates to the legitimacy of both PRC and separatist claims to Xinjiang. Scholars, however, do tend to agree on some things. The Uyghurs originated in northwestern Mongolia.⁷ Contrary to popular belief, the Uyghurs were not originally Muslims. The first Uyghurs were Buddhists. They did not begin converting to Islam until the 12th century.⁸ The process lasted until the 17th century.⁹ The belief that Uyghurs have always been Muslim is one of many misconceptions about them.

1.3 The History of China and Xinjiang

China has had a strong interest in Xinjiang for a very long time. Around the year 139 BCE, the Han Empire was clashing with the Xiongnu, a “...confederation of Altaic-speaking tribes, [that] formed an empire encompassing Mongolia, northwest China, and Zhungaria.”¹⁰ The battlefield between the Han and the Xiongnu was primarily southern Xinjiang. During this period, the Han had a military presence in Xinjiang, but did not control it completely.¹¹ After the Han Chinese divided the Xiongnu,¹² another confederation of nomads, called the Ruanraun, established an empire and ceded control of Xinjiang to an Iranian nomad empire called the

⁷ James A. Millward and Peter C. Perdue, *Political and Cultural History Through the Late 19th Century*, in *Xinjiang, China's Muslim Borderland* (M.E. Sharpe, 2004)

⁸ James A. Millward and Peter C. Perdue, 2004. p. 40

⁹ James A. Millward and Peter C. Perdue, 2004. p. 40

¹⁰ James A. Millward and Peter C. Perdue, 2004. p. 35

¹¹ Justin Rudelsen and William Jankowiak, *Xinjiang, China's Muslim Borderland* (M.E. Sharpe, 2004) p. 36

¹² James A. Millward and Peter C. Perdue, 2004. pp. 35-36

Hephthalites.¹³ After the Hephthalites fell in 560 AD, a primarily Turkic empire from Mongolia became the power of the day in Xinjiang. There were other interested parties as well, all trying to wield influence over the region: "...powers based in Tibet and in the west, from Arabia to western Turkistan, entered into a new geopolitical struggle that would eventually engulf the oases of southern Xinjiang."¹⁴ The first major influence of the Han Chinese in Xinjiang came in 60 BC.¹⁵ After dealing a strong blow against the Xiongnu, the Han established military farms in the area, giving itself a strong presence there. However, strife in China proper often diverted Han attention from the 'western regions.' While it is true that the China established a presence in 60 AD, the following three centuries were more of a battle for control than a time of Chinese dominance.

Later, the Tang Dynasty attempted to wield influence in the Xinjiang region. The Tang were different from previous Chinese in that those living in the west became more "Turkicized."¹⁶ Texts describe Chinese leaders from this time as enjoying Turkic music and food, and wearing Turkic clothing.¹⁷ Through shrewd political maneuvering, the Tang wielded a great deal of indirect influence over Xinjiang.

¹³ James A. Millward and Peter C. Perdue, 2004. p. 37

¹⁴ James A. Millward and Peter C. Perdue, 2004. p. 37

¹⁵ James A Millward Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang (Columbia University Press, 2007) p. 22

¹⁶ James A. Millward, 2007. p. 33

¹⁷ James A. Millward, 2007. p. 32

However, after a Tang military defeat at the Battle of Talas, (751 AD)¹⁸ and peasant rebellions in China proper,¹⁹ the Tang Dynasty withdrew from Xinjiang. China was not to have a presence in Xinjiang for the next thousand years.²⁰ In the fifteenth century, missions from Xinjiang presented tribute to Beijing in return for supplies and trade opportunities. James Millward says that "...these exchanges of goods...fall within the 'tribute system' model familiar to students of Chinese history."²¹ He goes on to tell us that although some previous and modern Chinese scholars cite this as evidence of Xinjiang's submission to Chinese rule, the relationship was more complex. In fact, he says, it was more an exchange between equals. The Chinese concept of a tribute system is unfamiliar to most westerners, and has thus led to disagreements over territorial claims. While China did have a strong influence over Xinjiang during this period, Chinese claims of complete sovereignty are an exaggeration.

The Qing Dynasty incorporated Xinjiang into the empire in 1884.²² Because the Qing Dynasty fell less than 30 years later, this constitutes a very brief, shaky period of control. In the 1930s and again in the 1940s, Uyghur nationalists took advantage of political instability and established the East Turkestan Republic. The

¹⁸ Dru Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic* (Harvard University Press, 2004)

¹⁹ James A. Millward and Peter C. Perdue, 2004. p. 39

²⁰ James A. Millward and Peter C. Perdue, 2004. p. 39

²¹ James A. Millward, 2007. pp. 72-73

²² The China Institute, *From Silk to Oil*. p. 18

http://www.chinainstitute.cieducationportal.org/cimain/wp-content/themes/chinainstitute/pdfs/education/fromsilktooil_pdf2.pdf accessed March 21st, 2011

first republic was brought down by the Kuomintang, the second by the CCP. This long, tenuous history can easily be manipulated by both Uyghur and Chinese nationalists. People on both sides of the conflict selectively use history to support their cause for Xinjiang independence or PRC dominance.

The purpose of this historical narrative is to emphasize two points. First, PRC claims that Xinjiang has been an integral part of China for thousands of years are a gross oversimplification. Second, Xinjiang has held high strategic value for a very long time. It is therefore no surprise that it has also been a place of frequent strife and conflict, up to the present day.

1.4 The Importance of Xinjiang

The PRC's official Xinjiang website has the following quote on its home page: "Since the Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C. - 24 A.D.), it [Xinjiang] has been an inseparable part of the unitary multi-ethnic Chinese nation."²³ China's texts and statements on Xinjiang are laced with such bold, uncompromising statements. Why does China place such high importance on Xinjiang? Why does the PRC reject all arguments that deviate from its official line?

Firstly, Xinjiang is inhabited by the Uyghurs, a people ethnically and culturally different from the Han Chinese of China proper. Fifty-five officially recognized

²³ The Government of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, History and Development of Xinjiang <http://www.xinjiang.gov.cn/10018/10008/00015/2005/22699.htm> accessed February 22nd, 2011

ethnic minority groups live within the PRC's borders.²⁴ China has always proven anxious to control its minority peoples, some of whom are hostile to Chinese rule. The PRC clearly fears a domino effect; if Xinjiang splits, what will happen to Tibet, Mongolia, and Taiwan?

Secondly, Xinjiang is in a strategically sensitive spot. At no point was this more evident than during the Sino-Soviet Split of the 1960s and 1970s. Xinjiang borders Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and Tibet.²⁵ The Uyghurs are culturally closer to Russia, as well as to the newly independent states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, than they are to China. China learned this lesson the hard way during the Great Leap Forward debacle of 1958-1961. Faced with famine and reorganization into communes, much of Xinjiang's ethnic population fled across the border into Russia.²⁶ The PRC clearly views the non-Han peoples of Xinjiang as mostly disloyal, and they are likely correct.

²⁴ Colin Mackerras, *China's Minority Cultures: Education and Integration Since 1912* (Longman, 1995) p. 3

²⁵ S. Frederick Starr, *Xinjiang, China's Muslim Borderland* (M.E. Sharpe, 2004) p. XV

²⁶ James A. Millward and Nabijan Tursun, *Political History and Strategies of Control, 1884-1978 in Xinjiang, China's Muslim Borderland* (M.E. Sharpe, 2004) p. 94



Located near the newly formed states of the former USSR, Xinjiang is in a strategically sensitive location.

Thirdly, Xinjiang is abundant in natural resources. It has grazing land, and land suitable for forestry. So far, 122 minerals have been discovered there, including an estimated 730 million tons of iron ore. It is home to more than 30% of the nation's coal reserves. Its petroleum and natural gas reserves are estimated at around 30 billion tons.²⁷ With China's increasing need for energy, Xinjiang's importance becomes clear.

Xinjiang is important to the PRC for another reason: nationalism. The general consensus is that Chinese nationalism is on the rise. Directly tied to this nationalism is a quasi-religious drive to regain territory lost during the so-called century of

²⁷ China Through a Lens, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/MATERIAL/139230.htm> accessed February 22nd, 2011

humiliation.²⁸ With the decline of Chinese socialism, the PRC needs a new philosophy to maintain its legitimacy.²⁹ Many scholars maintain that it has turned to two things: improving the standard of living, and appealing to popular nationalism. Simply put, territory is a hugely important issue to many Chinese people. If the Chinese public perceived the CCP as going soft on Xinjiang, Tibet or Taiwan, what would the consequences be? No Chinese leader wants to be remembered as the one who allowed a piece of national territory to break away; it would be devastating to any leader's legacy. These reasons constitute just a small overview of why the PRC views Xinjiang with great apprehension, and considers it vastly important.

Furthermore, PRC policy makers watched with great interest – and apprehension – the collapse of the Soviet Union. The PRC is determined to avoid the same fate. According to Ann Maxwell Harris and Minglang Zhou, the PRC was shocked “...by the role that ethnic relations played in the Soviet downfall.”³⁰ They go on to say that the PRC government drew a crucial lesson from the collapse of the USSR: in order to ensure its survival, the PRC had to fully incorporate all of its 55 minority groups into mainstream society.³¹ It is the author's opinion that education plays a key role in the PRC's integration strategy.

²⁸ Dingxin, Zhao, Nationalism and Authoritarianism: Student Government Conflicts During the 1999 Beijing Student Protests in *Asian Perspective*. (Volume 27, no. 1., 2003) p. 6

²⁹ Dingxin Zhao, 2003. p. 6

³⁰ Ann Maxwell Hill and Minglang Zhou Affirmative Action in China and the US (Palgrave Macmillen, 2009) p. 8

³¹ Ann Maxwell Hill and Minglang Zhou, 2009. p. 10

1.5 Education in Xinjiang

In any nation, education is essential to assimilating minority groups into mainstream society. Education can raise the minority standard of living. It can give opportunity to younger generations who may be more prone to causing civil unrest. Education can teach the majority's language to minorities, thus integrating them further. Perhaps most importantly, education can present the central government's version of history and politics to the minorities.

Dru Gladney states that "Education plays a privileged role in executing China's national integration project."³² Since the 1990s, the PRC has dramatically increased its education budget in Xinjiang. In 1949, Xinjiang had one college, nine secondary schools, and about 1,300 primary schools.³³ According to a report by the United Nations, by 2000 the region had 20 colleges and 2,000 secondary schools.³⁴ The PRC government claims that in 2008 alone, it invested 18.77 billion yuan into Xinjiang's education system.³⁵ If we accept the argument that the PRC is using education to integrate Uyghurs, then its astronomical education budget indicates how seriously it is taking this project.

³² Dru Gladney, 2004. p. 261

³³ China Global Times, Xinjiang Undergoes Unprecedented Changes in Education
<http://www.globaltimes.cn/www/english/truexinjiang/basic-facts/2009-09/470284.html> accessed January 21st, 2011

³⁴ <http://www.unescap.org/esid/psis/population/database/chinadata/xinjiang.html> accessed March 21st, 2011

³⁵ White Paper on Development and Progress in Xinjiang.
http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/ethnic/2009-09/21/content_8717461_5.htm, accessed March 21st, 2011

1.6 Limitations

This paper often uses the terms “Han Chinese” and “Uyghurs.” These are of course very diverse groups, with Uyghurs numbering over eight million, and Han Chinese more than one billion. Within these two groups are subgroups that differ vastly in opinion, culture, religion, and so on. This is particularly true of the Han Chinese. The author acknowledges that the term “Han Chinese” is something of a generalization that disregards the vast diversity of that group. While such a generalization is a shortcoming of this paper, the author hopes to accurately document the overall effects that China’s education program is having on both groups.

Another limitation to this study is the lack of fieldwork. This study is dependent on documentary analysis, rather than on interviews done in the field. While interviews done in the field would have been a strong contribution to this study, distance and financial constraints made this impossible. The author acknowledges the lack of fieldwork as a shortcoming to this thesis.

1.7 Motivation

It is the author’s opinion that in the 21st century, Xinjiang and the Uyghurs will play a crucial role on the world stage. As we have already seen, the PRC government is deathly serious about strengthening its hold on Xinjiang and controlling the Uyghurs. China is emerging as a world power. A major question mark will be its ability to

consolidate its territory. Because of Xinjiang's location, it is also greatly important to Russia, a potentially reemerging superpower. Because the Uyghurs are Muslims, and because they concern the PRC, they are also of great interest to the United States. This, of course, is particularly true after the attacks of September 11, 2001. Whether they like it or not, the Uyghurs are becoming key world players. The author thinks that Tibet is a very serious issue that merits scholarly attention and international concern. The author also feels that Tibet receives a great deal of sympathy from the West. Xinjiang, however, never seems to be discussed by Americans. The same Americans who put 'Free Tibet' bumper stickers on their cars never say a thing about Xinjiang or the Uyghurs.

This lack of attention is troubling, because that the 21st century will be difficult for the Uyghurs. It is the author's impression that the PRC government views them with suspicion and mistrust. Their language and identity face possible extinction. Xinjiang's location makes it an ideal smuggling point for heroin and other narcotics. The world's two largest sources of heroin are the golden crescent countries of Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan, and the golden triangle countries: Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand. When drugs produced in these areas are shipped to Europe, they go through Xinjiang.³⁶ Uyghurs have suffered a great deal from this. Mostly

³⁶ Kuo Ray Mao and Kay Kei-ho Pih. The New Silk Road: Central Asia's New Narcotics Trade Route and the Radicalization of Marginalized Minorities in China. (*Standing Group Organised Crime*, 2006)

as a result of spiraling heroin use among poor Uyghurs, more than 60,000 people in Xinjiang have HIV/AIDS.³⁷ More than 85% of people with HIV/AIDS in Xinjiang are Uyghurs.³⁸

The danger to Uyghur society is every bit as serious as that which faces the Tibetans and the Mongolians. Because of this, the author feels that studying the Uyghur predicament is both right and crucial.



³⁷ Kuo Ray Mao and Kay Kei-ho Pih., 2006.

³⁸ Kuo Ray Mao and Kay Kei-ho Pih., 2006.



Chapter 2. Literature Review

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of scholarly opinions relevant to this thesis. First, the author will look at some important issues concerning Xinjiang. Then, it is essential to consider the PRC's relations with its various ethnic minority groups, not only the Uyghurs. Next, the issue of ethnic separatism will be examined. Finally, the author will touch upon the three elements of education to be discussed in this paper: preferential policies, language education, and history content in education.

2.1 Xinjiang and China

In his book on Xinjiang, *Eurasian Crossroads*, James A. Millward stresses the importance of Xinjiang's geography. He uses the word 'betweenness' to describe Xinjiang's crucial location.³⁹ Located in the crux of three major regions (East Asia, South Asia, and Russia), Xinjiang is, according to Millward, a crossroads. He also argues that Xinjiang's location has helped shape its history. It is a buffer between China and Russia. It serves as a trade route between Asia and Europe. His arguments about the importance of Xinjiang's geography are very compelling.

As an example of Xinjiang's 'betweenness,' Millward also stresses the influence that nearby cultures have had on Xinjiang.⁴⁰ He claims that Xinjiang has absorbed religious, economic, and cultural traits from China, India, Tibet, and Mongolia.⁴¹

³⁹ James A. Millward, 2007. p. 1

⁴⁰ James A. Millward, 2007. p. 48

⁴¹ James A. Millward, 2007. p. 48

This is perhaps inevitable, considering Xinjiang's location and the diverse variety of peoples who have occupied it.

2.2 China and its Ethnic Minority Groups

In his book, *China's Minority Cultures*, Colin Mackerras provides a good overview of non-Han peoples living in China. Fifty-five officially recognized minority groups live in China, but they only comprise about eight percent of the population.⁴² It is important to note that these 55 groups do not represent all of the minorities in China. The current classifications have not changed since the 1970s⁴³, and the PRC based them on Joseph Stalin's model of ethnic minority classification.⁴⁴ Many other ethnic groups have applied for official minority status, but the government has only recognized one since laying out its original classification system.⁴⁵ The PRC's reasons for refusing minority status to other groups have never been clear.

Mackerras points out that China's minority groups differ from one another quite substantially. He states, "Their [the minorities'] living places range from the very high and dry planes of Tibet to the tropical regions of Hainan."⁴⁶ He goes on to point out that minorities differ from one another in ethnicity, language, religion, and culture.⁴⁷ Some minorities have assimilated quite thoroughly into mainstream

⁴² Colin Mackerras, 1995. p. 3

⁴³ Colin Mackerras, 1995. p. 3

⁴⁴ Dru Gladney, 1998. p. 109

⁴⁵ Colin Mackerras, 1995. p. 3

⁴⁶ Colin Mackerras, 1995. p. 4

⁴⁷ Colin Mackerras, 1995. p. 4

Chinese culture. The Hui are a good example. Although they are Muslims and a recognized minority group, the Hui live in Chinese cities, work with the Han, and have largely accepted being a part of Chinese society.⁴⁸ On the opposite end of the spectrum are the Tibetans and the Uyghurs. Although this is a general statement, it is the author's impression that the majority of ethnic minorities in China are content to be a part of the PRC.

How do Han Chinese view ethnic minorities? Dru Gladney argues that Han literature, media, and education tend to depict ethnic minorities as “exotic and erotic” others.⁴⁹ He also argues that Han Chinese tend to view minorities as being in need of education and culture. Gladney claims that the PRC media depicts ethnic minorities as colorful and innocent, dancers and singers happily living under their benevolent and more sophisticated Han superiors. Although this paper is focused on the influence of education on Uyghurs, the author cannot resist making the following observation: if Dr. Gladney's argument is valid, then it is fair to say that regardless of how it influences ethnic minorities, the PRC's education system is effective on mainstream society.

Ildiko Beller-Hann's essay, *Temperamental neighbors: Uyghur-Han Relations in*

⁴⁸ Dru Gladney, 1998, p. 110

⁴⁹ Dru Gladney, “Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities” in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 1994, p. 93

Xinjiang, Northwest China, examines the interaction between everyday Han and Uyghurs living in Xinjiang. He visits an oasis town called Urukzar, which has a large number of both Han and Uyghur residents. His observations focus on the perceptions that the two sides have of one another, both positive and negative. It is an interesting study on how stereotypes develop, and on how normal people coexist in an environment often fraught with social tension.

Shan Wei and Chen Gang wrote an essay titled *The Urumqi Riots and China's Ethnic Policy in Xinjiang*. This essay was useful in that it discussed and criticized the government's approach to Xinjiang. The opening pages of this article relate the seriousness of Xinjiang: the authors point out that after the Urumqi riots in 2009, PRC president Hu Jintao cut short his visit to Europe and returned to the PRC.⁵⁰ The essay also points out that the PRC rejected calls for mediation from Turkey, saying that the issue was an internal one. This reflects the PRC's desire to keep any and all foreign influence away from Xinjiang. Although these writers are from Singapore, their views seemed to support the PRC stance. Even when the writers criticized PRC policy, they appeared to support the ultimate goal of integration. The article cited preferential policy as a source of tension, claiming that it bred resentment among the Han Chinese. The article argues that preferential policies give unfair treatment

⁵⁰ Shan Wei and Chen Gang, *The Urumqi Riots and China's Ethnic Policy in Xinjiang* (East Asian Policy, July/September, 2009) p. 15

in favor of the Uyghurs. The writers even go so far as to imply reverse discrimination against the Han. This view is too simple and broad. The writers also argue very persuasively that the PRC must treat religion with genuine respect. They claim that until the PRC respects Islam, any preferential policies will be ineffective. The author agrees with this point entirely, and will discuss it later in this thesis.

Nicolas Becquelin's essay *Staged Development in Xinjiang* discusses the next phase of the PRC's settlement of Xinjiang. While his essay does not relate directly to the topic of education, it is valuable for its insights into China's 'Open Up the West' drive.

Becquelin argues that China's current strategy is a continuation of what began in the 1990s.⁵¹ In that decade, the PRC made huge strides in migrating Han settlers into Xinjiang, developing Xinjiang's infrastructure, and exploiting its natural resources. What we are seeing now, he says, are the PRC's attempts to consolidate its gains from the 1990s. This reflects the slow and methodical approach that the PRC has to its western development strategy.

Interestingly, Becquelin notes a shift in the PRC's rhetoric towards Xinjiang. He says that before the 1990s, the PRC denied that it was deliberately sending Han

⁵¹ Nicolas Becquelin, *Staged Development in Xinjiang*, in China's Campaign to "Open Up the West:" National, Provincial and Local Perspectives (The China Quarterly, 2004) p. 44

settlers to Xinjiang in order to colonize it.⁵² The PRC previously claimed that any increased Han population in Xinjiang was due to “seasonal migrants.”⁵³ Now, policy makers speak openly of the ‘sinicization of Xinjiang,’ and see Han migration as an integral part of that strategy. He cites a PRC article which “...explicitly acknowledged that the state was now aiming at fostering increased migrations to national minority areas in order to dilute the ethnic populations in the border areas and strengthen national unity.”⁵⁴ It is possible that this reflects the PRC’s growing confidence in its ability to control the region.

Becquelin tells us that according to Marxist theory, an increased standard of living will quell ethnic tensions. In other words, if minorities have more economic opportunity, they won’t cause trouble. This has, Becquelin says, been the official PRC argument for some time. Becquelin now cites another interesting change in the PRC’s perception. The PRC now acknowledges that increased development in Xinjiang will create more ethnic strife and unrest.⁵⁵ In Becquelin’s mind, this change in PRC rhetoric is very significant.

Michael Friderich wrote an essay titled *Uyghur Literary Representations of Xinjiang Realities*. In it, he looks at Uyghur literature in order to disseminate how the Uyghurs perceive themselves. He also makes interesting observations on how

⁵² Nicolas Becquelin, 2004. p. 54

⁵³ Nicolas Becquelin, 2004. p. 54

⁵⁴ Nicolas Becquelin, 2004. p. 60

⁵⁵ Nicolas Becquelin, 2004. pp. 60-61

the Uyghurs view their relationships with China, the West, and nearby Islamic elements. Friederich argues that Uyghur poets fear that their culture is under attack.⁵⁶ He points out that writing poems about Uyghur culture and history resemble a “high-wire act.”⁵⁷ Anything written by Uyghurs about culture or history comes under intense Chinese scrutiny. Because of political sensitivities, this can hardly be surprising.

Also interesting were Friederich’s comments on cultural isolation. He argues that location and politics have led the Uyghurs to feel cut off from the rest of the world. Firstly, anything that the Uyghurs get from the West comes via China. It is translated by Chinese scholars and – one can assume – scrutinized very closely before being passed on to Xinjiang.⁵⁸ Some Uyghurs are, Friederich claims, “...unable or unwilling to read in Chinese.” If texts are only provided in Mandarin, this surely makes it difficult to absorb anything from the West.⁵⁹ Secondly, contact with neighboring Islamic nations is, of course, closely monitored and generally discouraged.

⁵⁶ Michael Friederich, *Uyghur Representations of Xinjiang Realities*, in Situating the Uyghurs Between China and Central Asia (Ashgate Publishing, 2007) p. 94

⁵⁷ Michael Friederich, 2007. p. 94

⁵⁸ Michael Friederich, 2007. p. 102

⁵⁹ Michael Friederich, 2007. p. 103

2.3 China and Ethnic Separatism

Many different parties are directly concerned with the issue of ethnic separatism. These parties include the PRC, minority groups living in the PRC, certain foreign governments, and countless scholars. Needless to say, the agendas of these groups vary wildly. However, they all tend to agree on one point: the Chinese government treats ethnic separatism with the utmost seriousness. Most scholars agree that a major motivation for the Western Development Project, a venture costing billions of dollars, is the desire to tighten central control over Xinjiang and Tibet.⁶⁰ The evidence supporting this claim is quite strong.

Certainly, the PRC has proven willing to use violence in reaction to anti-Han demonstrations. This happened in Xinjiang in 1990, as well as in Tibet, just before the 2008 Olympic Games.⁶¹ In *Ethnic Minorities and Globalization*, Colin Mackerras argues that sensitivity towards the issue of ethnic separatism pushes the PRC's foreign policy. He cites this sensitivity as an explanation of why the PRC was staunchly opposed NATO intervention in Kosovo.⁶² Generally, the PRC government does not support foreign intervention in other countries, Mackerras says, because it

⁶⁰ Harry Lai *China's Western Development Program: Its Rationale, Implementation, and Prospects* (Modern China, 2002)

⁶¹ New York Times, *Tibetan Riots Spread Outside Region*
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/16/world/asia/16iht-tibet.4.11148124.html> accessed February 22nd, 2011

⁶² Colin Mackerras, 2003. p. 39

fears foreign intervention within its own borders.⁶³ Clearly, the PRC does not want to see a precedent that could one day justify intervention in a problem area like Tibet or Xinjiang.

2.4 Ethnic Minorities and Education

Gerald Postiglione's essay, *National Minority Regions*, is an interesting study on researching minority education in the PRC. In addition to talking about the challenges of research in China, Postiglione also provides some interesting observations on minority dissatisfaction with the education system. The author found Postiglione's observations about theory versus practice especially useful. He points out that the PRC's theory of education in minority regions is often very different from what happens in reality. In other words, the central government claims that it is implementing fair policies, and it has laws that are supposed to ensure that. In reality, however, that is often not the case. For example, Postiglione says that in theory, minorities may run their own schools, but in practice "...their actual autonomy may be severely restricted...minority groups can run their own schools, but they must abide by all regulations set down by the central government."⁶⁴ Postiglione also talks about the differences between theory and practice concerning two other important issues: language education and financial aid. He points out that while

⁶³ Colin Mackerras, 2003. p. 39

⁶⁴ Gerald A. Postiglione, *National Minorities: Studying School Discontinuation in The Ethnographic Eye: An Interpretive Study of Education in China* (Falmer Press, 2000) p. 54

minority languages may be used in schools, there “...may not be enough trained teachers who can teach in these languages.”⁶⁵ Postiglione also applies this problem to financial aid. While the central government does provide extra funds for minority areas, parents still “...must find ways of covering fees for food and clothing, and of overcoming separation anxiety.”⁶⁶ Many western academics touch on the issue of theory versus practice in the PRC’s ethnic minority policies.

Finally, Postiglione illuminates some of the many difficulties in researching minority education in China. Field work can be difficult for Han researchers, because many minorities tend to view them as outsiders.⁶⁷ Minorities may be more welcoming to a researcher who is not Han Chinese; however, very few foreigners speak the minority language, and that creates an impediment to research.⁶⁸ Finally, Postiglione points out that in dealing with teachers in minority schools (most of whom are Han), getting straight answers can be difficult. He claims that they may simply support Party policy or give answers that they think the researcher wants to hear.

⁶⁵ Gerald A. Postiglione, 2000. p. 54

⁶⁶ Gerald A. Postiglione, 2000. p. 54

⁶⁷ Gerald A. Postiglione, 2000. p. 66

⁶⁸ Gerald A. Postiglione, 2000. p. 67

2.5 Preferential Policies

In a book on affirmative action in China, Ann Maxwell Hill and Minglang Zhou state that China uses preferential treatment to “...redress historic inequalities among ethnic groups, [and] to reduce the potential for ethnic conflict.”⁶⁹ The existing scholarship tends to agree that the PRC has provided significant financial incentives to reward loyalty from ethnic minorities. An essay on China’s hard and soft policies points out that, “Soft measures (including education) are designed to win favor among the Uyghur population and facilitate acculturation into Chinese society.”⁷⁰ The author believes that this reflects a growing sophistication in China’s policies toward Xinjiang. It seems that the PRC government has concluded that brute force is not enough to control the Uyghurs. They must mix incentives in as well.

Zhu Zhiyong’s article *Higher Education Access and Equality Among Ethnic Minorities in China* sheds light on how the PRC is handling current challenges in its education system. Dr. Zhu, a professor at Beijing Normal University, explains a phenomenon familiar to those who study modern China: economic growth has led to greater inequalities. He argues that ethnic minorities have borne many of these new financial burdens, and that this can be seen in higher education. He points out that “...the percentage of ethnic minority students enrolled in higher education is still

⁶⁹ Ann Maxwell Hill and Minglang Zhou *Affirmative Action in China and the US* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) p. 1

⁷⁰ Justin Rudelsen and William Jankowiak, *Acculturation and Resistance: Xinjiang in Flux*, in *Xinjiang, China’s Muslim Borderland* (M.E. Sharpe, 2004) p. 301

below the percentage of minorities in the nation's population and has even fallen since 1998.”⁷¹ He later points out something that many scholars touch upon: from the very beginning of their education, young minorities are at a disadvantage because the central government provides schools in minority regions with less funding.⁷² The author shows a great deal of faith in the benefits of preferential policies. While acknowledging that China has a controversial and imperfect system, he suggests that affirmative action has helped level the playing field for many ethnic minorities. The author is curious to discover whether or not this is a widely held belief in the PRC government: that preferential policies and higher education can address economic inequalities.

Among western scholars there appears to be a healthy skepticism as to whether or not these policies actually reward Uyghurs who take advantage of them (or try to take advantage of them). For example, Timothy Grose states that even with scholarships and preferential admission policies, many Uyghurs are too poor to send their children to school.⁷³ Furthermore, Justin Rudelsen and William Jankowiak argue that with education being so Han-centered, many Uyghur parents are reluctant to send their children to school, for fear that their ethnic identity will be

⁷¹ Zhiyong Zhu, Higher Education Access and Equality Among Ethnic Minorities in China (Chinese Education and Society, Volume 43, Number 1, 2010) p. 4

⁷² Zhiyong Zhu, 2010. pp. 18-19

⁷³ Timothy Grose, Educating Xinjiang's Uyghurs: Creating Success or Achieving Unrest (University of Virginia, 2008) p. 9

compromised.⁷⁴ This likely reflects a wider mistrust of the PRC and its intentions.

The author also found Gerald Postiglione's comments on preferential policies as a means of national integration very interesting. He says that minorities admitted to universities have a "higher visibility" and serve as a model for younger minorities.⁷⁵ This is part of the PRC's strategy of rewarding loyalty. If a student is loyal to the government, he or she will be rewarded. This will be done in a very visible manner, as a message to other minorities about the advantages of loyalty.

For its part, the PRC is always eager to promote the strides made in minority education since 1949. It seems that every official white paper or web site touts rising literacy rates, higher standards of living, and a growing number of universities in Xinjiang. A white paper, released by the PRC in 2009, is a typical example. Titled *Development and Progress in Xinjiang*, it points out that before 1949, "Xinjiang had but one college, nine secondary schools, and 1,355 primary schools."⁷⁶ The same paper goes on to point out that nine year education in Xinjiang is now compulsory, and illiteracy has been "eliminated." Such flowery language and bright reporting is typical of the PRC's take on ethnic minority education. As will be discussed later, however, significant progress *has* been made in some areas.

⁷⁴ Justin Rudelsen and William Jankowiak, 2004. p. 313

⁷⁵ Gerald A. Postiglione, 2000. p. 59

⁷⁶ True Xinjiang, *Xinjiang Undergoes Unprecedented Changes in Education*, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/www/english/truexinjiang/basic-facts/2009-09/470284.html> accessed February 22nd, 2011

Our Good Han Mothers speaks of the impact that Han Chinese teachers have had on their Uyghur middle school students. The essay paints an idealized picture, to say the least. In fact, from beginning to end, the language borders on absurdity. It is a clear and unintentionally humorous example of what the PRC would like outsiders to think of its education system in Xinjiang.

The essay opens with Uyghur middle school students returning home after a semester in boarding school with their Han teachers. The young Uyghurs love their Han teachers so much that they cannot bear to leave them. “The youngsters crowded around the teachers, vying to give their beloved teachers a last hug, their smiling eyes brimming with tears, breasts heaving lightly, clasped hands unwilling to let go.”⁷⁷

Our Good Han Mothers suggests that the Uyghur children were uncivilized before they came under the wings of their Han teachers. It argues that the Han teachers saved them and gave them a future. It even quotes one student as saying “I’m happier here than I am at home!”⁷⁸

The essay also depicts the Han Chinese teachers as loving and nurturing. It states that the teachers sacrificed their time, money, and health to help the students. They “...willingly gave up their rest days to pair up with and coach the Xinjiang

⁷⁷ Tao Jiaqing and Yang Xiaohua “Our Good Han Mothers” in *Chinese Education and Society* (Volume 43, Number 3, May-June 2010) p. 65

⁷⁸ Tao Jiaqing and Yang Xiaohua, 2010. p. 66

youngsters.”⁷⁹ According to the essay, teachers also gave their personal things to the students, and treated the students as though they were their own children. This contrasts with Linda Tsung’s essay (to be discussed below), in which Uyghur students who struggled with Mandarin were called “not very bright” by their Han teachers.⁸⁰

Predictably, *Our Good Han Mothers* touts the successes of the teachers. It speaks of overcoming ethnic differences and becoming one under the banner of China. “Different ethnic groups, different languages, and different souls – all fused together here.”⁸¹ The political message of unity is so blunt that it is impossible to miss.

This article embellishes so much that it has no academic value whatsoever. However, it is useful in that it shows us what the PRC government would like readers to think about its education system. It is a piece of modern propaganda, revealing the PRC’s desire to present a magnanimous education system and a united China.

2.6 Language Education

Both the PRC and the Uyghurs take language education very seriously. Scholars and many Uyghurs associate language with the preservation of Uyghur identity. There is a real fear among Uyghurs that if they (or their children) learn Mandarin, their own language and culture will suffer. Timothy Grose cites interviews in which Uyghur university students say that the more they learned Chinese, the more alienated they

⁷⁹ Tao Jiaqing and Yang Xiaohua, 2010, p. 68

⁸⁰ Linda Tsung, *Minority Languages, Education and Communities in China* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) p. 140

⁸¹ Tao Jiaqing and Yang Xiaohua, 2010, p. 69

felt from their own cultures.⁸² In *Dislocating China*, Dru Gladney also stresses the importance of language learning in the assimilation of ethnic minorities. He states it very simply: “To learn Chinese is to become Chinese.”⁸³ PRC scholars are aware of this concern. One PRC scholar, Lin Shujiao (林淑娇), discusses this in an essay on problems facing bilingual education. Lin points out the worry that if Chinese is paramount in Uyghur classrooms, they will lose their cultural identity. The essay expresses similar worries about language; if Uyghur students spend more time learning Mandarin, will they be able to speak as well in their mother tongue?⁸⁴ Concern on this matter is justified. After all, culture and language are closely intertwined. If the Uyghurs lose their language, their culture will suffer as well.

Regardless, the PRC clearly wants to convince Uyghurs of the importance of learning Mandarin. Ku Erban (窟尔班), a Uyghur academic in the PRC, points out that Chinese is the common language used all over the PRC. He argues that in China, Mandarin is the language of business, economics, and politics.⁸⁵ The article’s message is clear: if Uyghurs want to be a part of this century, they will have no choice but to learn Mandarin.

James A. Millward also comments on the importance of language in both politics

⁸² Timothy Grose, 2008. p.11

⁸³ Dru Gladney, 1998. p. 264

⁸⁴ 林淑娇, 淺談新疆高校中的雙語教學政策(Charming China. 魅力中國, 2010)

⁸⁵ 窟尔班, 少數民族地區實行雙語教學的必要性 (The Language Teacher’s Friend. 2009)

and national identity. He points out that the PRC has changed the Uyghur writing system three times in 30 years. That is an extraordinarily large amount of change. He goes on to argue – rather persuasively – that the change in language policy clearly reflects the PRC’s political motives. For example, he points out that the first change was meant to “...reduce the appeal of Islamic texts and improve access to scientific and educational materials published in the Soviet Union.”⁸⁶ A later change reflected the rift between the PRC and the USSR.⁸⁷ It certainly seems true that the PRC’s language policies reflect political realities.

Linda Tsung, from the University of Hong Kong, wrote a book titled *Minority Languages, Education and Communities in China*. The author found her chapter on Xinjiang to be intelligent, informative, and highly useful. In all the reading the author has done for this thesis, this chapter has been among the most valuable.

For her research, Tsung visited a school that combined the *min kao min* (民考民) and *min kao Han* (民考漢) systems. A *min kao min* school, also called a minority school, is exclusively for ethnic minorities. The medium of instruction is the minority language, and minority culture is emphasized. A *min kao Han* school, also called a Chinese school, is a traditional PRC school. In these schools, most of the students are Chinese, and Mandarin is the only language used.

⁸⁶ James A. Millward, 2007. p. 234

⁸⁷ James A. Millward, 2007. p. 235

Interestingly, Tsung reported some policies that created resentment. Uyghur students in the school were required to learn Mandarin, but Han students did not have to learn Uyghur.⁸⁸ Uyghur teachers had to pass a Mandarin proficiency test, but Han teachers did not have to pass a Uyghur test. This is common: Uyghurs have to learn Mandarin, but Han Chinese almost never learn Uyghur, even in Xinjiang.

In a very revealing section, Tsung interviewed Uyghur academics. She spoke with people who studied at both *min kao min* and *min kao Han* schools. The results were most interesting. Uyghurs who studied at Chinese schools stated that they were grateful because they had better job opportunities later on in life. However, as children they struggled because classes were taught in Chinese, a language they did not understand well at the time. They reported feeling afraid, and being mocked by the Chinese children.⁸⁹

According to Tsung, Uyghurs who studied in minority schools also reported pros and cons. On the one hand, they did not have to struggle with a language they did not understand. They became completely fluent in Uyghur.⁹⁰ On the other hand, they did not learn Chinese well and had problems later in their academic careers.

Tsung gives a scathing criticism of minority education in Xinjiang. She claims

⁸⁸ Linda Tsung, 2009. p. 136

⁸⁹ Linda Tsung, 2009. p. 144

⁹⁰ Linda Tsung, 2009. p. 145

that Han Chinese policymakers and teachers dismiss Uyghur students as lazy.⁹¹ She reveals an interesting problem in the system. According to Tsung, authorities do not provide enough resources to Uyghur students, and then look down on those students for not succeeding. However, Tsung claims, the problem is not that the Uyghur students are lazy or stupid. The problem is that they are not given the same resources that Han children receive.⁹² If Tsung's criticisms are accurate, they reflect troubling problems of both racism and discrimination.

There was a great deal more of use in this chapter. It also discusses the possibility that authorities are making Mandarin the only useful language, while simultaneously making Uyghur useless for economic advancement.⁹³ Tsung recommends providing more resources for Uyghur students and minority schools. The author found this chapter most useful and intelligent. The author plans to refer to it often in this thesis.

In *Separate but Loyal*, Wenfang Tang and Gaochao He conduct an interesting survey of minority students in the PRC. They include an interesting discussion on the differences between theory and practice in language education. The authors point out that on paper, the policy is very clear: "The 1995 Education Law states that the Han language is the basic language of instruction. Ethnic minority schools can

⁹¹ Linda Tsung, 2009. p. 153

⁹² Linda Tsung, 2009. pp. 152-154

⁹³ Linda Tsung, 2009. p. 152

use their own language as the teaching language, but they are required to teach Mandarin at some point before the seventh grade.”⁹⁴ They go on to state, however, that while the classrooms they observed did indeed teach in the minorities’ language, the situation was often very confused. Bureaucratic conflicts between the Ministry of Education in Beijing and the Ethnic State Affairs Council influence the classrooms. The former group, they say, favors the use of Mandarin, while the latter favors instruction in the local ethnic language.⁹⁵ From this we can determine that language instruction in the PRC is often hazier than the laws would indicate.

Ma Rong, a professor at Peking University, writes a very interesting essay titled *Bilingual Education for China’s Ethnic Minorities*. While perhaps not entirely accurate, the author’s tendency was to view Dr. Ma as a voice of the PRC government. He outlines some of the very difficult challenges that come with trying to implement a bilingual education system. Some of the difficulties he cites are finding qualified teachers and making sure that material taught in minority languages is up to national standards.

Imagine trying to introduce the vocabulary of modern science so that it fits properly into the languages of several dozen large and small minority groups so that one could compile complete sets of texts for

⁹⁴ Wengang Tang and Gaochao He, Separate but Loyal: Ethnicity and Nationalism in China, (East-West Center, 2010) p. 19

⁹⁵ Wengang Tang and Gaochao He, 2010. p. 20

subjects such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology geography and history...and this will give an idea of the difficulty of the project.⁹⁶

Dr. Ma also speaks of the PRC concept ‘unified diversity.’ The author took this to mean that the country is unified in the sense that everyone speaks Mandarin, and diverse because minority groups still speak their own languages at the local level. Whether this is a practical goal or idealism is something the author would like very much to discover.

For its part, the PRC, not surprisingly, speaks of a bi-lingual education system in which both languages are respected and promoted. Concerning language education in the next decade (2010-2020), the official PRC website has this to say:

Efforts shall also be made to advance bilingual teaching, open Chinese language classes in every school, and popularize the national common language and writing system. However, minority groups' right to be educated in their native languages shall also be respected and ensured...⁹⁷

Certainly, this statement gives the appearance of tolerance and an eagerness to foster local Uyghur culture.

⁹⁶ Ma rong, Bilingual Education for China's Ethnic Minorities (Chinese Education & Society, Volume 40, number 2, 2007) p. 11

⁹⁷ The Chinese Government's Official Web Portal, China Vows Stronger Support for Education for Ethnic Minority Groups http://www.gov.cn/english/2010-07/30/content_1667226.htm accessed February 22nd, 2011

Among western scholars, however, there is a strong skepticism concerning China's bilingual education system. In his essay *Separate but Loyal*, Timothy Grose says that some researchers "...argue that the rhetoric of bilingual education is based on half truths, and that China's covert policy is, in fact, monolingualism."⁹⁸ In *China's Minority cultures*, Colin Mackerras argues that while the official PRC policy is to promote the use of minority language, everyday practice often deviates from that policy.⁹⁹ Among western scholars and certainly among human rights activists, the general perception is that bilingual education is something of a sham, meant to sugarcoat the real policy of marginalizing the ethnic minorities' language and ultimately, their culture as well.

Nicolas Becquelin has interesting observations on the PRC's linguistic policies. He notes the implementation of Modern Standard Chinese in Xinjiang, as well as Mandarin's becoming the medium of instruction of almost all subjects at Xinjiang University.¹⁰⁰ According to Becquelin, instituting Modern Standard Chinese is meant to achieve two things. First, it will placate the Uyghurs by giving them more economic opportunity through better Mandarin. Secondly, it will help to further assimilate them into the PRC.

⁹⁸ Timothy Grose, 2008. p.19

⁹⁹ Colin Mackerras, 1995. p. 144

¹⁰⁰ Nicolas Becquelin, 2004. pp. 61-62

These secondary sources begin to reveal a pattern. The implementation of Mandarin at Xinjiang University, the use of Modern Standard Chinese in Xinjiang, and increased Mandarin in minority schools all point to one trend. It is beginning to look as though the PRC's goal is to supplant the Uyghur language and give the Uyghurs no choice but to learn Mandarin.

2.7 History Content

The historical and political content of education in the PRC is far and away the most relevant topic to this paper. After all, regardless of whether they favor separatism, acculturation, or something else, everyone involved in the Xinjiang issue must have a keen interest in historical perception. There can be no doubt as to where the PRC stands on this issue. The official stance of the PRC is that “Xinjiang...has been an inalienable part of China from ancient times. In 60 B.C., Xinjiang officially became a part of China's territory.”¹⁰¹ This sentiment appears in one form or another all over the PRC's official web sites, white papers, government statements, and so on.

At the other extreme we find the views of East Turkestan independence supporters. An anti-China website, provocatively titled ‘eastturkestan.net,’ states

¹⁰¹ The Government of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, About Xinjiang, <http://www.xinjiang.gov.cn/10050/10051/10020/article.html> accessed February 22nd, 2011

bluntly that “East Turkestan is not a part of China.”¹⁰² It goes on to say the following: “...between 206 B.C. and 1759 A.D., East Turkestan was able to maintain its independence...During the periods when it was linked to the Turkish Hun and Gokturk khanates, local administration lay entirely in the hands of the people of East Turkestan. Between 751 and 1216 it was totally independent.”¹⁰³ As with the PRC’s claims, this web site’s interpretation of history has a clear political agenda.

Academics tend to favor a gray area. Western historians emphasize that the history of Xinjiang is long and complicated, and is now being manipulated by both sides for political purposes. For example, in an essay titled *Contested Histories*, Gardner Bovingdon says, “The party-state has long relied on official histories to justify its political and military control over Xinjiang...”¹⁰⁴ Bovingdon goes on to point out that Uyghur nationalists are also eager to use historical interpretations for their own purposes. “...Uyghur nationalist histories have provided a charter for Uyghur identity, underscored the centrality of Islam in Uyghur life, and offered Uyghurs both precedent and warrant for their resistance to Chinese rule.”¹⁰⁵ All the western academics that the author read tend to support Bovingdon’s arguments.

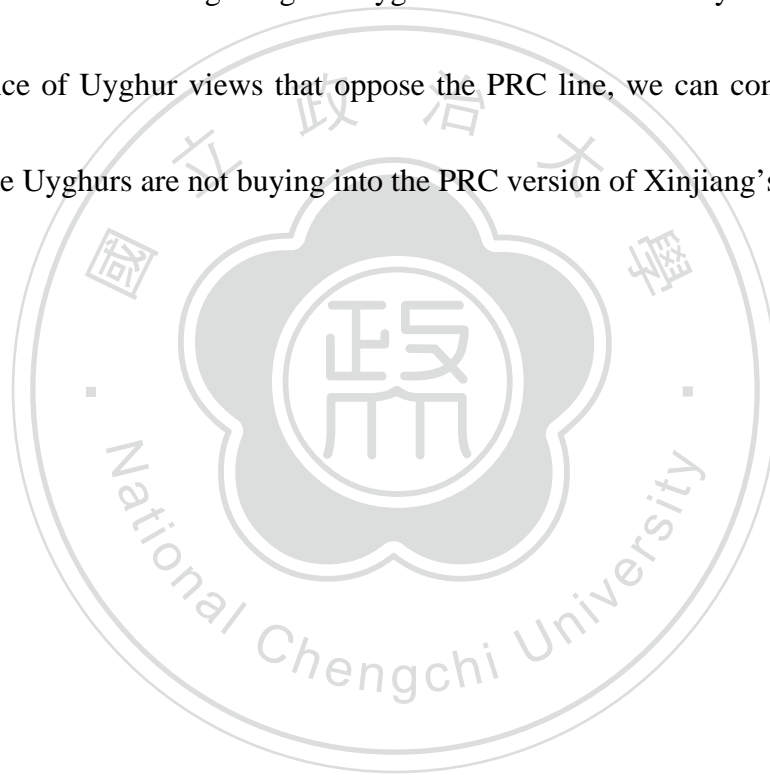
¹⁰² Harun Yahya, Communist China’s Policy of Oppression in East Turkestan
http://www.harunyahya.com/e_turkestan03.php accessed February 22nd, 2011

¹⁰³ Harun Yahya, http://www.harunyahya.com/e_turkestan03.php accessed February 22nd, 2011

¹⁰⁴ Gardner Bovingdon, *Contested Histories, Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland* (M.E. Sharpe, 2004) p. 353

¹⁰⁵ Gardner Bovingdon, 2004. p. 353

We can therefore make the following conclusions about academic opinions towards PRC and Uyghur interpretations of history. First, academics are generally skeptical of both sides' versions of history. However, scholars tend to be more hostile towards the PRC version. Second, everyone involved (ie: the PRC, the Uyghurs, and interested outside observers) agrees that the PRC is using history education as a means of integrating the Uyghurs into Chinese society. Finally, given the prevalence of Uyghur views that oppose the PRC line, we can conclude that by and large, the Uyghurs are not buying into the PRC version of Xinjiang's history.





Chapter 3. Preferential Policies for Uyghurs

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the preferential policies that the PRC has implemented regarding Uyghur education. What policies have the PRC put in place, and why? What positive effects have been achieved? What are the drawbacks? Are the PRC's policies really meant to create change, or do they serve another agenda? Are preferential policies improving the Uyghurs' education, economic opportunities, and upward mobility? How do the Uyghurs themselves view these policies? All of these issues lead to the fundamental question posed in this chapter: are the PRC's preferential policies quelling unrest and integrating the Uyghurs into China proper?

Preferential policies have been implemented by modern states all over the world. Ann Maxwell Harris and Minglang Zhou have this to say about preferential policies. These policies "...have widely been adopted by modern states to redress historic inequalities among ethnic groups, to reduce to potential for ethnic conflict, and, at times, to enhance opportunities for the dominant group itself."¹⁰⁶ They go on to say that the PRC is no exception. Preferential policies are a popular means of integrating into the state minority groups who feel marginalized by government and mainstream society.

The PRC has implemented a great deal of preferential policies for ethnic

¹⁰⁶ Ann Maxwell Hill and Minglang Zhou, 2009. p.1

minorities. Guarantees of these policies are written into the “Law of the People’s Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy.”¹⁰⁷ The laws were drafted in 1984, and amended in 2001. The following is a list of minority rights that are guaranteed by law in the PRC (it should be noted that these laws apply to all of the 55 recognized minority groups):

- Government subsidies for minority schools
- Lower admissions standards for minority university applicants. An elaborate points system determines how much benefit a minority applicant receives. It is based on the minority applicant’s gender, ethnicity, financial background, and so on.¹⁰⁸
- The development of specialized schools for minority nationalities
- More career opportunities for minority university graduates

It seems fair to state that the PRC’s reasons for implementing these policies are no different from the reasons of any other national government. By giving the Uyghurs more economic opportunity, the central government is attempting to pacify them and integrate them into the motherland. The PRC’s approach to the so-called minority issue seems to be more sophisticated than it was before. Policymakers have apparently concluded that keeping the Uyghurs under control through mere force is

¹⁰⁷ Law of the People’s Republic of China on National Autonomy
http://www.novexcn.com/regional_nation_autonomy.html, accessed April 18th, 2011

¹⁰⁸ Barry Sautman, Preferential Policies for Minorities in China: The Case of Xinjiang (University of Hong Kong, Division of Social Science, 1997) p. 16

not sufficient. They have decided to mix in incentives for loyalty as well. Colin Mackerras states that the PRC is attempting to raise the standard of living among minorities, thus making them "...less prone to rebellious movements."¹⁰⁹ The PRC's preferential policies are half of a two part strategy. On the one hand, the PRC takes a zero-tolerance approach to ethnic separatism. As we have seen in both Xinjiang and Tibet, the PRC will not hesitate to use violence when it perceives a threat from minorities in its borders. On the other hand, the PRC appears eager to entice ethnic minorities through education incentives and a higher standard of living.

In every country that has preferential policies, debates exist as to the merits of those policies. Certainly in the United States, the author's home country, affirmative action is an endlessly controversial topic. Affirmative action in the United States was first implemented in 1954, when the American Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation in schools was unconstitutional.¹¹⁰ American affirmative action requires "...agencies and institutions to make every effort to seek out qualified candidates from every possible source – but to focus especially on individuals...from underrepresented groups – to compete for limited resources in education, employment, and business."¹¹¹ The essential idea behind American affirmative action is to break down barriers of inequality in order to create a society where "...race no longer

¹⁰⁹ Colin Mackerras, *China's Ethnic Minorities and Globalization* (Routledge Courzon, 2003) p. 38

¹¹⁰ Evelyn HuDehart, *Racial Preferences in the United States*, in *Affirmative Action in China and the U.S.* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) p. 215

¹¹¹ HuDuhart, 2007. p. 215

matters.”¹¹² There are differences between American preferential policies and those in the PRC. The PRC concept of affirmative action is based on the concept of diversity-in-unity, and the idea that China’s various ethnic groups should develop together.¹¹³ All of China’s 56 groups are to complement one another and “...work to increase the nation’s cohesion.”¹¹⁴ China’s approach, therefore, is more group based. Furthermore, in the PRC, preferential policies are applied equally to all 55 recognized minority groups. They are similar in that the ultimate goal of both programs is to quell discontent and create stability.

Generally speaking, liberals view preferential policies as a means of helping those who have been oppressed. Conservatives criticize it as rewarding laziness. These debates exist in the PRC as well. Ann Maxwell Harris and Minglang Zhou state that “...discussions in China have...raised new questions about the effectiveness and fairness of positive policies that directly affect...minority nationalities.”¹¹⁵ In *Eurasian Crossroads*, James A. Millward claims that many Han in Xinjiang feel that preferential policies are unfair.¹¹⁶ The author’s conclusion is that in this respect, the preferential policies in Xinjiang have *created* a problem, instead of *solved* one. Scholars who have conducted field work in China often report that many Han Chinese

¹¹² HuDuhai, 2007. P. 215

¹¹³ Ann Maxwell Hill and Minglang Zhou, 2007.

¹¹⁴ Ann Maxwell Hill and Minglang Zhou, 2007. p. 10

¹¹⁵ Ann Maxwell Hill and Minglang Zhou, 2009. p. 2

¹¹⁶ James A. Millward, 2007. p. 311

view the Uyghurs as ‘dumb’ and ‘lazy.’¹¹⁷ If Han Chinese perceive the Uyghurs as receiving awards that they do not deserve, this will undoubtedly create tension, especially if they believe that Uyghurs are making gains at Han expense. The author is not arguing that preferential policies should not be implemented. The author is pointing out that affirmative action can create problems vis-à-vis Han perceptions of the Uyghurs.

For its part, the PRC claims to be implementing a successful program that promotes equality. The following is from a white paper issued by the PRC in September of 2009:

Xinjiang's primary and secondary school students have enjoyed free compulsory education. In 2008, the government granted living subsidies to all underprivileged students who live at school and exempted urban students from tuition fees during their compulsory education period. Since 2007, the state has initiated an annual budget of 129 million yuan for the education of 51,000 very poor university students...70% of whom come from ethnic minorities...the Xinjiang autonomous region government invested a total of 18.77 billion yuan in the region's education system, representing a year-on-year increase of 32.3%.¹¹⁸

That same white paper goes on to state that enrollment rates for minority children are over 99%. It touts countless other achievements, including free accommodation for minority students, cultivation of minority graduates for high level jobs, and sending promising Uyghur students abroad for further study. Consistent with other PRC

¹¹⁷ Linda Tsung, 2009. p. 84

¹¹⁸ Steady Development of Social Programs

http://www.china.org.cn/government/whitepaper/2009-09/21/content_18565913.html accessed April 18th, 2011

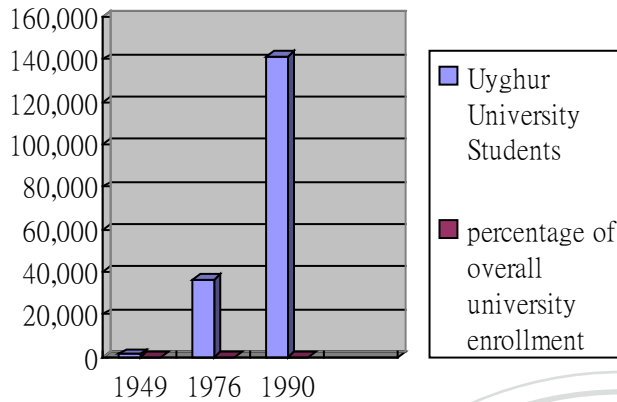
publications on this subject, the white paper also cites the ‘elimination’ of illiteracy in Xinjiang.

To be fair, impressive strides have been made in Xinjiang’s education system since 1949. When critics read the previous chapter, they likely dismiss PRC claims as pie-in-the-sky boasting. Certainly, the PRC is given to positive exaggerations that border on the absurd. Having said that, Western scholars who are generally objective also give China credit for improvements in its education system. Colin Mackerras, an Australian scholar who does not hesitate to criticize the PRC, credits the government with higher literacy rates, and expects those rates to improve in the future.¹¹⁹ Timothy Grose states that from 1982 to 1990, primary school enrollment rates among Uyghurs increased by six percent, and illiteracy rates dropped from significantly.¹²⁰ In fact, this parallels an overall improvement in minority standards of living. As we will see below, however, the PRC’s education system remains deeply flawed. We will also see that the PRC’s claims of success are exaggerated and perhaps outright false. Nevertheless, the PRC *does* deserve credit for the remarkable improvements in ethnic minority literacy rates.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Colin Mackerras, China’s Ethnic Minorities and the Middle Classes: an Overview (International Journal of Economics, 2005)

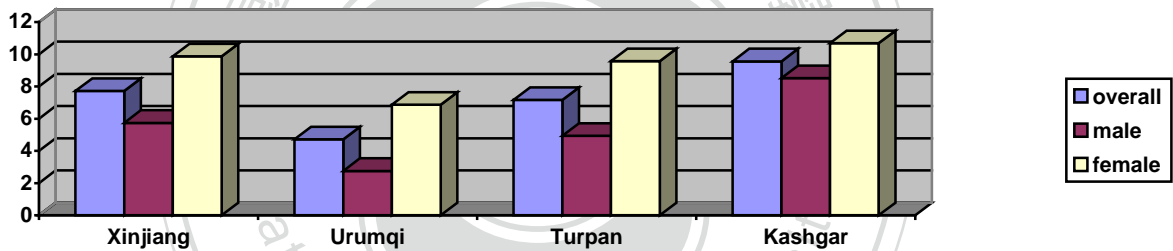
¹²⁰ Timothy Grose, 2008. p. 99

Uyghur University Enrolment



In 1949, 1,285 Uyghurs were enrolled in universities, making up less than 1% of the student body. By 1976, the number had risen to 36,578. This accounted for 5% of all university students in the PRC. By 1990, 141,767 Uyghurs were enrolled in university, still comprising about 5% of the overall number of students. (Sautman, 1997)

Illiteracy in Xinjiang for population aged 15 and over, 2000



The above table shows illiteracy percentages in various Xinjiang cities. Note that in every case, females have a significantly higher illiteracy rate than males. The information reflects all nationalities living in Xinjiang. (Stanley Toops. Demographics and Development in Xinjiang after 1949. East West Center, 2004)

Perhaps one negative aspect of the PRC's preferential policies is that it reinforces paternal attitudes among Han Chinese. By paternal attitudes the author means the notion that the Han Chinese are more civilized than minorities. Dru Gladney argues that popular media and the education system portray minorities and Han Chinese in

just this way. Minorities, he claims, are depicted as colorful and innocent. They dance and sing and smile, happy under the protective guidance of the generous and more civilized Han.¹²² As one example, he cites a state-sponsored pictorial of China's nationalities. In it, the minorities wear traditional 'colorful' costumes, and "...are almost always portrayed in natural, romantic settings, surrounded by fauna and flora. Significantly, however, the Han are represented in the same book by conservative, middle-aged men and women in an urban setting, with what is generally thought to resemble 'modern' (clothing)."¹²³ Scholars frequently remark on the so-called Han "civilizing mission" (文明化). Certainly, even when well intentioned these attitudes are racist and insulting. At their core, these ideas imply that ethnic minorities are backward and inferior. The PRC's preferential policies, even when well intentioned, run the risk of reinforcing this paternal attitude.

In an essay titled *Preferential Policies in Xinjiang*, Barry Sautman quotes a Chinese analyst. This passage is a perfect illustration of the destructive attitude the author is describing.

The government has adopted various efforts according to the special needs of each minority...the great assistance of the *relatively more advanced* Han is extremely important in speeding up the development of minorities. *Yet the Han have selflessly regarded this kind of assistance as their responsibility.* (emphasis added)¹²⁴

¹²² Dru Gladney, 1994. p. 93

¹²³ Dru Gladney, 1994. p. 97

¹²⁴ Barry Sautman, 1997. p. 6

The essay *Our Good Han Mothers* (see Literature Review) is another example of the civilizing mission mentality among many Han Chinese. All throughout the essay, the Han teachers are depicted as selflessly fighting to civilize their backward Uyghur students.

Every teacher mother had to exercise great patience when explaining simple words to these lovable youngsters [Uyghur children] – words that would seem to need no explaining but were often mysteries to these children who had grown up in nomadic families in southern Xinjiang.¹²⁵

This same essay speaks of children who did not know how to cut their fingernails until their ‘Han mother teachers’ taught them.¹²⁶ Another interesting part of the essay describes the teachers’ trips to meet the Uyghur parents. The trip is described as a bumpy and treacherous journey through the wilderness.¹²⁷ Reading it, one gets the strong sense of civilized people (the Han teachers) venturing out into the savage wilderness (areas in which the Uyghurs live). Of course, all of this is shown as being done in the name of the great civilizing project.

The author believes that the PRC has an obligation to continue and even increase preferential policies. However, notions that these policies will help the Uyghurs shed their ‘backward’ culture are destructive and must be opposed. Instead, the PRC needs to implement preferential policies on the understanding that the Uyghurs are

¹²⁵ Tao Jiaqing and Yang Xiaohua, 2010. p. 72

¹²⁶ Tao Jiaqing and Yang Xiaohua, 2010. p. 66

¹²⁷ Tao Jiaqing and Yang Xiaohua, 2010. p. 69

struggling against discrimination, and that the playing field needs to be leveled. Unfortunately, this also requires a systematic change in education of the Han themselves, and an overhaul of Han attitudes in general. These same challenges exist in the United States and elsewhere.

Despite the advances that have come about through preferential policies, there are still very serious shortcomings. In her book *Minority Languages, Education and Communities in China*, Linda Tsung makes some very disturbing observations about the educational system in Xinjiang. As was stated in the Literature Review, Tsung traveled to a school that was half minority and half Han Chinese. In other words, it was a *min kao min* (民考民) and *min kao Han* (民考漢) school together in one building. Tsung pointed out that Han Chinese children had English classes, but the Uyghur students did not.¹²⁸ Instead, the Uyghur children had Chinese class. According to Tsung, the Han principal explained this by saying that the Uyghur children “...could not even learn Mandarin.”¹²⁹ The implied argument is that Uyghur children cannot even learn Mandarin, so why should we waste an English teacher on them? Tsung also reports that there are enough English teachers for the Han students, but not for the Uyghur students. According to Tsung, Uyghur students are not given the same resources that Han students receive, and are then criticized

¹²⁸ Linda Tsung, 2009. p. 144

¹²⁹ Linda Tsung, 2009. p. 144

when they do not perform as well as their Han counterparts. Arienne M. Dwyer also points to this discrepancy: "...compared to the Chinese-language classrooms, 'minority' classrooms received half as many supplies and toys and even smaller pieces of drawing paper."¹³⁰ This of course is blatant discrimination against Uyghur children. It brings us to an interesting question of theory versus practice.

In theory, Uyghur students are given everything that they need to secure an equal education. As we have seen, the PRC subsidizes Uyghur schools, weighs admissions tests in favor of minority applicants, and gives universities a quota for the number of students they must enroll every year. Is this the same in reality? Do Uyghur students really receive an equal opportunity for education? It is the authors opinion that they do not.

Firstly, even when primary school tuition is free, Uyghur families must still pay for transportation, food, and school supplies. Timothy Grose states that these fees, "...although in some instances minimal, prevent many Uyghur children from attending school past the elementary and middle school level."¹³¹ He goes on to state that the average salary for Xinjiang farmers (of any ethnicity) is about 3,220 RMB per year.¹³² Many Uyghur families simply cannot afford the incidental costs of sending their children to school. Furthermore, when Uyghur families send a son to school,

¹³⁰ Arienne M. Dwyer, The Xinjiang Conflict: Uyghur Identity, Language Policy, and Political Discourse (East-West Center Washington, 2005) p. 54

¹³¹ Timothy Grose, 2008. p. 8

¹³² Timothy Grose, 2008. p. 9

they lose the labor that their son would provide at home. More than 80% of Uyghurs in Xinjiang are farmers.¹³³ Some Uyghur families report that they cannot afford to go without their child's labor while that child is at school.¹³⁴ Many Uyghur parents, already dealing with significant financial hardship, do not see any economic advantages in sending their children to school. Gerald Postiglione says that there is a "...lack of relevance of schooling to the everyday life in these minority communities...Schooling failed to make a direct contribution to housing in most cases."¹³⁵ We can therefore make the following conclusion: in theory, all of the tools needed to give the Uyghurs a fair shot at education do exist. In practice, however, economic hurdles are still there. These hurdles mean that equality in educational opportunity has not yet been achieved.

Another problem is the shortage of trained teachers in Xinjiang. According to Linda Tsung, Han teachers generally do not wish to live in rural areas.¹³⁶ They prefer the cities. It is therefore harder to staff minority schools with qualified teachers. Furthermore, while the government has preferential policies that are said to help students, many Uyghur *teachers* complain that they face discrimination. Tsung tells us that Uyghur teachers are required to take a Mandarin proficiency test, but Han

¹³³ Unrepresented Nations and People's Organization, <http://www.unpo.org/members/7872>, accessed April 18th, 2011

¹³⁵ Gerald A. Postiglione, 2000. p. 63

¹³⁶ Linda Tsung, 2009. p.137

teachers do not have to learn Uyghur.¹³⁷ Poor Mandarin can lead to qualified Uyghur teachers losing their jobs. This of course exacerbates the teacher shortage problem. Uyghur Human Rights Project goes so far as to say that the PRC uses Chinese proficiency testing to “...force veteran teachers out of the classroom.”¹³⁸ Regardless of whether it comes from intentional policy or an innate cultural bias, the fact remains that a shortage of qualified teachers puts Uyghur students at an even greater disadvantage. The PRC is aware of this problem. An essay written for the *Journal of Xinjiang Education Institute* also touches on it. The writer, a PRC scholar, argues that it is very difficult to get enough qualified teachers in Xinjiang.¹³⁹ The author has not seen any evidence to suggest that preferential policies are addressing this problem.

How do the Uyghurs view preferential policies? Do they feel that these policies are giving them more educational and economic opportunities? It is the author’s impression that despite subsidies put in place by the PRC, many Uyghur students still feel cheated, and consider themselves the victims of discrimination. Timothy Grose’s interviews tell us that many Uyghurs are still unhappy with the education system. Grose claims that even Uyghur university graduates have difficulty finding good jobs, usually because of language issues.

¹³⁷ Linda Tsung, 2009. pp. 137-138

¹³⁸ Uyghur Human Rights Project, p. 1 accessed May 29th, 2011

¹³⁹ 喀什地區三所學校雙語教學情況評估報告(Journal of Xinjiang Education Institute, Volume 26, No. 4. 2010) p. 19

Many Uyghurs complain...that adequate jobs in Xinjiang are scarce...in Turpan, a twenty-four year old male graduate of Xinjiang University expressed his frustrations with finding a job. Speaking nearly fluent English he explained that after nearly half a year of looking, he is still unable to find a job, and he is forced to drive tourists around Turpan...[Another man explained that his] sister graduated from a university in Urumqi and has been looking for a job for over a year.¹⁴⁰

Clearly, Uyghurs still feel marginalized, despite preferential policies. Among young Uyghurs there is still the feeling that the best jobs are reserved for the Han. Concessions *are* being made. For example, a certain number of government positions are set aside for Uyghurs. However, the oil industry in Xinjiang has no such quotas. Ildiko Beller-Hann states that "...the Uyghur resent the well-known fact that the developing oil industry of the province (ie: Xinjiang) tends to employ only Han brought in from the overpopulated areas of China."¹⁴¹ This is significant, because the oil industry provides some of the best jobs in the region. Beller-Hann goes on to say that job discrimination is one of the biggest grievances that Uyghurs have. While the focus of this thesis is education and not employment, the author still feels that this is a relevant point. If Uyghurs feel that their education is not preparing them for useful jobs, they are bound to become more resentful and feel more alienated. This could lead to greater trouble. High education and low employment are a bad mix.

¹⁴⁰ Timothy Grose, 2008. p. 12

¹⁴¹ Ildiko Beller-Hann, 2002. p. 65

The situation is made more difficult by the huge influx of Han immigrants. The PRC government has encouraged a steady flood of Han immigrants to settle in Xinjiang. The strategy is to tighten the center's grip on the border region by settling it with more Chinese. The influx of Han Chinese into Xinjiang has been nothing short of incredible. In 1949, Han Chinese made up just six percent of Xinjiang's population.¹⁴² Between 1990 and 2000, the Han population of Xinjiang grew by more than 30%. By 2000, the Han population stood at over 40% (7.49 million).¹⁴³ This figure does not include unregistered workers and migrants. Their number may top 800,000.¹⁴⁴ In researching this part of the thesis, the author found it very difficult to obtain reliable figures on the Han population of Xinjiang between 1949 and 2010. The author's impression is that because Han migration is such a sensitive topic, the PRC government may be reluctant to provide concrete statistics.

Han migration policy has led to a great deal of tension between the Xinjiang Uyghurs and the Han Chinese settlers. Stanley Toops states that immigration can "...exacerbate competition for scarce land and resources, and therefore enflame Uyghur passions further."¹⁴⁵ In fact, Han migration is one of the most commonly cited sources of tension in Xinjiang. Many Uyghurs feel that it is overwhelming their culture and turning them into second class citizens. Some even claim that the

¹⁴² David Strawbridge, Challenges of a Bilingual Education (Save, the Children) p. 1

¹⁴³ Nicolas Becquelin, 2004. p. 55

¹⁴⁴ Nicolas Becquelin, 2004. p. 55

¹⁴⁵ Stanley Toops, 2004. p. 2

ultimate PRC strategy is to wipe out Uyghur culture once and for all. In this case, Han migration appears to make Uyghurs feel that regardless of the preferential treatment they receive, realities outside of the classroom will render these advantages moot. Why place your faith in the government's education system if Han 'outsiders' are taking all the good jobs?

Another problem that the PRC's preferential policies fail to address is cultural discrimination. Language education will be discussed in the next chapter. At this point it is prudent to touch on the issue of religion in schools. While religion in schools is not directly related to the issue of preferential policies, it is another important example of the differences between theory and practice. Almost all Uyghurs are Muslims. As the PRC is officially an atheist nation, this naturally puts the two sides at odds. Officially, the PRC claims to respect and preserve all religions, including Islam. A Chinese white paper states that "The right to freedom of religious belief for various ethnic groups is fully respected, and all normal religious activities are protected by law."¹⁴⁶ This statement is supported by some actions. There are mosques all over Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang. One academic, who traveled to a small Xinjiang town, noted that even in the Chinese section of the town, he saw mosques.¹⁴⁷ However, the PRC government's main internal concern is ethnic

¹⁴⁶ Upholding Equality and Unity among Ethnic Groups, and Freedom of Religious Belief <http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/20030526/8.htm> accessed April 18, 2011

¹⁴⁷ Ildiko Beller-Hann, 2004. p. 61

separatism, and it tends to view religion as a dangerous source of separatist sentiments.

When we look closer, we learn that religion in Xinjiang, while nominally respected, is also monitored, controlled, and often repressed. In the 1990s the PRC adopted a relatively open and pluralistic approach toward religion, but unrest, perceived disloyalty, and the September 11th attacks have led to a PRC crackdown on Islam in Xinjiang.¹⁴⁸ For example, Uyghur males under the age of 18 are not allowed to attend mosques in Xinjiang.¹⁴⁹ Wenfang Tang and Gaochao He are two scholars who traveled to Xinjiang in 2005. They paint a very disturbing picture in which Islam is systematically repressed in Xinjiang schools. The following is from a sign that they photographed inside a teachers' school. The sign read (in Mandarin and Uyghur):

- Do not propagate religion.
- Do not believe and practice religion.
- Do not wear religious costumes.
- Do not say anything to damage national unity.
- Do not say anything to hurt national unity.
- Do not take part in separatist activities.
- Do not spread feudal superstition.¹⁵⁰

This clearly reflects the PRC government's distrust of religion. Personally, the author finds it interesting that the sign includes warnings against both religion and ethnic separatism. This seems to confirm that the PRC sees a link between the two.

¹⁴⁸ Michael Frederick, *Uyghur Representations of Xinjiang Realities*, in *Situating the Uyghurs Between China and Central Asia* (Ashgate Publishing, 2007) p. 132

¹⁴⁹ Tim Grose, 2008. p. 127

¹⁵⁰ Tang Wenfang and He Gaochao, 2010. p. 25

From the PRC's white papers, it is clear that the central government wants to be perceived as welcoming the Uyghurs into the motherland and giving them opportunities. However, if the PRC continues to repress religion, Uyghurs will likely continue to feel that their way of life is under attack. The author does not think that throwing money at the problem (ie: preferential policies) is going to help the situation.

Another indication of Uyghur dissatisfaction is the rate at which they drop out of school. It is difficult to know the exact rates of dropouts because, as Gerald Postiglione tells us, the data is not always reliable.¹⁵¹ However, he tells us that nearly 30 percent of educators in minority regions are not satisfied with dropout rates.¹⁵² He argues that many minority parents see schooling as 'useless,' because it does not help in their everyday lives. From this information we can conclude that even with preferential policies in place, Uyghur parents are not satisfied with the PRC's school system.

Young Uyghurs continue to feel frustrated by lower education and lack of job opportunities. With the exception of suspiciously optimistic reports from the PRC, everything the author has read suggests that young Uyghurs feel the system is weighted against them. The prevailing attitude among young Uyghurs still appears

¹⁵¹ Gerald A. Postiglione, 2000. p. 54

¹⁵² Gerald A. Postiglione, 2000. p. 65

to be that they are second class citizens, being pushed out and exploited by the dominant Han. As we have seen, even with preferential policies in place, economic realities still make it hard, if not impossible, for Uyghur families to pay for school. Furthermore, Linda Tsung tells us that Chinese schools (*min kao Han* schools) are better equipped and receive more resources.¹⁵³ It is therefore not surprising that Timothy Grose and other scholars report that Uyghurs feel the system is unfair.

3.1 Conclusion

So far, preferential policies have not helped integrate the Uyghurs into the PRC. This is not to say that the policies have been useless. On the contrary, they appear to have had some positive effects. We can see this through a dramatic increase in literacy rates, school enrollment, and the number of schools in Xinjiang. However, preferential policies have failed to overcome certain realities. Firstly, all the free education in the world will not satisfy the Uyghurs if there are no good jobs available after they graduate. If Han migration continues and ‘outsiders’ take all of the good jobs, preferential policies will do nothing, and resentment will continue to simmer. Secondly, preferential policies will not help if Uyghurs continue to feel that Han students receive better treatment. If Han students have English class and Uyghur students do not, how will Uyghurs believe that preferential policies are sincere?

¹⁵³ Linda Tsung, 2009. p. 140

Thirdly, preferential policies do not solve other problems discussed in this chapter, such as religious discrimination and racist attitudes of some Han teachers.

If conscientiously applied, these policies *could* help in the future. As we have already seen, the largest complaint among Uyghur students is not religion or language, but a lack of good jobs. Right now, the PRC claims that it streamlines minority students into technical positions that are waiting for them upon graduation. While this may be true, complaints from Uyghurs tell us that not enough is being done. However, the ray of light for the PRC is that if it *can* find jobs for the Uyghurs, it will go a long way towards making them content citizens of China.

The PRC government cannot simply throw money at this problem and then publish white papers that only focus on achievements and ignore shortcomings. By publishing pie-in-the-sky reports with flowery language, the PRC is only proving that it is unwilling to be fair and objective. Preferential policies must be part of a larger plan that deals with issues of Han migration, cultural respect, and economic equality.

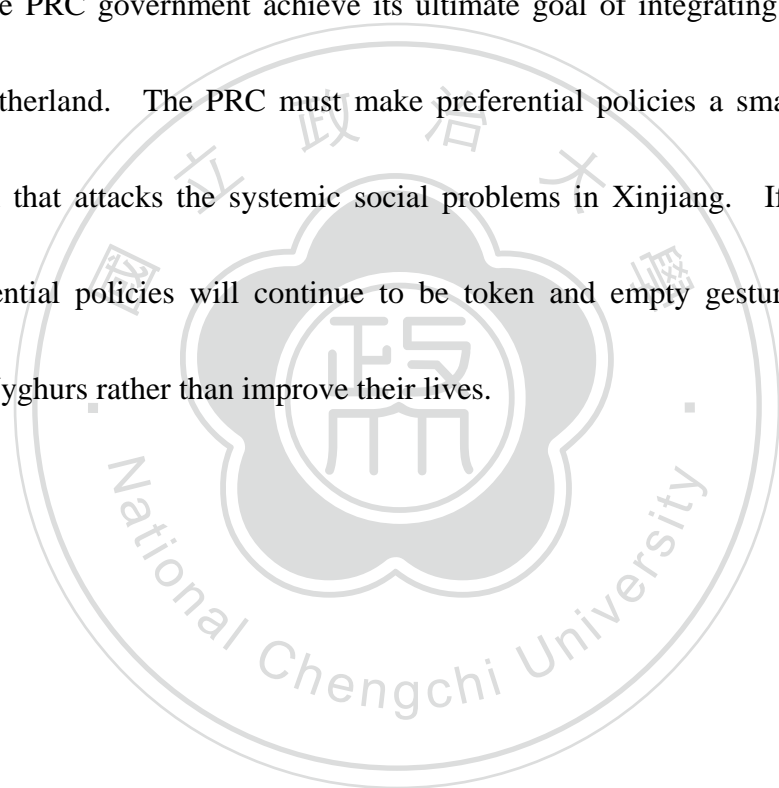
The author thinks that the following steps will go a long way toward making preferential policies more effective.

- The PRC must provide trained, skilled teachers for minority schools. If Han teachers are reluctant to live in the ‘countryside,’ the PRC can solve that problem by training more Uyghur teachers.
- The PRC must ensure that minority schools have the same resources that

Han schools have.

- The PRC must find a way to respect Islam in minority schools. If Uyghur students and parents feel that they face religious discrimination, preferential policies will not make them happy.

If these goals are accomplished, preferential policies could perhaps work. They could help the Uyghurs by giving them more economic opportunity. They could also help the PRC government achieve its ultimate goal of integrating the Uyghurs into the motherland. The PRC must make preferential policies a small part of an overall plan that attacks the systemic social problems in Xinjiang. If it does not, then preferential policies will continue to be token and empty gestures, meant to pacify the Uyghurs rather than improve their lives.





Chapter 4. Language Education

This chapter will explore the PRC's language education policies, and the effects that these policies are having on the Uyghurs. What strategies is the PRC using to spread Mandarin among its Uyghurs? What language options do Uyghur students and their parents have? Are the PRC's official statements of respecting language genuine? Are there any differences between theory (the PRC's pledges of respecting language) and practice (what actually goes on in the classroom)? What are the PRC's ultimate goals? How do Uyghurs view current education trends? Are the PRC's language policies integrating the Uyghurs and making them viable citizens of China proper, or are they alienating them?

Language education is vitally important to any government's attempts to integrate its minorities into mainstream society. Arienne M. Dwyer states that

Though language policy rarely makes headlines, it is a central tool in national consolidation, and permeates all aspects of society...It shapes the media, education system, and provides a rallying point for or against ethnic identity.¹⁵⁴

Language is strongly linked to ethnic and national identity. It is a sensitive issue for several reasons. People often value their native language as a link to their culture. Taiwan is a good example. Since 1949 the ruling Kuomintang Party (KMT) placed a strong emphasis on teaching Mandarin to the local population

¹⁵⁴ Arienne M. Dwyer, 2005. p. 6

(*benshen ren*). This was vital to the KMT's strategy of "sinicizing" Taiwan. Although the details differ, the same thing is happening in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Mongolia.

Since the establishment of the PRC in 1949, the central government's language policy in minority education has gone through several phases. Policies towards the Uyghurs have always reflected political realities. Internal issues, particularly domestic unrest, have influenced the PRC's attitudes. International relations, particularly with the USSR in the 20th century, have also shaped PRC policy a great deal.¹⁵⁵ Even with the demise of the Soviet Union, the author believes that the trend of linguistic policy reflecting political realities continues today.

In 1949, the PRC adopted a relatively open and tolerant approach towards minority languages. Arienne M. Dwyer states that "Shortly after the inception of the People's Republic of China, language policies in China's border regions was responsive to local conditions and arguably one of the more flexible in the world."¹⁵⁶

This openness, however, did not last long. The Great Leap Forward brought about a radicalization that ended linguistic plurality. The Cultural Revolution produced even greater intolerance of minority customs and language, which were attacked by the red guards as feudal. A monolingual approach was stressed that lasted until the

¹⁵⁵ James A. Millward, 2007. p. 235

¹⁵⁶ Arienne M. Dwyer, 2005. p. ix

end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976. The lack of a stable policy that respects minority languages has led to Uyghur distrust of the PRC's current intentions.

The PRC's treatment of written Uyghur script has been no less chaotic. James Millward tells us that from 1949 to 1984, the PRC changed the Uyghur writing system three times (see literature review). Consistent with the rest of the PRC's language policies, the writing system seems to have changed with the political times. For example, when Sino-Soviet relationships were warm, the PRC used a Uyghur writing system similar to the Turkic system used in the USSR. After relations soured, the PRC shifted to its own, distinct system.¹⁵⁷ Here again we see an example of the PRC's language policies creating distrust among the Uyghurs. Some scholars report that many Uyghurs believe these inconsistencies were introduced to create a rift between Uyghur generations.¹⁵⁸ The author can think of no way to verify this suspicion. It does, however, demonstrate the severe mistrust against which the PRC is struggling.

According to the law of the PRC, all minority languages are taught and respected.

A PRC white paper states this in lengthy but clear terms:

[PRC laws]...enshrine in legal form the freedom and right of ethnic minorities to use and develop their own spoken and written languages. Whether in the fields of judicature, administration, education, etc., or in political and social life, the spoken and written languages of ethnic

¹⁵⁷ James A. Millward, 2007, pp. 234-236

¹⁵⁸ Dru Gladney, 1994. p. 197

minorities are broadly used.¹⁵⁹

This statement is consistent with others issued by the PRC. The running theme is encouragement of ethnic cultural expression, as long as it does not stir up the wrong kind of nationalism. Fei Xiaotong calls this "...ethnic pluralism within the organic configuration of the Chinese nation."¹⁶⁰ Certainly the PRC wishes to be seen as respecting ethnic nationalities, but the central government has shown itself anxious to control all cultural expression. The PRC no doubt prefers the kind of ethnic expression described by Dru Gladney. This is harmless cultural expression, done under the umbrella of the PRC. It is the author's impression that the government walks the same fine line with language. PRC policymakers must know that if they force Mandarin on the Uyghurs too much, they will receive resentment and resistance. The author thinks that they would like to push Mandarin on the Uyghurs, but do it in a way so as not to seem like bullies.

Currently, most Uyghurs seem willing to admit that Mandarin is a must for finding work. A PRC survey done in Xinjiang supports this. The survey asked three questions of University students: 1. Is it easier to get a job if you can speak Mandarin?; 2. If you are fluent in both languages, is it easier to get promoted?; 3. If you are fluent in both languages, can you make more money? The essay states that

¹⁵⁹ <http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/20030526/8.htm>, accessed April 18th, 2011

¹⁶⁰ Zhao Zhenzhou, (*China's ethnic dilemma, Chinese Education and Society*, 2010) p. 3

respondents answered ‘yes’ to all of these questions.¹⁶¹ Uyghurs are clearly aware of the need to learn Mandarin.

As to be expected, there is a large chorus of voices criticizing the PRC’s policy. Critics charge that the PRC’s bilingual policy is a myth, meant to disguise the real agenda of cultural genocide. Uyghur Human Rights Project makes the following accusations. “Employing the term “bilingual” education, the PRC is, in reality, implementing a monolingual Chinese language education system that undermines the linguistic basis of Uyghur culture.”¹⁶² The same report goes on to accuse the PRC of:

- Removing Uyghur students from their cultural environment
- Eliminating Uyghur as the language of instruction in Xinjiang
- Not giving Uyghur parents the right to choose what language their children study
- Increasing tension between Uyghurs and Han Chinese

While the author cannot say that the PRC is intentionally committing cultural genocide, there are certainly some troubling problems with the language education system in Xinjiang. As we have seen with preferential policies, there is a difference

¹⁶¹ 祁佛, 新疆和田地區雙語教育實踐成果綜述(Education & Teaching Research, 2008) pp. 115-116

¹⁶² Uyghur Human Rights Project, p. 1

between theory and practice. In theory, minority language rights are guaranteed by PRC law. In practice, the truth appears to be quite different. Greater realities outside the classroom harm efforts to implement bilingual education. These include financial issues, racism, Han chauvinism, and Han migration into Xinjiang. As the author will attempt to prove, bilingual education is not making the Uyghurs content citizens of the PRC. Instead, pressure to learn Chinese appears to be alienating many Uyghurs, making them more hostile to the central government.

In theory, Uyghur parents have two options. They can either send their children to minority schools (*min kao min*) or Chinese schools (*min kao Han*). In minority schools, the minority language is the medium of instruction. Chinese is taught as a second language, starting in the third year of primary school. Students must take a Chinese proficiency test every two years. They may take college entrance exams in their own language.¹⁶³ All of the students in *min kao min* schools are minorities. The benefits of minority schools are that students can learn in their native language, and thus avoid extra pressures that would come with learning in a difficult second language. Furthermore, in minority schools, students remain closer to their native culture and identity.

The other option for Uyghur students are Chinese schools (*min kao Han*). These

¹⁶³ Timothy Grose, 2008. pp. 122-123

resemble more traditional Han schools. In *min kao Han* schools, Mandarin is the medium of instruction. Teachers are usually minorities, but they are not allowed to use their native language in the classroom.¹⁶⁴ *Min kao Han* schools have both minority and Han students. The advantage of Chinese schools is economic. Students learn Mandarin and thus have better chances of finding jobs after graduation.

This brings us to a very sad and troubling option for Uyghur parents. They are being forced to choose between their cultural identity and their economic futures. Linda Tsung reports that Uyghur parents who send their children to Chinese schools do so out of economic concerns, while those who send their children to minority schools do so out of cultural pride.¹⁶⁵ Uyghurs who studied in minority schools complained that their Mandarin was not good enough to help them find jobs. Timothy Grose, who interviewed Uyghurs in Xinjiang on this subject, quoted several young Uyghurs as saying that without Chinese ability, their chances of finding a job were very low.¹⁶⁶ The choice for Uyghur parents, then, seems to be obvious: send children to Chinese schools, so they have superior Mandarin and hence better job prospects. However, it is not that simple. Many Uyghur parents feel that by sending their children to *min kao Han* schools, they are alienating their children from

¹⁶⁴ Timothy Grose, 2008. pp. 122-123

¹⁶⁵ Linda Tsung, 2009. pp. 141-143

¹⁶⁶ Timothy Grose, 2008. p. 128

their own cultures. Justin Rudelsen and William Jankowiak state that “The decision of whether to send Uyghur children to Mandarin language or Uyghur language schools is the most difficult and painful facet of Uyghur acculturation in Xinjiang.”¹⁶⁷ There can be little surprise, therefore, that Uyghurs feel their culture is under attack. Likewise, there can be little surprise that Uyghurs resent their current situation. If Uyghurs feel that in order to find good jobs they must sacrifice their cultural identity, anger and unrest are inevitable results.

A survey in the PRC, conducted by a PRC scholar, reveals some interesting links between language and self identification. The goal of the survey was to discover if Uyghurs identified more with their Uyghur ethnicity or their Chinese nationality. The study finds that the more Uyghurs can speak Chinese, the more they identify with the PRC. Conversely, those who do not speak Chinese well feel a weaker connection to China.¹⁶⁸ The author recommends that the central government push Chinese on the Uyghurs more, and start Chinese language education at a young age for the students.

The trend now appears to be that more and more Uyghur parents are choosing *min kao Han* schools for their children. David Strawbridge states “There are now

¹⁶⁷ Justin Rudelsen and William Jankowiak, 2004. p. 313

¹⁶⁸ 常宝宁, 新疆南疆地區青少年國家認同影響因素實証研究 (2010)

declining numbers of children attending ethnic schools...”¹⁶⁹ This creates problems within Uyghur communities. If a Uyghur family sends their child to a *min kao Han* school, what will their peers think? The author’s impression is that they will be perceived as abandoning their culture. This can create divisions with Uyghur communities, and erode Uyghur solidarity at a time when it is sorely needed. Linda Tsung reports that Uyghur academics who studied in minority schools feel that those who studied in Chinese schools look down on them.¹⁷⁰ Conversely, she reports that academics who studied in *min kao Han* schools complained that they faced resentment from colleagues who had studied in minority schools.¹⁷¹ Consequently, there appears to be a growing divide between Uyghurs who have learned Mandarin and those who have not. Some Uyghurs who have learned Mandarin scorn those who have not, and look down on them. Those who remain close to their culture can become angry at their colleagues who have assimilated. Of course, the previous statement is a vast oversimplification. Feelings are far more complex and varied than that. Nevertheless, the author does think it illustrates the growing divide among Uyghurs, and the resentment created by that divide.

As we have already seen, there are benefits to both Chinese and minority schools.

Uyghur students in Chinese schools learn Mandarin. Those in minority schools

¹⁶⁹ David Strawbridge, p. 3

¹⁷⁰ Linda Tsung, 2009. p. 145

¹⁷¹ Linda Tsung, 2009. pp. 149-152

retain their cultural identity. However, children in either school face difficulties in the classroom. Linda Tsung reports that Uyghur students in Chinese classes face difficulties because they are studying in a second language.¹⁷² She reports that Uyghur academics who studied in Chinese schools felt uncomfortable in class because they constantly had to catch up with their Han classmates:

Since they [Uyghur students in *min kao Han* schools] lacked Chinese when they entered school as children, they faced serious difficulties in learning and were often scared. They were under constant pressure of having to work harder simply to avoid falling behind Chinese classmates with whom they were expected to compete. Some even said that with those experiences, they “lost their childhood.”¹⁷³

Certainly, Uyghur students who study with mostly Han classmates in an all-Mandarin environment are bound to deal with feelings of inferiority. When the author taught English as a second language in Taiwan, he noticed that children who struggled with English were often self-conscious of their problems. A Uyghur student in a Chinese school would not only deal with problems of language, but would also be a racial minority. It is no surprise, then, that some of Linda Tsung’s interviewees reported being picked on by their Han classmates. Therefore, sending Uyghur students to Chinese schools does not seem to be a means of effective integration. Instead, it seems to alienate Uyghur students by making them feel inferior to their Han counterparts. Furthermore, placing Uyghur students in Han

¹⁷² Linda Tsung, 2009. p. 140

¹⁷³ Linda Tsung, 2009. p. 144

schools could give the Hans negative views of the Uyghurs. Impressionable Han children see Uyghur students struggling in class. At a young age, they would not understand the unfair challenges that Uyghur students face. They would only see that many or all of the Uyghur students struggle. This could help to enforce racist attitudes.

There is also the practical problem of communication. A PRC essay, written in Chinese by two Uyghur academics, states that few Han teachers can speak Uyghur, and few Uyghur students can understand their teachers well.¹⁷⁴ Another PRC survey, conducted in a middle school in He Tian (和田) found that 96.3 % of the teachers spoke Uyghur as their first language. Teachers who mastered the four basic skills in Mandarin – reading, speaking, writing and listening – numbered 27.3%. Twenty-two percent could speak and read Mandarin, but could not write it well. Twelve percent could speak Mandarin, but not read or write it.¹⁷⁵ Certainly, the PRC cannot expect ethnic minorities to learn Mandarin when the teachers themselves are not fluent.

Racism is a serious problem in PRC classrooms. PRC white papers can talk of respect for minority students, and PRC academics can publish rosy reports like *Our*

¹⁷⁴ 依皮提哈尔·实实提，吾守尔·斯拉木，面向新疆雙語教學的遠程教學系統的設計馬實現 (Journal of Chinese Information Processing. Volume 24, No. 4. 2010) p. 88

¹⁷⁵ 祁伟，和田地區中小學維漢雙語教育調查(Education & Teaching Research, 2007) pp. 123-124

Good Han Mothers. The fact remains that in the classroom, students still cope with racism from their Han teachers and classmates. As we have already seen, Han chauvinism leads to attitudes that minority culture is backward and inferior.¹⁷⁶ Linda Tsung also reports troubling scenes in which Uyghur students struggle with Mandarin, and then face ridicule from their teachers. The following dialogue is a perfect, if unsettling, example. In this dialogue, a Han Chinese teacher quizzes a Uyghur student's Mandarin, and then belittles the student for failing to answer correctly.

Teacher: Aili (a student) is very bright. He reads it very well.
No mistakes. (to another student) Maimaiti, you read it again.
Student: *Xingei guoqing de liwu.*
Teacher: You have made many mistakes. This character is *xian*, not *xin*. Did you practice it yesterday?
Student: Yes, I did.
Teacher: Maimaiti is not very bright...¹⁷⁷

This brings us to a troubling double standard in the PRC's so-called bilingual education program. As many scholars point out, Uyghur students and teachers must learn Mandarin, but Han students and teachers do not have to learn Uyghur. This arrangement is bound to breed resentment among Uyghurs. There is already resentment in the Uyghur community at the increasing number of Han 'outsiders.' On top of this, the Uyghurs are compelled to learn Han, but virtually no Han Chinese learn Uyghur.¹⁷⁸ It can

¹⁷⁷ Linda Tsung, 2009. p. 143-144

¹⁷⁸ Arienne M. Dwyer, 2005. p. 33

hardly be surprising then that many Uyghurs feel they are being wiped out and assimilated, rather than incorporated into China as a distinct minority group.

Because Uyghur students have to learn Mandarin, they have fewer opportunities to learn English. Timothy Grose interviewed one young Uyghur woman who spent a great deal of time learning Mandarin and so did not have enough time to learn English. “She explained that because during high school and her first year at university she concentrated on learning Chinese, she was unable to properly study English.”¹⁷⁹ Grose goes on to state that the young woman’s English was not as good as her classmates’. The same problem of not having enough qualified teachers again becomes an issue. As Gerald Postiglione states, few qualified teachers are willing to live and work in rural areas.¹⁸⁰ Therefore there are not enough people to teach Mandarin to Uyghur students. This creates a sad and wholly unfair cycle. Uyghur students do not have qualified Chinese teachers, and so their Mandarin is often poor. Their poor Chinese enforces racist attitudes among some Han observers, who decide that because the Uyghurs ‘can’t learn Mandarin,’ they could never hope to learn English. Therefore many Uyghurs enter the workforce with poor English *and* Mandarin.

¹⁷⁹ Timothy Grose, 2008. pp. 9-10

¹⁸⁰ Gerald Postiglione, 2000. p. 65

An essay in the *Journal of Xinjiang Education Institute* talks about an experiment at one middle school in Xinjiang. In technical subjects, Mandarin was the medium of instruction. In the humanities, Uyghur was used. The result was that Uyghur students did not understand the classes taught in Mandarin, and so tended to lose interest in those subjects.¹⁸¹ As technical subjects often lead to the best jobs, this can exacerbate problems of unemployment.

Linda Tsung reports that among the people she interviewed, Uyghur graduates from Chinese schools plan to send their children to minority schools. She also reports that Uyghur graduates of minority schools plan to send their children to Chinese schools.¹⁸² This is the best evidence that both paths for Uyghur children are flawed. If graduates from both Chinese and minority schools have no faith in the educations they received, something must be wrong.

As long as the massive influx of Han migrants into Xinjiang continues, it will always be economically wiser for the Uyghurs to learn Mandarin, even at the expense of their mother tongue. Certainly, for upward mobility in the PRC, fluent Mandarin is a must. Ma Rong, a well known PRC scholar on language, says that “If learning English allows people to go anywhere in the world, then learning Chinese allows

¹⁸¹ 喀什地區三所學校雙語教學情況評估報告(Journal of Xinjiang Education Institute, 2010) pp. 18-20

people to go anywhere in China.”¹⁸³ This is another example of outside problems making the PRC’s conciliatory gestures useless. As we’ve seen, the huge number of Han Chinese in Xinjiang made preferential policies less effective, because almost all of the good jobs went to Han immigrants. In this case, the influx of Han immigrants makes Mandarin infinitely more useful than Uyghur. If the PRC wishes to make its bilingual programs more than just a token gesture, it must let Uyghur flourish outside of the classroom. The Uyghur language must retain its relevance in Xinjiang workplaces. Otherwise, Uyghurs will have no choice but to learn Mandarin, at the expense of their cultural identity. While this may be what the PRC wants, in the long run it will create resentment and instability.

Regardless of what the PRC says, and regardless of the token gestures it makes, the signs do not look good for the Uyghur language. After reading countless sources on the subject, the author’s impression is that the PRC is systematically trying to turn Xinjiang into a monolingual state. Arienne M. Dwyer’s essay, *The Xinjiang Conflict*, details the methodical steps that the PRC is taking against the Uyghur language. Her arguments are very persuasive. She depicts the time since 1949 as a “...long-term trend towards mono-lingualism,” and points to the abolishment of Uyghur in Xinjiang University as the “final step.”¹⁸⁴ Prior to 2002, the medium of

¹⁸³ Ma Rong, *China’s Education for Ethnic Minorities* (Chinese Education and Society, Volume 40, No. 2, 2007) p. 2

¹⁸⁴ Arienne M. Dwyer, 2005. pp. 55-56

instruction at Xinjiang University was Uyghur. In 2002, the medium instruction was changed to Mandarin in all classes except those that dealt specifically with minority studies. The home page of Xinjiang University's web site is entirely in Mandarin, except for a Uyghur slogan written in the upper right hand corner.¹⁸⁵ Evidence suggests that the PRC is in fact supplanting Uyghur with Mandarin.

4.1 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to determine whether or not the PRC's language policies have helped integrate Uyghurs into China proper. The author's conclusion is that they have not. The evidence suggests that the PRC's bilingual policies are at best ineffective, and at worst a disguise for the more sinister plan of making Xinjiang a monolingual, monocultural province of China.

The PRC's heavy handed policies are not integrating the Uyghurs. Instead, they appear to be angering and alienating them. If the PRC continues on its current path, it may cause that which it is trying to avoid: it may make the Uyghurs more prone to rebellious activity, rather than more docile. Arienne Dwyer states that the

PRC's attempt to marginalize language

...only served to reinforce both Uyghur nationalism and small separatist movements, with the potential to undermine the territorial integrity of the PRC and the Chinese effort to build a modern Chinese nation.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Xinjiang University Web Site <http://www.xju.edu.cn/> accessed April 18, 2011

¹⁸⁶ Arienne M. Dwyer, 2005. p. 14

The author agrees entirely with this analysis. The author believes that if the PRC tries to dilute the Uyghur language, Uyghurs will continue to resent the central government.

How much Mandarin are Uyghur students learning? Are they becoming fluent to the extent that PRC policymakers would like them to be? Of course, it's difficult to answer this question. A survey of three Xinjiang schools, conducted by PRC analysts, sheds some light on this issue. The author points out that the emphasis lies too much on textbooks, and not enough on practical abilities outside the classroom. As a result, even students who do well on tests may not have acceptable speaking abilities. Finally, these students' parents are rarely fluent in Mandarin. When the kids go home, they revert to Uyghur.¹⁸⁷ While it is difficult to get an accurate idea of Mandarin levels in the PRC, certainly the government is still facing a great deal of challenges.

If the PRC wishes to use its language policies to integrate the Uyghurs into the PRC, then a massive overhaul is required. The following changes could be beneficial for both the PRC and the Uyghurs.

¹⁸⁷喀什地區三所學校雙語教學情況評估報告(Journal of Xinjiang Education Institute, 2010)

1. Don't try to replace the Uyghur language with Mandarin. Instead, allow Uyghur to remain a viable and useful language.

The author does not believe PRC claims that it is respecting Uyghur language and allowing it to flourish. Instead, the author believes that the PRC's seemingly generous language policies mask its real plans of cultural assimilation. The PRC views Xinjiang as a 'problem' area. Its solution to this problem is to overwhelm Uyghur language and culture. It is attempting this by pouring Han immigrants into the area, and supplanting the Uyghur language with Mandarin. This is not going to work. Instead, Uyghurs will continue to resist. The author agrees with Dwyer's claim that "Uyghurs have perceived the changes to monolingual instruction as an attack; and this perception has fostered the very identity polarization that Beijing would like to avoid."¹⁸⁸ The Uyghurs continue to view the Han immigrants as a threat. The PRC government must give them reason to believe otherwise.

If the PRC takes a more respectful attitude towards the Uyghur language, they may find their goals of integration easier to obtain. If the PRC changes its approach and makes Uyghurs distinct but equal members of the Chinese nation, Uyghurs may respond more positively. The PRC approach cannot be to steamroll Uyghur culture and language. It must employ a friendlier, more respectful policy.

¹⁸⁸ Arienne M. Dwyer, 2005. p. 57

2. Require Han teachers to learn Uyghur

From what the author has read, he believes that many Han teachers would laugh at this suggestion. However, a common source of resentment is the fact that Uyghur students and teachers must learn Mandarin, but Han teachers and students do not have to learn Uyghur. Right now, the testing system is biased in favor of the Han. There is a Han proficiency test, but no Uyghur proficiency test. This implies that Han is a more important language than Uyghur. Certain PRC scholars, such as Ma Rong, suggest that this is inevitable. The author submits that it does not have to be. The author finds it absurd that immigrants into Xinjiang are forcing the locals to learn Mandarin but do not bother to learn Uyghur themselves. It's no wonder that the Uyghurs are unhappy. Teaching Uyghur to Han Chinese teachers would be a wonderful gesture. It would show the Uyghurs that they are on equal footing with the Han Chinese. It would demonstrate that the PRC has gone past the antiquated and racist ideas of the 'civilizing mission' and great Han chauvinism.

3. Give Uyghur students the same resources that Han students receive.

Preferential policies are a good start, but Han students still receive more than their Uyghur counterparts. In order for Uyghur students to succeed, they must have the same resources than Han students have. This includes Mandarin teachers and English teachers. It is not fair to give Uyghur students inferior resources and then

blame them for not succeeding. This cycle will only increase Uyghur frustration.

4. Listen to Uyghur complaints

As with the issues concerning preferential policies, it seems that the PRC is not interested in hearing Uyghur grievances. Instead, the government produces an endless string of white papers and statements that tout achievements and ignore shortcomings. By claiming complete harmony and dismissing complaints as the rumblings of a few troublemakers, the PRC is only making the problems worse. To be fair, certain scholars within the PRC have proven themselves to be open-minded and analytical. These include Ma Rong and Lui Jihua. The PRC must listen to the grievances of its citizens and the suggestions of its analysts, and then act accordingly.

5. End Han and minority schools

In researching this essay, the author tried to understand the reasons behind separating children into Han and minority schools. The logic appears to be that minorities and Han Chinese can maintain their distinct identities. To me, however, it seems like racial segregation. Of course, the author is from the USA, a country in which racial segregation is a very sensitive issue. The author brings American sensibilities that may not be suited to this issue. Having said that, the author cannot help but think that separation encourages mistrust, resentment, and misunderstandings. The author sees no practical need for separating Uyghur children from Han children,

any more than he sees the need for separating white children from black children in the United States. Furthermore, by separating the schools, the PRC can allocate different amounts of money to each. If children are studying together, a Uyghur student would, in theory, have the same opportunities as a Han student.

The PRC's current language policies are failing to integrate the Uyghurs into China proper. By supplanting Uyghur language and culture, the PRC is creating tension and thus harming its goal of integration. Only by elevating the Uyghur language to the same level as Mandarin will the PRC successfully integrate the Uyghurs. The PRC must first treat the Uyghurs as equals. If the Uyghurs believe that the PRC is treating them fairly, they may become loyal and productive citizens. If the PRC's current policies and attitudes do not change, the Uyghurs will continue to resist integration, rather than accept it.



Chapter 5. History Education

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the content of history textbooks in the PRC.

What are young Uyghurs learning in the classroom? What version of history is the PRC trying to present? How accurate is this history? Why is the PRC trying so hard to sell its official version of history to the Uyghurs? Finally, is the PRC's version of history convincing Uyghurs that they belong in China?

As is true everywhere, history education is immensely important in the PRC. It allows the government to legitimize its rule. It lets them emphasize the benefits of Chinese leadership, while downplaying or ignoring the drawbacks. In presenting its official version of history, the PRC can draw attention to its past good deeds, while whitewashing its crimes. As we will see, PRC histories certainly focus on the positives of Chinese-minority interactions, while saying very little of the conflicts.

History can be a sensitive issue in any country. In the United States there is still a great deal of controversy over depictions of slavery, the settling of the Americas, and the USA's role in the world. In China, however, history and its interpretation is more sensitive than in most places. We saw this in 2004, when Japan published a textbook that many felt glossed over Japanese crimes in the Second World War. After the release of the book, "Massive anti-Japanese demonstrations quickly erupted in dozens of Chinese cities spanning over 20 provinces, and even escalated to violent

attacks on Japanese nationals and diplomatic stations.”¹⁸⁹ The author is not suggesting that Chinese anger over this incident was not justified. He is citing it as proof that in the PRC, history is a sensitive and emotional issue. Another example can be seen in the PRC’s reaction to the discovery of the Tarim mummies. Caucasoid mummies were discovered in Xinjiang in the 1990s. Some activists seized on this event as evidence that Xinjiang was not ethnically Chinese. The PRC reacted by publicly burning books that made such suggestions.

Xinjiang independence groups have also shown a willingness to emphasize histories that supports their cause. Pro-independence writer Harun Yahya presents his version of history on a web site titled eastturkestan.net (see literature review). While more thorough and balanced than texts on official PRC web sites, Yahya clearly presents a version of history that supports his agenda of independence. As his evidence he cites vague language from one premodern Chinese scholar and points out that the great wall is between China and Xinjiang.¹⁹⁰ By slanting history, parties on both sides of the Xinjiang question can legitimize their agendas.

The PRC government has proven itself anxious to control history education. History textbooks are standardized throughout the PRC, meaning that all of China’s citizens read the same histories. Content is tightly controlled. History is normally

¹⁸⁹ Yinan He, History, Chinese Nationalism, and the Emerging Sino-Japanese Conflict (Routledge, 2007) p. 1

¹⁹⁰ <http://www.eastturkestan.net/> accessed April 29th, 2011

taught from a Han Chinese perspective. Colin Mackerras states that “A minority such as the Mongols, Zhuang, Uyghurs or Tibetans learns the same history as any other student in China: the history of China or ‘world history.’”¹⁹¹ He goes on to state that minority histories can be taught in minority schools, but this must be done in *addition* to the existing histories, not *instead* of it. Gerald Postiglione tells us that even when minority history is taught, it must be done in a way that supports the PRC’s official slant.¹⁹² Clearly, the PRC is being careful.

The PRC, however, has taken great liberties in its historical interpretations. As we will see later, everything in the classroom justifies the PRC’s control over Xinjiang. Minorities are depicted as simple and brave, while Han Chinese are the civilizers who bring life changing innovations. The tightening of relationships is constantly emphasized. Unity is an omnipresent theme. Rebellions are depicted as unjust savagery, or ignored altogether. Minorities of centuries past are always said to be grateful to their Chinese rulers. We see evidence of things discussed in this thesis: the colorful innocent minorities and Han China’s great civilizing missions.

Before looking at the textbooks, it is prudent to consider the official Chinese interpretation of a key historic event: the founding of the first East Turkestan Republic (1933-1934). The words ‘East Turkestan Republic’ are of course anathema

¹⁹¹ Colin Mackerras, 1995. p. 136

¹⁹² Gerald A. Postiglione, 2000. p. 54

to the PRC. By examining the PRC's interpretations of these events, the author hopes to demonstrate the ways in which China bends history to suit its political aims.

Right on the doorstep of the Soviet Union, and in a China mired in war and economic woes, Xinjiang Uyghurs seized the opportunity and created the East Turkestan Republic. Faced with a hostile Soviet Union and a hostile Nanjing government, the Republic only lasted a year.

A look at the PRC's official Xinjiang web site tells us China's interpretation of these events.

In the early 20th century and later, a small number of separatists and religious extremists in Xinjiang, influenced by the international trend of religious extremism and national chauvinism, politicized the unstandardized geographical term "East Turkistan," and fabricated an "ideological and theoretical system" on the so-called "independence of East Turkistan" on the basis of the allegation cooked up by the old colonialists.¹⁹³

There are several points of interest here. Firstly, the Republic is depicted as the brainchild of a "small number of separatists." This wording suggests that the Republic did not have the support of the people (in fact, the web site goes on to claim that a popular uprising *toppled* the Republic). Secondly, the founders of the Republic are characterized as "religious extremists." The author finds this very interesting. Since September 11th, the PRC has shrewdly linked Xinjiang

¹⁹³ Global Times, Origin of the 'East Turkistan Issue.'
<http://www.globaltimes.cn/www/english/truexinjiang/urumqi-riot/anti-terror/2009-07/445742.html>
accessed April 29th, 2011

independence groups to the international fight against terrorism. By calling Uyghur activists religious extremists, the PRC is putting them in the same category as Osama bin Laden, the Taliban, and Al Qaeda. Finally, the PRC resorts to one of its favorite explanations for ethnic unrest. It blames foreign meddling, in this case calling outsiders “old colonialists.”

How accurate is this history? To find out, the author compared the PRC’s version of history to that of scholar James Millward. Firstly, is the PRC correct in implying that the East Turkestan Republic had no popular support? Of course, this is a very difficult thing to gauge, especially almost 80 years later. James Millward, however, describes a festive scene at the Republic’s founding, in which blue and white banners were raised, large rallies were held, and people waved East Turkestan flags.¹⁹⁴ Again, the author can see no way of verifying the degree of popular support that the Republic had. However, it is likely fair to venture that a foreign scholar is likely more objective than the PRC government.

Were the founders of East Turkestan religious extremists? It appears that they were not. Again, James Millward tells us that the founders of East Turkestan did in fact mean to create an Islamic state. However, he goes on to state that the founders were reformists, many of whom were highly educated. The constitution, while also

¹⁹⁴ Millward, 2007. p. 204

invoking Islam,

...underlines the reformist and developmental goals of the founders, emphasizing the importance of education, promising to support foreign study, recruit foreign specialists, create libraries and support publishing.

While it is impossible to verify the validity of the founders' intentions, this passage hardly suggests the agenda of religious extremists.

Finally, the PRC claims that the handful of extremists were helped and manipulated by foreign powers. Certainly, foreign powers have a long history of exploiting China. However, the PRC's tendency to blame all of its ethnic woes on foreign troublemakers is frustrating. It discourages analysis and open discussion. Millward does not accept the PRC's suggestion of shadowy foreign agents. In fact, he says that the USSR actively *opposed* the Republic (not surprising, since it had ethnic issues of its own), while England and India did not provide help for fear of angering the KMT. Turkey, a nation with close ethnic ties to the Uyghurs, pledged friendship but did not provide material assistance.¹⁹⁵ This does not lend credibility to the PRC's claims of foreign meddling.

The PRC official history treats activity in Xinjiang from 1944-1949 as part of the nationwide Communist Revolution. Using the term "Revolution of the Three Regions," the PRC claims the unrest was "...part of Chinese people's democratic

¹⁹⁵ Millward, 2007, p. 206

revolutionary movement, [which] broke out against the Kuomintang rule.”¹⁹⁶ While the East Turkestan Republic was clearly not friendly to the KMT, it was not part of the Communist revolution. The Republic was nationalist and anti-Han. Millward suggests that instead of being for or against the KMT, CCP, or USSR, the Turkic nationalists were willing to work with or against anyone. It all depended on whether foreign groups were friendly or hostile to their cause.

5.1 Textbooks

In writing this thesis, the author was able to obtain excerpts from several history textbooks that are used in PRC classrooms. Because textbooks in the PRC are all standardized, we know that this is the material being taught to Uyghur children. The author believes that analyzing these textbooks is immensely useful. It can show us how the central government is presenting history to Uyghur children, how it would like minorities to view themselves, and how it would like them to view the role of minorities in China. In examining these textbooks, we can understand more about the PRC’s political agenda, and its attempts to integrate the Uyghurs through political education.

Of course, there are limitations to this kind of study. Firstly, the author only has access to the teaching materials. There is no way of knowing how teachers

¹⁹⁶ Global Times, Origin of the East Turkistan Issue
<http://www.globaltimes.cn/www/english/truexinjiang/urumqi-riot/anti-terror/2009-07/445742.html>
accessed April 29th, 2011

present these materials, or how students react to them. Furthermore, my own experiences as a teacher tell me that educators can sometimes alter the curriculum or stray from it. Finally, we are only looking a handful of chapters from a few textbooks.

Although this study is limited, the author hopes that it will provide an interesting glimpse into the PRC's education of Uyghurs, and its political agendas.

5.2 Textbook #1: National Elementary and Middle School Teaching Material, Compulsory Educational Course, Standard Experimental Text, Grade Seven, Volume One

The first book to be considered is for seventh grade students. The chapter begins with the famous story of legendary Chinese statesman Zhang Qian (張騫). It recounts Zhang Qian's well known journey to what is now Xinjiang, in 138 B.C. His goal was to establish an alliance with the Yuezhi people to fight against the nomad empire known as the Xiongnu. Although unsuccessful (he was captured twice), Zhang Qian did report "...to the Emperor Wu Di in detail about what he experienced in Xiyu, (the old name for Xinjiang) helping the Han Dynasty understand more about Xiyu."¹⁹⁷ The book cites this adventure as the earliest days of the Silk Road. If an observer were looking for evidence of historical manipulation in this excerpt, it would be difficult to find. Perhaps one could assert that the PRC is

¹⁹⁷ 本套歷史實驗教科書由國家基礎教育. 歷史課程標準研製組編寫. 北京師範大學出版社出版發行. p. 81

cynically trying to establish its relationship with Xinjiang early in its history, but that is a rather tenuous reach.

However, the next page provides ample material for those wishing to criticize China. The page opens with this quote: “At that time (119 B.C.), the Han Dynasty had effectively established dominance over Xiyu.”¹⁹⁸ As evidence, the book cites a growing trading relationship between the two sides. The paragraph closes with this uncompromising quote: “In 60 B.C., the Western Han Dynasty established the Protectorate of the Xiyu, which meant that the Xiyu was under official dominance of China.” The PRC’s official web site also gives 60 BC as the start date for China’s ownership of Xinjiang. This sentence requires little analysis. It states this as fact, giving no analysis or room for argument.

Certain trends emerge in this excerpt. We will see them in following excerpts as well. First are the statements that Xinjiang became a part of China in ancient times. Secondly, China is depicted as a stabilizing force, which was needed to counter the “dangerous” Xiongnu. Finally, there is a great deal of talk about the strengthening of ties, and the two sides growing closer and closer. We will see these themes, and others, in later excerpts.

Is this history accurate? It is not outright false, but it is certainly selective in

¹⁹⁸本套歷史實驗教科書由國家基礎教育·歷史課程標準研製組編寫·北京師範大學出版社出版發行·p. 82

what it says and emphasizes. Firstly, it is a gross simplification to state that Xinjiang became part of China in 60 B.C. It is true that the Chinese tribute system differs from Western perceptions of territorial rule. Chinese minds may interpret a system of gifts as non-Chinese peoples submitting to China's rule. However, the author maintains that the receiving of gifts does not constitute the receiver's legitimate rule over the giver. Furthermore, Millward suggests that "tributes" given to the Chinese were, in this case, simply gifts between equals.

This history says nothing about the chaos in Xinjiang during this period. As was discussed in the literature review, this part of the world was home to a long succession of empires and nomadic peoples. The history book says nothing about the Ruanruan, the Hephthalites or the Tibetans, all of whom had a strong interest in Xinjiang. It mentions the Xiongnu only briefly, only as enemies that threatened peace. There is also nothing of the Battle of Talas, which effectively ended Chinese presence in Xinjiang for a thousand years.

5.3 Textbook #2:

The National Elementary and Middle School Teaching Material, Compulsory Educational Course, Standard Experimental Text Books, Grad Seven, Volume Two

The first part of this chapter discusses the Tang Dynasty and its dealings with the Eastern Turkic Khaganate. It discusses the emperor Taizong (唐太宗 or 李世民) and his dealings with the minorities in southern Mongolia. A great deal of emphasis

is put on personal relationships between the Chinese emperor and the minority leaders.

It also discusses the famous wedding of Songtsen Gampo and Princess Wenchang.

The first thing one notices is the reverent way in which emperor Taizong is depicted. This is common in most countries; founders are often revered and even deified. Of greater interest here is the way in which Taizong is said to have viewed ethnic minorities. The following quote suffices: “The Emperor Taizong once said, “Chinese people have always valued China, and looked down on Yidi (The ethnic minorities). I valued every one [of the minorities], so that every one treated me like their own father.””¹⁹⁹ He is shown as caring and brave, willing to risk his life for his minority comrades. For example, the chapter tells one story in which emperor Taizong saves a minority comrade’s life in battle by sucking poison from the man’s arrow wound. Also of note are the feelings that the minorities allegedly had towards the Chinese emperor. Again and again, this chapter emphasizes that the minority people loved their emperor – it claims that when the emperor died, the ‘Turkic’ people were so devastated that they wanted to “...show their respect to him by cutting their hair, faces, and ears off.”²⁰⁰ Very significantly, the chapter also mentions that the Turkic chiefs started to refer to the emperor as ‘Tian Kehan’ (holy chief). The

¹⁹⁹經全國中小學教材審定委員會 2001 年初審通過 七年級 下冊 義務教育歷史課程標準研製組 p. 26

²⁰⁰經全國中小學教材審定委員會 2001 年初審通過 七年級 下冊 義務教育歷史課程標準研製組 p. 26

chapter explains that this “...meant that Emperor Taizong was everybody’s king.”²⁰¹

There are two more interesting points in this first part of the chapter. Firstly, the title of the chapter is “United as a Family.” This of course suggests that all minority groups are united in the common motherland of China. Secondly, it mentions that the Tang Dynasty set up a protectorate in Xinjiang. Of interest here is the following sentence: The Tang Dynasty “...appointed the Eastern Turkic nobles to manage the area. The people still retained their own habits lifestyle.”²⁰² This has echoes of the current system in the PRC, in which ethnic groups such as the Uyghurs, Tibetans and Mongols have their own autonomous regions which nevertheless must remain part of China.

**5.4 Textbook #3:
Compulsory Education Course, Standard Experimental Textbooks,
Chinese History, Seventh Grade, Volume Two**

The first part of this chapter discusses China’s early contact with Tibet. The author will not discuss this part in great length because it is not related to the Uyghurs or Xinjiang. He will only mention that as with chapters on the Uyghurs, these pages depict the Tibetans as great admirers of Chinese culture, and press home the idea of unity and cooperation.

The next part of this excerpt deals with the ancestors of the Uyghurs (referred to

²⁰¹經全國中小學教材審定委員會 2001 年初審通過 七年級 下冊 義務教育歷史課程標準研製組 p. 26

²⁰²經全國中小學教材審定委員會 2001 年初審通過 七年級 下冊 義務教育歷史課程標準研製組 p. 26

here as the “Huihu”). It picks up the Uyghur history in the eighth century. The most troubling part of this excerpt is the description of the Uyghurs as “brave and innocent.”²⁰³ There is a similar description of Tibetans earlier. The chapter also states that Han Chinese living in this area were greatly influenced by Uyghur culture, even to the point of “...dressing themselves in Huihu clothes.”²⁰⁴ This is consistent with academic sources that the author has read, which claim that Han people on the Chinese “frontiers” in the eighth century took on many habits of the locals.

Of great interest is the text’s treatment of the Qing’s war against the Zhungars. Previous texts have discussed this as well, but the author decided to wait until this text to discuss it (this text covers it in much greater detail). The text has this to say about the Uyghurs who fought the Qing Dynasty in the 18th century: “They [those who fought the Qing] robbed from the Uyghur, set fires and killed people wherever they went, causing great resentment.”²⁰⁵ The text goes on to say that the Qing dispatched an army to suppress the “rebellion,” and that the soldiers were given strict orders not to harm innocent people. According to the text, popular support helped the Qing crush the rebels. It claims that locals “...greeted Qing soldiers with food and supplies.”²⁰⁶ At the same time, it claims that local leaders refused to help the rebels,

²⁰³ 義務教育課程標準實驗教科書. 中國歷史. 七年級. 下冊. 歷史課程教材研究開發中心. p. 22

²⁰⁴ 義務教育課程標準實驗教科書. 中國歷史. 七年級. 下冊. 歷史課程教材研究開發中心. p. 23

²⁰⁵ 義務教育課程標準實驗教科書. 中國歷史. 七年級. 下冊. 歷史課程教材研究開發中心. p. 101

²⁰⁶ 義務教育課程標準實驗教科書. 中國歷史. 七年級. 下冊. 歷史課程教材研究開發中心. p. 101

closing town doors to retreating rebel forces.

While the neutrality of all these texts is suspect, this excerpt borders on outright falsehoods. The PRC text depicts the rebels as brutal and unjust, and paints the Qing as liberators who did not harm civilians. To be fair, other texts say that Zhungar actions at this time were provocations against the Qing.²⁰⁷ However, the Qing texts demonize the Zhungars, and gloss over horrific atrocities committed by the Han Chinese. As we have already seen, the PRC texts say that the Qing troops had instructions not to harm civilians. Charles Perdue and James Millward tell us that the Qianlong emperor embarked upon a deliberate campaign of genocide and slavery.²⁰⁸ “[Emperor] Qianlong repeatedly urged reluctant generals to exterminate all the Zhungars except women and children and the elderly, who were to be enslaved to the Manchu...”²⁰⁹ Millward goes on to tell us that through deliberate policies of starvation and smallpox, the Qing effectively wiped out the Zhungars. In light of this, it is incredible that the PRC textbook would depict Qianlong and the Qing as noble and merciful. The author finds this depiction no different from a German denial of the holocaust, a Japanese denial of Nanjing, or an American denial of slavery.

Later in the chapter, there is an interesting quote. It is long, but worth repeating

²⁰⁷ Millward, 2007, p. 91

²⁰⁸ Millward, 2007, p. 95

²⁰⁹ Millward, 2007, p. 95

in its entirety:

At the beginning of the Qing Dynasty, the territory extended westward to the Pamir Mountains, northwestward to the Lake Balkhash, northward to Siberia, northeastward to the Outer Xing'an Mountains and Kahhakin, eastward to the Pacific Ocean, southeastward to the Taiwan Islands, Senkaku Islands (Diaoyutai Islands), and Chiwei Islands, and southward to the islands around the South China Sea.²¹⁰

One needs only consider the PRC's current territorial disputes to understand the significance of that paragraph.

5.5 Textbook #4

Compulsory Education Courses Standard Experimental Textbooks, Chinese History, Seventh Grade, Volume One

As with some of the other excerpts, this one begins with a retelling of the statesman Zhang Qian's journey to the west, and his attempts to forge an alliance with the Yuezhi. Interestingly, this excerpt also discusses material exchanged between the Han and the Uyghurs. The author finds it noteworthy that the only things the Uyghurs are said to contribute are natural (horses, grapes, pomegranates, walnuts and clovers), while the Han provide the Uyghurs with technical innovations (casting, well canalling, drilling, lacquer, and metal tools). This seems to fit in with the idea of Han 'civilizing' the northwest. The page closes with a quote that is familiar now:

The chiefs in the Xiyu submitted to the Han Dynasty. In 60 BC, the West Han Dynasty established the Protectorate of the Xiyu to manage the affairs in the western regions. Since then, Xinjiang has been under the dominance of the central government of China and part of China.²¹¹

²¹⁰義務教育課程標準實驗教科書. 中國歷史. 七年級. 下冊. 歷史課程教材研究開發中心. p. 102

²¹¹義務教育課程標準實驗教科書. 中國歷史. 七年級. 上冊. 歷史課程教材研究開發中心. p. 83

5.6 Observations on the textbooks

Throughout the textbooks, there are some recurring themes that require more attention. The first and most important theme is that of continuing unity in the Chinese motherland. We see this mentioned again and again. We see chapters with titles like “United as a Family.” We see countless reminders of closer and closer relationships between China and the ‘western regions.’ We hear again and again about exchanges of business, commerce, and goods. Although not related to the Uyghurs, a passage about a Mongolian tribe known as the Torghut supports this idea. The passage depicts the Torghuts as being exploited by the Russians and deciding to return to the ‘motherland.’ According to the text, they overcome dangerous weather, sickness, and Russian attacks in order to settle in China. Every chapter seems to reinforce the idea of a continuing closeness that ends in unity.

Secondly, all of the texts are filled with points that support China’s claims to sovereignty over Xinjiang and other areas. At several points, the texts remind us that China set up protectorates over the western areas. What strikes me about these passages is the incredible simplicity of the arguments. The texts consistently state that China set up a protectorate in Xinjiang, which means that Xinjiang has been a part of China since 60 BC. The texts take complex political relationships and distill them down to a simple conclusion that supports the PRC’s stance. This simplicity is

prevalent throughout. There are great swaths of history missing from these narratives. As has already been pointed out, the texts say nothing about the countless other groups that had interest in – and sometimes control over – Xinjiang. Furthermore, it says nothing of the fact that Qing officials in the 19th century faced great resistance in convincing the government to conquer Xinjiang.²¹² The mere fact that officials in the 19th century were debating whether or not to conquer Xinjiang calls into question China's claims of sovereignty since ancient times.

The next theme to be discussed is the whitewashing of Chinese history. The author remembers reading American history textbooks as a child. While American books have biases of their own, these texts at least discussed the crimes that white settlers committed against Native Americans. The PRC textbooks say nothing about the abuses of the Qianlong emperor, nor do they question the justness of the Chinese empire moving into lands occupied by others. Instead, Chinese emperors are painted as benevolent rulers who protect their Han subjects and respect the minority groups. The minorities, in turn, are always depicted as feeling love and appreciation for their Han 'rulers.'

The next theme that we see in all of these texts is the depiction of minorities themselves. As we have seen, Dru Gladney comments that the Chinese media tends

²¹² Millward, 2007, pp. 125-128

to depict minorities as “exotic and erotic.” Certainly, these textbooks support that claim. The text describes the Uyghurs as “brave and innocent.” It talks about other minorities this way as well. It shows the Turfans (ie: Tibetans) as brave warriors who considered death in battle to be the ultimate honor. It claims that the Mohe, another minority group, “...were courageous and pugnacious. They loved singing and dancing.” Again and again, the various minority peoples are depicted as brave, colorful, primitive and innocent. In contrast, the ‘enlightened’ Han are the bringers of civilization and order. This fits in with the Han idea of the great civilizing mission. Certainly, painting non-Han people as noble savages is a racist and unfair portrayal. It suggests inferiority, ignoring the achievements and complexities of those people. These texts suggest that Han chauvinism is alive and well.

All of this history is told from the perspective of the Han Chinese. At no point do we see things from the Uyghur point of view (or any other minority point of view, for that matter). This is consistent with Colin Mackerras’s comments, which state that history in the PRC is greatly “slanted” towards the Han Chinese experience.²¹³ A suspicious observer would say that this is an intentional ploy to downplay the cultural distinctions of minorities, and force a common Chinese identity upon them.

All in all, these textbooks excerpts do not inspire confidence in the PRC’s

²¹³ Colin Mackerras, 1995, p. 136

history education system. The books betray a willingness to manipulate history to suit political goals. In fact, the author would even go so far as to say that the *main* purpose of these texts is to stress the PRC's right to rule minority areas. The texts hammer these same points home again and again, using minute pieces of evidence to justify Han rule, and conveniently ignoring parts of history that do not.

It is difficult to gauge the degree to which Uyghurs living in the PRC accept this version of history. Uyghurs living outside the PRC certainly attack this official version of events. The World Uyghur Congress (WUC), a group made up primarily of exiled Uyghurs, presents an entirely different version of history. Instead of accepting the PRC's date of 60 B.C. as the time in which China took control of Xinjiang, the WUC claims that rule did not come until 1949. "The neighboring Chinese province annexed part of the territory (ie: Xinjiang) as a result of the Chinese communist *invasion* of 1949. (emphasis added)"²¹⁴ It should be noted that just like the PRC textbooks, the WUC's website also glosses over certain periods that might harm its cause.

Ultimately, the PRC's approach to teaching history appears counterproductive. No observer could miss the political agendas in these pages. By taking such a biased approach, the PRC only succeeds in making its education system look like a

²¹⁴ World Uyghur Congress, <http://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/?cat=132> accessed April 29th, 2011

propaganda machine.

5.7 Recommendations

The following suggestions, while admittedly too general, could improve the PRC's system.

1. Give a fair and accurate portrayal of history.

The foreign settlement of any area, whether it is the Americas, Africa, Asia or Australia, is in large part a history of crime, theft, and bloodshed. It is the author's understanding that for a long time history books in the United States glossed over atrocities committed by white settlers. None of this whitewashing convinced American minorities. Instead the obvious lies only created more resentment, making minorities feel even more like second class citizens. While the neutrality of current American textbooks is still open to question, these materials have come a long way in the last fifty years. Admissions of crimes have not led to greater unrest. People who want to will always manage to manipulate history to suit their purposes, just like some will always manipulate the Bible for the same reasons. An honest discussion of history will not change that. By presenting a fair and honest historical account, the PRC will greatly increase its credibility.

2. Stop objectifying minorities.

The PRC portrayal of minorities as colorful, innocent and brave is both insulting and inaccurate. It suggests that the makers of these texts have made no effort to understand the people they are discussing. Furthermore, as Dru Gladney tells us, these portrayals breed resentment among Uyghurs, who as Muslims understandably do not like being portrayed as “erotic.”²¹⁵ Nobody likes to feel that their identity is being manipulated or repressed. If the PRC were to give its ethnic minorities a real chance to flourish and express their cultural heritage, perhaps it would create goodwill. The government’s current allowance of cultural expression is not enough. Indeed, it seems like a token gesture and reinforces the “colorful and innocent” fallacy. The PRC needs to stop viewing the most trivial ethnic expression as a separatist threat and allow its people to be what they want to be.

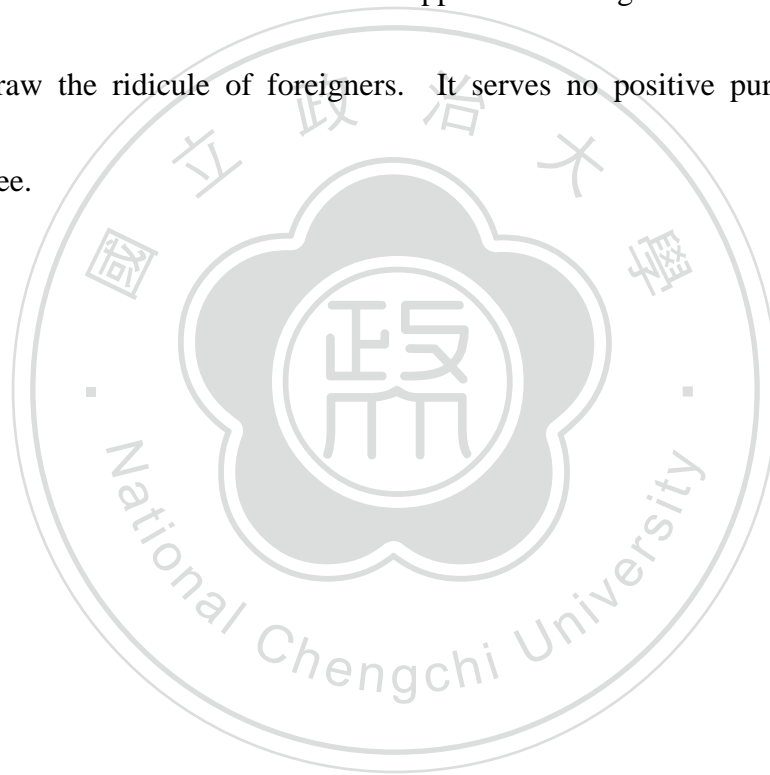
3. Present history from both the minority and Han perspectives

When presenting the history of Xinjiang, the PRC should include the Uyghurs (as well as all other minority groups with a history there) along with the Han. The texts that the author read presented everything from a Han point of view. There was nothing about the Uyghurs, except for the reverent ways in which they viewed the Han.

²¹⁵ Gladney, 1998. p. 110

4. Eliminate politics from history.

These texts never stop reinforcing the idea that Xinjiang is part of China. The books make no effort at neutrality whatsoever. If a text is laced with sentences like “this proves Xinjiang is a part of China” and “their return to the motherland was glorious,” it is impossible to take them seriously. These texts read more like a legal argument than a historical narrative. This approach can anger minorities, delude the Han, and draw the ridicule of foreigners. It serves no positive purpose that the author can see.



Chapter 6. Conclusion

This paper has covered a wide range of issues in a limited space. We have looked at the history of Xinjiang and its people, as well as political issues that affect the region today. We have taken a broad survey of PRC policy and Uyghur reactions to that policy. Any conclusions or suggestions that the author draws from this work are bound to be too general. The author can only share the observations made during the research of these last months, and then share some conclusions and suggestions. While they are sure to be flawed, the author hopes that his thoughts will shed light on this interesting and crucial subject.

Have PRC education policies helped integrate the Uyghurs into China proper? This is a difficult question to answer, because we can only guess at what the central government's goals really are. If the government only wishes to strengthen its hold on Xinjiang and keep the Uyghurs under its thumb, then it has certainly achieved some success. If the government is sincere about integrating the Uyghurs as equals rather than simply assimilating them, then it has a lot of work to do.

From a security standpoint, the central government has clearly strengthened its grip on Xinjiang. The Western Development Program, which has cost more than 200 billion yuan, was partly implemented for the purposes of extending central control over the western regions. Certainly the vast development of infrastructure

and security networks has helped the PRC keep an eye on Xinjiang. The days of Xinjiang and Tibet being a distant frontier are ending. China is forcing its grip around these areas, albeit not always with subtlety.

However, the PRC has not succeeded in its goal of using *education* to integrate the Uyghurs. At best, its policies have been ineffective and left the Uyghurs unsatisfied. At worst, they have been counterproductive and created in the Uyghurs a feeling of being under siege from outsiders. We see evidence of this in the continued unrest in Xinjiang which, despite the PRC's paranoid claims, comes from Uyghur discontent and not foreign instigators. All of the secondary sources that the author has read also point to a lingering discontent among the Uyghurs. They appear to feel marginalized and persecuted; frankly, the author doesn't believe they are wrong. If the PRC cannot satisfy Uyghur misgivings, no amount of military muscle will quell discontent there. The central government may be able to put down uprisings with relative ease. However, every incident causes the PRC to lose face at a time when it is emerging as a world player.

The PRC does deserve some credit. The standard of living has gone up in Xinjiang, albeit more for the Han than for the Uyghurs. Furthermore, as we have seen, literacy has increased impressively, as have salaries and health standards. There is more work to be done, however, particularly to ensure that improvements are

reaped equally and not only by the Han. The central government must build upon the progress it has made, rather than simply tout numbers that stress success.

What is required is a massive overhaul of the PRC's approach to the Uyghurs and Xinjiang. Despite PRC claims to the contrary, it is the author's impression that its ultimate goal is the complete assimilation of the Uyghur people. Towards Xinjiang, the central government has adopted a conquest mentality. Instead of guns and artillery, it is using Han immigrants and propaganda. As long as the central government treats Xinjiang like an enemy territory that needs to be conquered, Uyghurs and others will understandably view the Han government with hostility. The PRC must adopt policies that embrace Uyghurs as equal partners. Until it does this, any reforms will be fundamentally flawed.

Preferential policies are a good start. Used effectively, affirmative action can level the playing field and counterbalance handicaps caused by past injustices. The PRC does deserve credit for making education more widely available to Uyghurs. What is also needed, however, is an adequate number of jobs awaiting educated Uyghurs upon graduation. If the central government educates Uyghurs but does not provide them with decent work, it will create problems for itself. The discontent of unemployment could channel itself into political action.

Furthermore, preferential policies must be sincere. They must help all Uyghurs,

rather than a token few. Linda Tsung's excellent book on language education presents a convincing case that even with preferential policies in place, Uyghurs still receive an inferior education. If fewer resources are provided to minority schools, then preferential policies are meaningless. We have learned that part of the PRC's strategy is to raise the standard of living through higher education. Zhu Zhiyong tells us that PRC policymakers believe more wealth will quell separatist feelings among minorities. It is therefore in the government's best interests to ensure that all Uyghurs reap the benefits of affirmative action.

The situation of language education is troubling. The PRC has relegated Uyghur to a cultural relic with little economic value. The choice for Uyghur families is clear: learn Mandarin and prosper, or stick with Uyghur and fall behind. Linda Tsung tells us that this choice is creating resentment among the Uyghurs, as well as divisions between those who embrace Mandarin, and those who do not. The author sees nothing wrong with teaching Mandarin to the Uyghurs. However, it must be done in addition to the teaching of Uyghur, rather than instead of it. Furthermore, the insistence that Uyghur students learn Mandarin cannot deprive Uyghur children of the chance to learn English. Only by making Uyghur a financially relevant language can the PRC hope to solve this problem. Again, for this to happen, the planners in the PRC must move away from their conquest

mentality and embrace a more equal approach.

There is light at the end of the tunnel for the PRC. If more jobs are created for young Uyghurs, discontent will be reduced. Beller-Hann tells us that the lack of good jobs is the biggest grievance of young Uyghurs. In order to solve this problem, the PRC must address the systemic flaws discussed in this thesis. The good news is that these problems can be solved, to the mutual benefit of all concerned parties.

The textbooks examined for this essay reveal some very troubling trends. They suggest that history education in the PRC exists only to justify political ends. The PRC cannot expect Uyghurs or outsiders to take it seriously when such transparently biased material is being taught in the classrooms. Although the author cannot say so for certain, he finds it hard to believe that young Uyghurs will accept such a history. Instead, the PRC texts will likely only serve to anger the Uyghurs. Furthermore, young Han who accept this version of history will grow up and find themselves at odds with Uyghurs who do not. In this sense, the PRC's official history could deepen ethnic divisions rather than relax them. Certainly from an ethical standpoint, presenting such a history is questionable. On a practical level, the PRC may be digging a deep hole for itself. As historians learn more about Xinjiang, the PRC may feel it cannot retreat from its original claims. It may feel obligated to defend its official histories, as we saw with the burning of books that dealt with the Tarim

mummies.

In order for the PRC's policies to bring about true integration, its leaders must ensure that minority culture is respected. This must be true both inside and outside the classroom. The PRC is doing itself no favors by ordering its teachers to oppose religion. The CCP may be atheist, but most Uyghurs are not. By attacking religion as feudal and a source of separatism, the PRC only makes Uyghurs feel more isolated. Policymakers have to find some kind of middle ground in which religion and government policy are both respected. This cultural respect must extend to language and treatment of Uyghur culture in general.

As the author has already mentioned, educational reforms must be accompanied by reforms outside of the classroom as well. If problems outside of the classroom are not addressed, then any reforms in schools will ring hollow. Firstly, Han migration must be reduced. This would free up more jobs for Uyghurs, and ease tensions created by language issues. It would demonstrate to the Uyghurs that they are not under siege by the Han. It would not force Han culture on Uyghur classrooms.

Certainly, the Uyghurs are a diverse group and as such, some members of Uyghur society will benefit from China's education initiative more than others will. Those Uyghurs living in cities, with more access to higher education, will likely

benefit more than those living in the countryside. Furthermore, Uyghur families with the means to pay for incidental costs like transportation, food, and school supplies will also benefit more than those who cannot. While this paper has admittedly lumped Uyghur society into one broad category, it is important to remember that China's education initiatives will be different for everyone.

Furthermore, there must be a change to the education that Han Chinese receive as well. Current depictions of minorities instill within young Han feelings of superiority. The PRC cannot continue to portray ethnic minorities as colorful 'others.' Only by depicting Uyghurs accurately and respectfully can the PRC hope to combat great Han chauvinism. From a very young age, Han students must be taught to respect minorities and treat them as equals. Of course it is not easy to overhaul ingrained stereotypes. Countries around the world are making the effort, however, and the PRC must do so as well.

It is still too early to tell whether or not the PRC is achieving its goals and indeed, what those goals really are. Having said that, it still seems clear that current educational policies have not achieved the PRC's goal of integrating the Uyghurs. Instead, Uyghurs continue to feel frustrated and resentful towards the PRC. Whether or not this resentment will manifest itself in violence is impossible to tell. Regardless, educational policies make the government appear shortsighted and

unwilling to address or even acknowledge its ethnic relations problems. Until the PRC government approaches these problems with sincerity, its claims of being an equal, multinational society will always ring hollow.

What does the future hold for the Uyghurs? Uyghur leaders outside the PRC are understandably dismayed by the way things are going. Under pressure from Han migration and an unsympathetic government, the Uyghur identity could very well vanish. Certainly, PRC efforts to hollow out Uyghur culture and make it look benign could rob these people of their national identity. They may end up as mere poster children for China's image of ethnic unity.

More than national unity or politics, the story of the Uyghurs is the most important part of this study. How much of a voice will the Uyghurs have in the future? How much of a say will they have in their own fate? When we consider the fact that Uyghurs have few real allies or sympathizers abroad, their future looks very bleak indeed.

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