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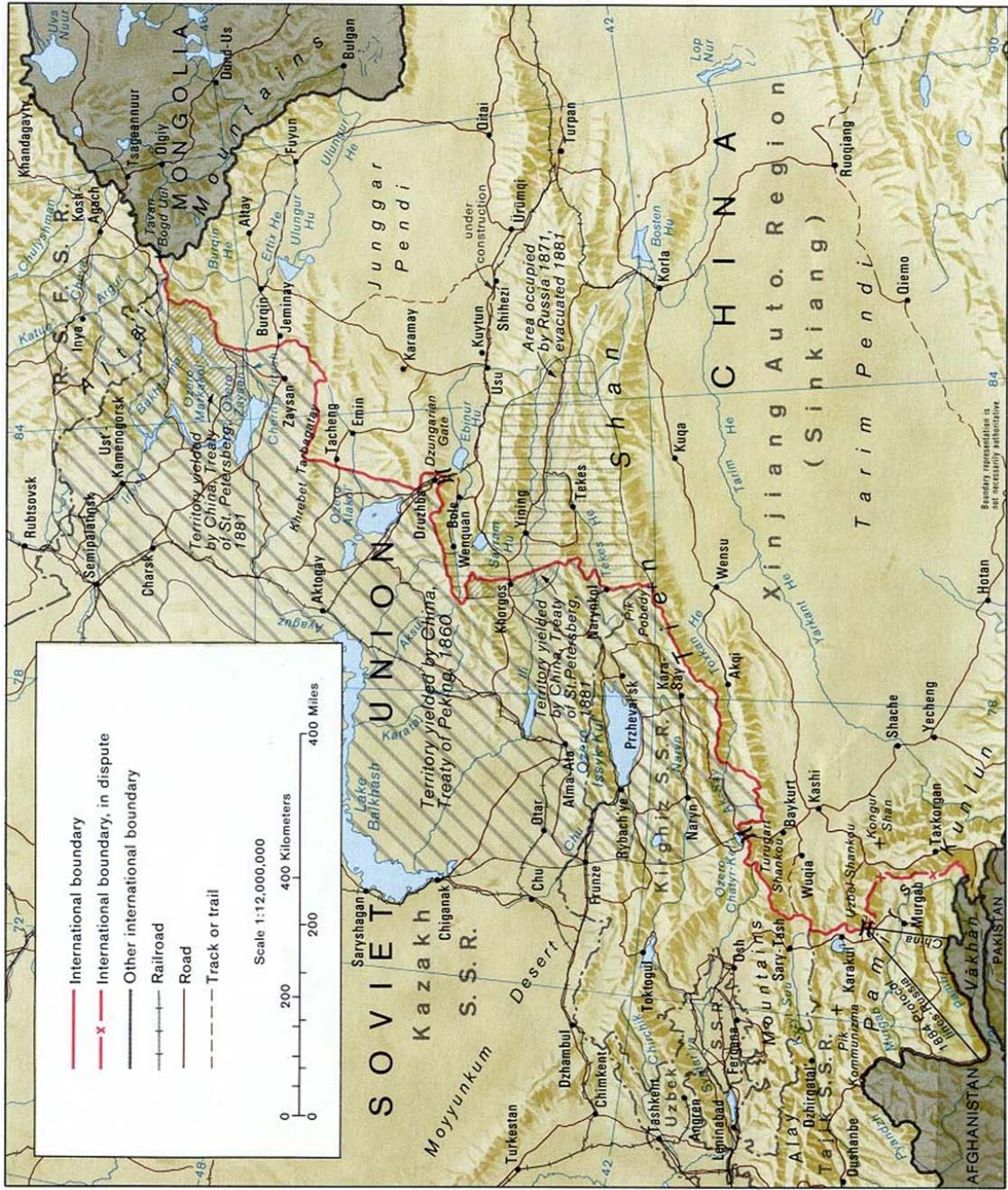
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Map of Xinjiang Province, China



Chapter 1 Profile

Introduction

Uighurs (Uyghurs) are a Turkic Muslim people who speak a Turkic language of the same name. The majority of Uighurs live in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, an administrative division of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Located in China's far northwest, Xinjiang (formerly Sinkiang) is a vast, thinly populated region comprising arid basins and high-altitude mountains. Its name means "new frontier" in Chinese; this description reflects the region's remoteness from eastern China, the historic power base of successive imperial dynasties and, since 1949, the communist PRC government. For Uighurs, the region is better known as *Sharqi Turkistan*, or Eastern Turkestan.¹



DoD image
Map of Xinjiang, China

This distinction illustrates the tension surrounding the PRC's ongoing development of the Xinjiang region, which is part of a larger effort to integrate and secure its remote borderlands. Over several decades, the PRC has heavily invested in regional infrastructure while expanding industry and large-scale commercial agriculture. This process has corresponded with a massive in-migration of Han, the predominant ethnic group in China. (The influx of Han to resource-rich Xinjiang has often been compared to the settlement of the American West.)² Considerable economic expansion and a higher overall standard of living are products of the PRC's development strategy.³ However, as Uighurs have generally remained poorer than Han, tensions have arisen over perceptions that Han have disproportionately benefited from the enhanced economic opportunities. Moreover, various PRC policies, including severe restrictions on religious practice, have been criticized as a repression of traditional Uighur culture.⁴

These factors have contributed to dissent and social unrest among the Uighur, a proud and hardy people who have a history of chafing under Chinese rule.⁵ In its most extreme form, Uighur unrest has manifested in violent separatist movements under organizations such as the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM). Of late, ethnic tensions erupted in clashes between Uighurs, Han, and local security forces in Urumqi (Urumchi) in July 2009.⁶

¹ *Xinjiang – China's Muslim Far Northwest*. Dillon, Michael. "Chapter 1: Xinjiang's Geographical Position [p. 4]." 2004. London: Routledge.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=hQhQ3QKDezsC&pg=PA4&dq=Xinjiang+%E2%80%93+China%E2%80%99s+Muslim+Far+Northwest+tianshan+sinkiang&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

² Los Angeles Times. Demick, Barbara and David Pierson. "China's Flood of Fortune Seekers Unsettles Xinjiang." 11 July 2009. <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/jul/11/world/fg-china-west11>

³ China Daily. Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China. "White Paper on Development and Progress in Xinjiang: Swift Economic Development." 21 September 2009. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/ethnic/2009-09/21/content_8717461_3.htm

⁴ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. *International Religious Freedom Report 2009*. "China (Includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau)." 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127268.htm>

⁵ Foreign Policy. Larson, Christina. "How China Wins and Loses Xinjiang." 9 July 2009. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/07/09/how_china_wins_and_loses_xinjiang?page=0,0

⁶ Council on Foreign Relations. Bhattacharji, Preeti. "Uighurs and China's Xinjiang Region." 6 July 2009. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/16870/>

Area

The Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region is located in far northwestern China. Within China, it borders the provinces of Gansu and Qinghai to the east, and Tibet (or the Xizang Autonomous Region) to the south. Xinjiang's international borders make it strategically important to China. In the southwest, it borders the disputed area of Jammu and Kashmir, where India, Pakistan, and China have conflicting territorial claims. Here, the disputed territory of Aksai Chin, which India also claims, is occupied and administered by China as part of Xinjiang.⁷ To the west, Xinjiang borders Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. To the northwest, it shares an extensive border with Kazakhstan, the home of the largest Uighur population outside of China.⁸ In the north and northeast, Xinjiang shares borders with Russia and Mongolia. Overall, the region measures 1,664,900 sq km (642,821 sq mi), accounting for approximately one sixth of China's total land area. It is the country's largest administrative region. By comparison, it is larger than the combined area of Texas, California, and Montana.⁹



© Peter Morgan
Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region

Geographic Divisions and Topographic Features

Xinjiang essentially comprises two massive basins surrounded and divided by formidable mountain ranges. The terrain varies widely from snowy, high-altitude peaks to desert lowlands and depression; both earth's second-highest and third-lowest points are located in Xinjiang. The majority of the population lives in transitional areas between mountains and desert. Extreme climate conditions make large portions of the region inhospitable.¹⁰



© Vít Hněvkovský
Altai mountain range

Northern Highlands

In the north, Xinjiang is bounded by a series of mountain ranges that run throughout the borderlands with Kazakhstan, Russia, and Mongolia. In the northwest, the Tarbagatay Range extends into Xinjiang from eastern Kazakhstan. Running west–east, it forms a portion of the Xinjiang-Kazakhstan border with a peak of 3,816 m (12,520 ft). The more significant Altai Mountains (Altai Shan) extend into northern and northeastern Xinjiang. The Mongolian Altai, a branch of the Altai proper, runs generally northwest–southeast along the Xinjiang–Mongolia border. This extension of the Altai reaches 4,374 m (14,350 ft) at Khuiten Peak, near where the Russian, Mongolian, and Chinese borders converge.¹¹

⁷ “The Great Wall of Steel: Military and Strategy in Xinjiang [pp. 141–143].” Shichor, Yitzhak. In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

⁸ Reuters. Golovnina, Maria. “Uighurs in Kazakhstan Rally Against China Crackdown.” 19 July 2009. <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSLJ612396>

⁹ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 1: Ancient Encounters (earliest times-8th century) [p. 4].” 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=8FVvWq31MtMC&pg=PA4&dq=eurasian+crossroads+geographic+setting+1,664,900&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

¹⁰ “The Ecology of Xinjiang [pp. 264–267].” Toops, Stanley W. In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=tfWq65DIGxkC&pg=PA264&dq=Xinjiang:+China%E2%80%99s+Muslim+Borderland+intermontane+basins+and+mountain+ranges&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

¹¹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Altai Mountains: Physical Features: Physiography.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-47846>

From the snowy peaks and dense forests of its upper and middle elevations, the Altai descend into mountain steppe, or grasslands, before blending into the northern reaches of the Junggar Basin. Notably, the southwestern slopes of the Altai—those in Xinjiang—are rolling and relatively gentle compared to the more rugged terrain found on the opposite slope.¹² This region is dominated by ethnic Kazakhs, who traditionally practice nomadic pastoralism in the highland pastures.



© randomix / flickr.com
Gurbantunggut Desert

Junggar (Dzungarian) Basin

The Junggar Basin comprises the majority of northern Xinjiang, an area known as Dzungaria (Zhungaria).¹³ Sloping from northeast to southwest, this vast lowland expanse is encircled by the highlands to the north and the Tien Shan mountain range of central Xinjiang. The basin opens to the west and east. In the west, the Dzungarian Gate (Alatau Pass), a gap through the mountains, leads into the grasslands of Kazakhstan. In the far north, the Ertix River Valley, separating the Tarbagatay and Altai ranges, also opens into Kazakhstan.

The central basin is dominated by the Gurbantunggut Desert, where low rainfall is common year-round. Semi-desert and steppe lands—including substantial areas of pasture—occur between the central desert and the encircling mountains; the region’s major cities are located in this transitional zone. Urumqi, Xinjiang’s capital, is one of several oasis cities lining the southern edge of the basin along the Tien Shan. As part of the PRC’s intensive development efforts, the region’s pasturelands have been increasingly converted for large-scale agricultural use. The basin is the site of significant oil and natural gas deposits, particularly around the city of Karamay, in the northwest.¹⁴

Tien Shan

The Tien Shan, an extensive high-altitude mountain range, runs roughly west–east from Central Asia through central Xinjiang; it spans approximately 2,500 km (1,500 mi) overall. In the west, the range forms much of the Xinjiang–Kyrgyzstan border, along which it reaches a highpoint of 7,439 m (24,406 ft) at Victory Peak (known by the Uighur as Tomur).¹⁵ Extending throughout central Xinjiang in several branches, the Tien Shan divides the Junggar Basin in the north from the Tarim Basin in the south. The northernmost extension of the range is the (Dzungarian) Alatau Range, which forms a portion of the Xinjiang–Kazakhstan border in the west. From the Alatau, the Borohoro Shan run southeastward toward the central Tien Shan range. In the east, the smaller but still substantial Bogda and Karlik (Barkol) ranges run toward Mongolia.¹⁶

The Tien Shan are known to Uighurs as the *Tengritagh*, or “Mountains of God (or Heaven).”¹⁷ Capped with snowy peaks, their steep, rugged slopes are scattered with glaciers. The range’s

¹² Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Xinjiang: Land: Relief.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-71452>

¹³ “Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late Nineteenth Century [p. 30].” Millward, James A. and Peter C. Perdue. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

¹⁴ “The Ecology of Xinjiang: A Focus on Water [pp. 266–267].” Toops, Stanley W. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe. <http://books.google.com/books?id=tfWq65DIgxC&pg=PA264&dq=Xinjiang:+China%E2%80%99s+Muslim+Borderland+regional+divisions+within+xinjiang&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

¹⁵ *Xinjiang: The Land and the People*. “Chapter 1: Geographical Features [p. 8].” 1989. Beijing: New World Press.

¹⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Tien Shan: Physical Features: Physiography.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-47925>

¹⁷ *Xinjiang – China’s Muslim Far Northwest*. Dillon, Michael. “Chapter 1: Xinjiang’s Geographical Position [p. 5].” 2004. London: Routledge. <http://books.google.com/books?id=hQhQ3QKDezC&pg=PA5&dq=Xinjiang+%E2%80%93+China%E2%80%99s+Muslim+Far+Northwest+tianshan+sinking&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

middle elevations are typically forested, while lower elevations consist of steppe and semi-desert terrain. Important lowland areas lie between the Tien Shan's various branches. In the west, the Ili (Yili) River valley lies between the Borohoro Shan and the central Tien Shan range. Opening into southeastern Kazakhstan, this fertile valley is the site of intensive agriculture. In east-central Xinjiang, the Turpan (Turfan) Depression lies south of the Bogda Range and north of a spur of the Tien Shan known as the Qoltag Mountains. Here, the elevation descends to -154 m (-505 ft), the third lowest point on earth.¹⁸ The Hami Basin lies east of the Turpan Depression.¹⁹ South of these lowland oases lies another mountain chain, the low-elevation Kuruktag Range.

Tarim Basin

The Tarim Basin comprises most of southern Xinjiang. Like the Junggar Basin to the north, it is a desert plain encircled by steppe lands and high-elevation mountain ranges; it generally slopes southwest to northeast. Because the Tien Shan and other ranges prevent the Tarim Basin from receiving moist air currents from the west, it is extremely dry—more so than the Junggar Basin. The region is dominated by the Taklamakan Desert, which covers some 327,000 sq km (126,255 sq mi). Encompassing huge shifting sand dunes, this largely barren and inhospitable desert is subject to seasonal sandstorms known as *qara buran*, or “black winds.”²⁰



© Dperstin / flickr.com
Pamir Mountains

A string of oases surrounds the desert near the foothills of the encircling mountains. The traditional homeland of the Uighur, this settled region has been known as Altishahr, or “Six Cities.” Despite the harsh environment, traditional oasis agriculture remains the primary economic activity of the Uighur, who are predominant in this region. They depend upon springs and mountain runoff to water crops.²¹ While energy and mineral deposits are also present in the region, the Tarim Basin remains less industrialized than the Junggar, where Han have a greater presence.²²

Southern Mountains

The southern rim of the Tarim Basin (and greater Xinjiang) is formed by several of the world's highest mountain ranges. In the west, the Pamir Mountains extend into Xinjiang from Tajikistan. This highland region is essentially the knot from which the Tien Shan, Hindu Kush, Karakoram, and Kunlun Mountains extend.²³ With an average elevation of 6,100 m (20,000 ft), the Karakoram Range extends from far northeastern Afghanistan, throughout the disputed area of Jammu and Kashmir, into China. K2, the world's second highest peak, lies on the border of

¹⁸ Geology.com. Lynch, David K. “Land Below Sea Level.” No date. <http://geology.com/below-sea-level/>

¹⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Tien Shan.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9110526>

²⁰ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 1: Ancient Encounters (Earliest Times—8th Century) [p. 6].” 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=8FVsWq31MtMC&pg=PA6&dq=eurasian+crossroads+qara+buran&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

²¹ *Xinjiang – China's Muslim Far Northwest*. Dillon, Michael. “Chapter 1: Xinjiang's Geographical Position [p. 4].” 2004. London: Routledge.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=hQhQ3QKDezsC&pg=PA4&dq=Xinjiang+%E2%80%93+China%E2%80%99s+Muslim+Far+Northwest+tianshan+sinkiang&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

²² “The Ecology of Xinjiang: A Focus on Water [pp. 265–266].” Toops, Stanley W. In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=tfWq65DIGxkC&pg=PA264&dq=Xinjiang:+China%E2%80%99s+Muslim+Borderland+regional+divisions+within+xinjiang&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

²³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Pamirs.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9110525>

Xinjiang in this range; it reaches 8,611 m (28,251 ft).²⁴ North of the Karakoram, the Kunlun Mountains originate near the Pamirs and extend some 2,000 km (1,250 mi) to the east. This range essentially forms the northern boundary of the Tibetan Plateau.²⁵ Encompassing several peaks above 7,000 m (23,000 ft), the Kunlun serve as a formidable barrier against passage in and out of the southern Tarim Basin. Finally, the Altun Shan run generally from southwest to northeast as they branch from the Kunlun to skirt the Tarim Basin to the east.²⁶

Climate

Xinjiang's continental climate is determined by the surrounding mountains rather than by ocean air currents, which are too far away to be influential. Because the mountains impede the flow of moist air into the basins, the region is generally dry, sunny, and prone to temperature extremes—both seasonally and throughout the course of the day. The average annual rainfall for Xinjiang is approximately 165 mm (6.5 inches), although precipitation levels vary from the north to the south.²⁷ In the northwest, openings amid the regional mountain ranges allow Siberian air currents to enter the Junggar Basin (as well as the Ili River Valley). As a result, the north is wetter and colder than the Tarim Basin of the south, which is more thoroughly enclosed. While the north may receive between 150–500 mm (6–20 in) of annual precipitation, only 20–150 mm (0.8–6 in) may fall each year in the south.²⁸



© kindsir/ flickr.com
Road in the Tien Shan Mountains

Although Xinjiang's climate follows a general pattern of cold winters and hot summers, regional temperature differences are also significant. In January, the coldest winter month, the average temperature for much of the Junggar Basin is -15°C (5°F), while temperatures in the Tarim Basin average around -7°C (20°F). In July, the hottest summer month, temperatures average between 21° and 24°C (70 – 75°F) in the northern basin and around 27°C (80°F) in the south. The Turpan Depression experiences the hottest temperatures in China; here, a high of 49°C (120°F) has been recorded.²⁹ Xinjiang's mountain regions receive substantially greater levels of precipitation than the basins. In highland areas, the air is moister and peaks may be snow-capped year-round. Throughout Xinjiang, strong winds are common in the spring.³⁰ Wind turbines have recently been installed in Xinjiang to take advantage of these winds, which are predictably and reliable enough to serve as a source of power.³¹

²⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Karakoram Range: Physical Features: Physiography." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-47896>

²⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Kunlun Mountains." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9110524>

²⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Xinjiang: Land: Relief." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-71452>

²⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Xinjiang: Land: Climate." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-71454>

²⁸ "The Ecology of Xinjiang: A Focus on Water [pp. 264–267]." Toops, Stanley W. In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick, Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=tfWq65DIGxkC&pg=PA264&dq=Xinjiang:+China%E2%80%99s+Muslim+Borderland+regional+divisions+within+xinjiang&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

²⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Xinjiang: Land: Climate." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-71454>

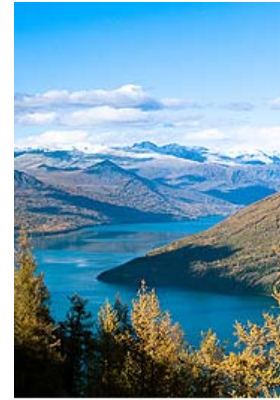
³⁰ *Xinjiang: The Land and the People*. "Chapter 1: Geographical Features [pp. 19–22]." 1989. Beijing: New World Press.

³¹ FarWestChina.com. "Picture of the Week: Wind Power: Xinjiang." 15 October 2009.

<http://www.farwestchina.com/2009/10/picture-of-week-wind-power.html>

Rivers and Lakes

The extensive mountain ranges surrounding and bisecting Xinjiang feed the arid lowlands with vital runoff from rainfall, snowmelt, and glaciers. Of the many streams and rivers that flow into the basins, only one—the Ertix (Irtysh) River—flows to the sea; all others are inland waterways that terminate in Xinjiang’s lowland deserts or lakes.³² Broadly, the PRC’s efforts to develop Xinjiang have involved the intensive diversion of river waters for use in large-scale irrigation schemes. Such practice has contributed to regional water shortages, both within Xinjiang and in downstream countries such as Kazakhstan.³³



© runner PL / flickr.com
Ertix River

Running through the north, the Ertix River originates in the Altai Mountains and flows generally westward into northeastern Kazakhstan; it ultimately empties into the Arctic Ocean through the Ob River system in Russia. Also originating in the Altai, the Ulungar River flows generally westward through the northern reaches of the Junggar Basin, where it empties into Lake Ulungar. Another important waterway in the north is the Manas River, which originates in the Tien Shan and flows northward into Lake Manas, a once desiccated lake that has reportedly been revitalized in recent years.³⁴ Ebinur (Aibi) Lake is a huge saline lake in the far southwestern part of the basin.



© Michael D. Manning
Tarim River

The Ili (Yili) River, which originates in the Tien Shan and runs westward into Kazakhstan, is a vital source of irrigation water for the fertile valley that surrounds it. To the east in the Turpan Depression, lies Lake Ayding (Aydingkol), a once permanent lake that is now a saline swamp.³⁵ Originating in the Tien Shan, the Kaidu River flows eastward into the lowlands between the Tien Shan and the Kuruktag Range. Here, it feeds into Lake Bosten (Bagrax), Xinjiang’s largest lake; its downstream flow, which runs through the northeast region of the Tarim

Basin, is known as the Konqi River.

Xinjiang’s largest and most important river system is the Tarim River, which flows generally eastward through the northern region of the Tarim Basin. It is formed and fed by several mostly seasonal rivers and streams that originate in the surrounding mountains. These include the Yarkant (Yarkand), Hotan (Khotan), and Aksu rivers. Subject to changes in its course, the Tarim flows strongest during the summer months of June through September, when it receives the majority of its runoff.³⁶ In recent years, improvement projects have partially restored its lower reaches, which had dried out.³⁷ The Tarim formerly emptied into Lop Nur, a saline lake in eastern

³² Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Xinjiang: Land: Drainage.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-71453>

³³ The Jamestown Foundation. *China Brief*, Vol. 7, Issue 10. Peyrouse, Sebastien. “Flowing Downstream: The Sino-Kazakh Water Dispute.” 16 May 2007. http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=4131&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=197&no_cache=1

³⁴ People’s Daily Online. “Agricultural No. 8 Division Tops the World in Drip Irrigation Scale.” 15 October 2007. <http://english.people.com.cn/90002/92362/92376/6283101.html>

³⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Turpan Depression.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9073828>

³⁶ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 7: Between China and the World (1990s–2000s) [pp. 313–314].” 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

³⁷ People’s Daily Online. “China Invests Over 7 Billion Yuan to Improve Tarim River.” 3 February 2009. <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/6584796.html>

Xinjiang that is now desiccated. Lop Nur was the site of Chinese nuclear testing between 1964 and 1996.³⁸

Major Cities

While Uighurs are found throughout Xinjiang's urban areas, many of the region's major cities, especially those in the north, have strong Han majorities.³⁹ The following cities are those with significant Uighur populations.



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Urumqi skyline

Urumqi (Urumchi)

Urumqi is the capital of Xinjiang and its most populous city. Situated along the southern rim of the Junggar Basin, it lies in the foothills of the Tien Shan, near a gap in the range that leads into the Turpan Depression. Of the world's major cities, it is reportedly the farthest city from an ocean—some 2,250 km (1,398 mi).⁴⁰ Urumqi's location historically made it an important transit point on regional trade routes. Today, it remains a major trade and transportation hub—both within Xinjiang and between greater China and Central Asia and beyond.⁴¹ Under the PRC, the city has grown into a booming commercial and industrial center based on the region's rich resources, which include oil and coal. The city lies within an oasis belt, and the surrounding region has been developed agriculturally. While it is now dominated by Han, the city's population is diverse, including a substantial Uighur community.⁴² Long-running ethnic tensions between Han and Uighur residents manifested in a series of deadly riots in July 2009, provoking a city-wide lockdown. The city's greater metropolitan population is estimated at 2.3 million.⁴³



© Bert van Dijk
Turpan

Yining (Ghulja)

Yining is the economic center of the Ili River Valley, one of the wettest and most fertile regions of Xinjiang. Situated north of the Ili River, the site occupied by modern Yining was the base of early nomadic powers, including the Chagatai Khanate of the Mongol Empire. Today, the city functions as a processing center for the valley's agricultural and livestock production. Textile manufacturing is also important to the local economy.

While the greater area is dominated by ethnic Kazakhs, Uighurs comprise a substantial share of Yining's population.⁴⁴ In February 1997, the city was the site of a series of Uighur demonstrations that culminated in deadly clashes between protestors and security forces.⁴⁵ Yining's population is approximately 259,000 (2002 estimate).⁴⁶

³⁸ New York Times. Lague, David. "China Now Pays Troops Involved in Nuclear Tests." 28 January 2008.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/28/world/asia/28china.html>

³⁹ "The Demography of Xinjiang [p. 257]." Toops, Stanley W. In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed.

Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=FHq7Ib1Pb8UC&pg=PA257&dq=Xinjiang:+China%E2%80%99s+Muslim+Borderland+large+countingent+of+%22volunteers%22&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

⁴⁰ *China*, 8th Ed. Harper, Damian, et al. "Ürümqi [p. 842]." 2002. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

⁴¹ Slate. Kucera, Joshua. "Dispatches from China's Wild West: The New Silk Road." 6 March 2008.

<http://www.slate.com/id/2185456/entry/2185460/>

⁴² Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Urumqi." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9074507>

⁴³ The New York Times. Wong, Edward. "China Locks Down Restive Region After Deadly Clashes." 6 July 2009.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/07/world/asia/07china.html?pagewanted=1&sq=urumqi&st=cse&scp=2>

⁴⁴ "The Ecology of Xinjiang [p. 267]." Toops, Stanley W. In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=tfWq65DIgxC&pg=PA267&dq=Xinjiang:+China%E2%80%99s+Muslim+Borderland+yining+30,000+48+percent&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

Turpan (Turfan)

Turpan is located in east-central Xinjiang, on the northern edge of the Turpan Depression, where the weather is famously hot and dry. Historically, the city's location made it a major crossing point on the Silk Road, a series of trade routes connecting the East and West, with routes running to the northern and southern basins. The city lies within a fertile oasis that was traditionally irrigated via *kariz* (*karez*), a system of underground channels that transport mountain runoff to agricultural fields. As the *kariz* have been increasingly replaced by electrically powered pumps, the region remains agriculturally productive, with major crops including cotton, grains, grapes, and other fruits.⁴⁷ Local industry—including mining, food processing, and textile manufacturing—has greatly expanded in recent decades. While the majority of the local population remains Uighur, Han now have a significant presence. The ancient site of Gaochang, which served as the base of the ancient Uighur empire, is located just southeast of Turpan.⁴⁸ While the population of the city proper is approximately 123,000 (2000 census), an estimated 255,000 (2003) live in the greater metropolitan area.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. "Chapter 7: Between China and the World (1990s–2000s) [pp. 331–333]." 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

⁴⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Kuldja." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9046383>

⁴⁷ *Xinjiang – China's Muslim Far Northwest*. Dillon, Michael. "Chapter 1: Xinjiang's Geographical Position [p. 5]." 2004. London: Routledge.

⁴⁸ *China*, 8th Ed. Harper, Damian, et al. "Turpan [p. 849]." 2002. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

⁴⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Turfan." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9073827>

Kashgar (Kashi)

Situated in the far-western reaches of the Tarim Basin, this remote oasis city retains a strong Uighur majority within an otherwise diverse population that includes Tajiks, Kyrgyz, and Uzbeks. The greater region—the western part of the basin—has been known as Kashgaria. The city itself lies between the Taklamakan Desert and the foothills of the Tien Shan (to the north) and Pamirs (to the west). This location, at the convergence of historic Silk Road routes, has long made Kashgar a major trading hub. Today, such activity occurs throughout the city’s bustling bazaars and markets. Fed by wells and the Kashgar River, the surrounding oasis produces cotton and a variety of fruits and grains. The city is also known as a center for handicrafts, including textiles, leather goods, and pottery. In recent years, improvements in regional transportation—air, train, and highway—have reduced the city’s remoteness.⁵⁰ An extensive, ongoing modernization of the historic quarter of the city—supposedly to eliminate earthquake risks—has also affected its historic character.⁵¹ It has a population of approximately 229,500 (2002 estimate).⁵²



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Kashgar street

Hotan (Khotan)

Hotan is an oasis city situated on the southern edge of the Taklamakan Desert in the Tarim Basin. As an administrative seat, it oversees the string of oasis cities lining the southern edge of the basin. Formed from two rivers flowing down from the Kunlun Mountains, the Hotan (Khotan) River runs northward through the oasis into the desert. These precious waters, which fill a local reservoir, allow Hotan to function as a regional agricultural center; major crops include cotton and various grains. Like many other cities in Xinjiang, Hotan has a long history as a trade outpost. Today, it is known for its jade and handcrafted textiles, including silk, cotton, and wool.⁵³ With only limited industry, it is reportedly one of the poorest cities in Xinjiang.⁵⁴ It has approximately 101,750 residents (2000 census), the majority of whom are Uighur.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ *China*, 8th Ed. Harper, Damian, et al. “South-West Xinjiang – Kashgaria [pp. 855–856].” 2002. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

⁵¹ New York Times. Wines, Michael. “To Protect an Ancient City, China Moves to Raze It.” 27 May 2009.

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/28/world/asia/28kashgar.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&ref=global-home

⁵² Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Kashgar.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9044793>

⁵³ *China*, 8th Ed. Harper, Damian, et al. “Hotan [pp. 866–867].” 2002. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

⁵⁴ “The Ecology of Xinjiang: A Focus on Water [p. 266].” Toops, Stanley W. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

⁵⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Hotan.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9040640>

History

Early History and Peoples

The territory comprising modern Xinjiang historically served as a crossroads for diverse Eurasian peoples. Archeological evidence of permanent human settlement in the region dates back to the Neolithic Era (8000–2000 B.C.E). At that time, small-scale agriculture supplemented hunting and gathering as the means of subsistence. By the early 2nd millennium B.C.E. (during the Bronze Age), regional peoples had increasingly adopted animal husbandry. The Iron Age, which began in Xinjiang about 1200 B.C.E., was marked by the spread of nomadic pastoralism. One early nomadic group in the region was the Saka (Saks), also known as the Sai or, more broadly, as the Scythians. Regarded as skillful horsemen and warriors, these Indo-European nomads established themselves throughout Central Eurasia, including parts of Xinjiang, during the first millennium B.C.E. Other early inhabitants of the Xinjiang region included the Yuezhi (Yueh-chih), Wusun (Usun), and the Xiongnu (Hsiung-nu).⁵⁶



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Buddhist fresco in the
Tarim Basin, 9th century

The Xiongnu, a confederation of nomadic tribes from Mongolia, took control of much of Xinjiang in the 2nd century B.C.E., when they defeated and displaced the Yuezhi.⁵⁷ Possibly related to the Huns, the Xiongnu long posed a threat to Chinese power in the east; their invasions over the preceding centuries prompted the building of the Great Wall.⁵⁸ The Han dynasty, the Chinese power from 206 B.C.E.–221 C.E., made inroads into Xinjiang in the 2nd century B.C.E. in an effort to subjugate the Xiongnu. While the Xiongnu retained a significant presence, the Han established a protectorate over the region in 60 B.C.E; thereafter, it developed military-run farms (*tuntian*) in the area.⁵⁹ This period is officially cited by the PRC government as the inauguration of Chinese power in the Xinjiang region.⁶⁰

Power struggles between the Han and Xiongnu continued over the following centuries. During this time, the Silk Road carried merchants, travelers, and goods through the Tarim Basin of southern Xinjiang.⁶¹ In general, northern Xinjiang was home to nomadic peoples, while the Tarim and Turpan Basins supported sedentary communities formed around oasis agriculture and trade; this pattern would remain for centuries. As both Xiongnu and Han power waned, the region was effectively under local control by the 3rd century C.E. From the 4th through 7th centuries, power shifted between various tribal confederations, including the Ruanruan (Rouran), Hephthalites, and Gokturks (Kuk Turks). The Chinese reasserted authority in the region during the Sui dynasty

⁵⁶ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 1: Ancient Encounters (Earliest Times—8th Century) [pp. 8–14].” 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=8FVvWq31MtMC&pg=PA8&dq=eurasian+crossroads+conduit+west-east&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

⁵⁷ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 1: Ancient Encounters (Earliest Times—8th Century) [pp. 18–19].” 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=8FVvWq31MtMC&pg=PA18&dq=eurasian+crossroads+conduit+west-east&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

⁵⁸ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Xiongnu.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9041305>

⁵⁹ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 1: Ancient Encounters (Earliest Times—8th Century) [p. 22].” 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=8FVvWq31MtMC&pg=PA22&dq=eurasian+crossroads+conduit+west-east&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

⁶⁰ Xinhua. Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China. “History and Development of Xinjiang.” May 2003. http://news.xinhuanet.com/zhengfu/2003/06/12/content_916306.htm

⁶¹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Xinjiang: History.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-71463>

(581–617) and under the Tang dynasty (618–906), although the Tang dynasty’s control over Xinjiang was intermittent and often indirect. In the latter case, administration was typically carried out by Turks. Tang forces withdrew from the region in the mid 8th century as they faced internal rebellion elsewhere in the empire.⁶²

The Uighurs

In 744, the Uighurs, a confederation of Turkic nomadic tribes, established an empire based in Mongolia. (Uighur is thought to mean “alliance” or “union.”) Their territory extended into northern Xinjiang following the decline of Tang power. After their empire was toppled by a Kyrgyz invasion in 840, the Uighurs moved southward. Most of them settled along the northern slope of the Tien Shan and in the Turpan Basin of Xinjiang. From a capital at Qocho (Gaochang) in the Turpan region, Uighur power extended over the Urumqi area, the Hami Basin, and the settlements of the northern Tarim Basin; this domain became known as Uighurstan. The Uighurs intermarried over the following centuries with the Indo-European and other Turkic peoples who inhabited or came to the region. Thus, while they are not the direct ancestors of the modern Uighurs, they are among their predecessors. (The modern Uighurs, whose culture is significantly different than that of the earlier group, were not known as Uighurs until the 20th century, when the term was broadly applied to the sedentary Turkic-speaking Muslims of Xinjiang’s oases.)^{63, 64, 65}



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Genghis Khan

To the west of the Uighurs, the Karakhanids, another Turkic tribal confederation, took control of a large swath of Central Asia, including areas of southeastern Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and southwestern Xinjiang. Under the Karakhanids (ca. 840–1211) Islam spread among the Turkic peoples of Central Asia, eventually overshadowing Buddhism, which had grown popular among Uighurs, and indigenous religions such as animism.⁶⁶ In the early 12th century, the Uighurs submitted to the Kara Khitai (Western Liao) dynasty, which was founded by members of the fragmented Tang dynasty that had formerly ruled over northern China. The Kara Khitai, also known as the Khitans, also extended their rule over the Karakhanids to the west. The Uighurs maintained local administrative control under the Kara Khitai but they ultimately resisted their authority. In 1209, the Uighurs pledged allegiance to the Mongol leader Genghis (Chinggis) Khan, who had risen to power by consolidating the many tribes of the Mongolian steppe.⁶⁷

⁶² “Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late Nineteenth Century [pp. 36–40].” Millward, James A. and Peter C. Perdue. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

⁶³ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 1: Ancient Encounters (Earliest Times–8th Century) [pp. 42–46].” 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=8FVWq31MtMC&pg=PA42&dq=eurasian+crossroads+conduit+west-east&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

⁶⁴ “Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late Nineteenth Century [pp. 41–44].” Millward, James A. and Peter C. Perdue. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

⁶⁵ “The Chinese Program of Development and Control, 1978–2001 [pp. 102–103].” Gladney, Dru C. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

⁶⁶ *Xinjiang – China’s Muslim Far Northwest*. Dillon, Michael. “Chapter 2: Xinjiang Before 1949: A Historical Outline [p. 11].” 2004. London: Routledge.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=hQhQ3QKDezsC&pg=PA11&dq=Xinjiang+%E2%80%93+China%E2%80%99s+Muslim+Far+Northwest+Islam+Karakhanids+960&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

⁶⁷ “Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late Nineteenth Century [pp. 41–44].” Millward, James A. and Peter C. Perdue. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Mongol Powers

The Mongol armies of Genghis Khan swept through Xinjiang between 1216 and 1218. The Uighurs, who had already submitted to Mongol rule, supplied troops to the Mongol army and adopted administrative roles in the growing empire.⁶⁸ Upon the death of Genghis Khan in 1227, the Mongol Empire was divided among his male heirs. At that time, the empire stretched from the Caspian Sea to the east coast of China. Xinjiang and much of Central Asia were left to Chagatai, Genghis' second son, whose territory became known as the Chagatai Khanate.⁶⁹ After further expansion, the great Mongol khanate to the east became known as the Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368) under Genghis' grandson, Kublai Khan. Dissention within and between the various divisions of the Mongol Empire led to its collapse in the 14th century.



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Ogedei Khan

The Chagatai Khanate split into eastern and western khanates in the 1330s. The Chagataids who retained power in the region over the following centuries were known as Moghuls (“Mongols” in Persian).⁷⁰ The eastern Moghul khanate, which comprised areas of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Xinjiang, became known as “Moghulistan.”⁷¹ The Moghuls nominally ruled over the region from the 14th to 17th centuries, although real power often lay with other groups, such as the Dughlat clan of the Tarim Basin. Under the Muslim Moghuls, the spread of Islam throughout the Xinjiang region was completed. This was achieved, in large part, by Sufis, the practitioners of a mystical form of Islam, who disseminated the religion among the region’s nomadic tribes.⁷² The dominant Sufi order in the area was the Naqshbandiyya. Its competing local branches—led by “masters” known as Khojas—effectively gained control over the Tarim Basin by the latter 17th century.⁷³

During this time, another Mongol tribe rose to power. In the 17th and early 18th centuries, the Zunghar (or Kalymyks), a confederation of Mongol Oyrat (Oirat) tribes, developed a powerful nomadic state based in the steppes of northern Xinjiang (Dzungaria). They expanded their territory by staging raids into Kazakh lands to the west and taking control over the Turpan and Tarim Basins to the south. They used early modern weaponry, including small cannons strapped to the backs of camels.⁷⁴ Their exploits brought them into conflict with the expanding Qing (Ch’ing) dynasty, a Manchu-founded empire based in northeastern China. Following decades of

⁶⁸ “Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late Nineteenth Century [p. 47].” Millward, James A. and Peter C. Perdue. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

⁶⁹ *Xinjiang – China’s Muslim Far Northwest*. Dillon, Michael. “Chapter 2: Xinjiang Before 1949: A Historical Outline [p. 12].” 2004. London: Routledge.
<http://books.google.com/books?id=hQhQ3QKDezsC&pg=PA12&dq=Xinjiang+%E2%80%93+China%E2%80%99s+Muslim+Far+Northwest+Chagatai+Khanate+Chinggis+Khan&cd=2#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

⁷⁰ The Moghuls of Central Asia are not to be confused with the Muslim Mughul Dynasty of India.

⁷¹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “History of Central Asia: The Middle Ages: The Mongol Epoch: Mongol Rule.” 2009.
<http://search.eb.com/eb/article-73544>

⁷² “Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late Nineteenth Century [pp. 46–48].” Millward, James A. and Peter C. Perdue. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

⁷³ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 3: Between Islam and China (16th–19th Centuries) [pp. 83–88].” 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.
<http://books.google.com/books?id=8FVsWq31MtMC&pg=PA83&dq=Eurasian+Crossroads+Naqshbandiyya+khoja&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

⁷⁴ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 3: Between Islam and China (16th–19th Centuries) [pp. 88–91].” 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.
<http://books.google.com/books?id=8FVsWq31MtMC&pg=PA88&dq=Eurasian+Crossroads+Zunghar+Kalmyk&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

intermittent conflict, the Qing destroyed the weakening Zunghar state in the late 1750s, resulting in the death or disappearance of the entire Zunghar population.⁷⁵

The Qing Dynasty

The Qing era (1644–1911) was a time of massive territorial expansion for the empire, which incorporated Tibet, Mongolia, and Xinjiang, among other regions, into its fold. Following the destruction of the Zunghar state, the Qing gradually implemented control over Xinjiang from an administrative seat at Yining, also known as Ili or Ghulja. The Qing retained local leaders in the administrative structure, established military colonies (*tuntian*), and encouraged migration to targeted areas of the region. Despite development efforts, Xinjiang—particularly the southern basin—remained insecure and susceptible to internal rebellion.⁷⁶

In the 1820s and early 1830s, invasions supported or spearheaded by the nearby Khanate of Kokand—a Muslim state in Central Asia—temporarily disrupted Qing rule in Kashgar and other Tarim Basin settlements.⁷⁷ These Muslim insurgencies—motivated by both commercial and religious interests—anticipated a series of Muslim uprisings that spread throughout Xinjiang in 1864. Amid the ensuing disorder, Yakub Beg, a military leader from Kokand, took control of Kashgar in 1865. He soon extended his authority throughout the Tarim Basin, where he proclaimed himself the leader of the independent state of Kashgaria. Meanwhile, regional instability also prompted incursions from the Russians, whose territorial expansion into Siberia and Central Asia had long ago brought them into contact with Xinjiang. While some Qing officials suggested that Xinjiang be abandoned, Qing forces embarked on a campaign to retake the region. They successfully defeated the late Yakub Beg’s troops in 1878, and, in 1881, the Russians withdrew from their positions in the Ili River valley. The reconquest of the region was made official in 1884, when Xinjiang was formally incorporated into the Qing Empire as a province.⁷⁸

Over the following decades, the Qing sought to establish direct control over the region through the development of a bureaucratic administration increasingly staffed with Han Chinese. Uighurs, who were long concentrated in the Tarim Basin, migrated in large numbers to areas of northern and eastern Xinjiang, where conflict had left fertile lands unused.⁷⁹ A series of internal conflicts and military defeats to Western powers, including the first Opium War (1839–1842) and the Boxer Rebellion (1900), contributed to the Qing Empire’s decline. Its last emperor was overthrown in the Chinese Revolution of 1911–1912, bringing to an end a long history of imperial rule.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ “Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late Nineteenth Century [pp. 48–54].” Millward, James A. and Peter C. Perdue. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

⁷⁶ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 3: Between Islam and China (16th–19th Centuries) [pp. 97–104].” 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.
<http://books.google.com/books?id=8FVvWq31MtMC&pg=PA97&dq=eurasian+crossroads+conduit+west-east&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

⁷⁷ *Xinjiang – China’s Muslim Far Northwest*. Dillon, Michael. “Chapter 2: Xinjiang Before 1949: A Historical Outline [pp. 18–19].” 2004. London: Routledge.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=hQhQ3QKDezsC&pg=PA18&dq=Xinjiang+%E2%80%93+China%E2%80%99s+Muslim+Far+Northwest+khanate+of+Kokand+Islamic+forces&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

⁷⁸ “Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late Nineteenth Century [pp. 57–62].” Millward, James A. and Peter C. Perdue. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

⁷⁹ “Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late Nineteenth Century [pp. 64–67].” Millward, James A. and Peter C. Perdue. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

⁸⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Qing Dynasty.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9082155>

Warlords, Unrest, and Fleeting Independence

Under the newly-founded Republic of China, Xinjiang came under the control of Yang Zengxin; he became governor of the province in 1911 shortly after seizing power amid the revolution. Yang was a skillful politician who consolidated power by embracing his enemies before eliminating them via arrest or execution. Amid a period of “warlordism” in China, he maintained strict control over the region until his assassination in 1928. During his rule, the spread of schools combining Islamic and Turkic studies with a broad, modern education laid the foundation for the development of Turkic nationalism in Xinjiang. (These schools followed what is known throughout Central Asia as the jadidist educational model.) Under the rule of Jin Shuren, Yang’s successor, tensions between the ruling Chinese, Uighur leaders, and other regional factions began to mount. A Uighur-led uprising broke out in Hami in 1931 and widespread rebellion swept through Xinjiang in the winter of 1932–1933.⁸¹



© William Vandivert
Sheng Shicai

In April 1933, Jin was overthrown in a coup and replaced by Sheng Shicai, a veteran military officer. In November of that year, Uighur leaders based in Khotan and Kashgar established a short-lived Eastern Turkestan Republic, which was to be a constitutional Islamic state.⁸² It was overthrown 3 months later—not by the Sheng government, but by Hui (Chinese Muslim) forces led by the warlord Ma Zhongying. Over the following years, Sheng sought to suppress Uighur—or more broadly, Turkic Muslim—resistance movements while receiving support from the Soviet Union and maintaining relative autonomy from the national Chinese government.⁸³

Sheng was ultimately removed from power in 1944 by the Nationalist government known as the Kuomintang (Guomindang), or KMT (GMD). That year, a renewed Eastern Turkestan Republic (ETR) emerged in northern Xinjiang in opposition to the KMT; this uprising is known to the Chinese as the “Three Districts Revolution” in reference to the Ili, Altay, and Tarbagatay districts of northern Xinjiang. Soon thereafter the KMT entered into renewed civil conflict with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) following a temporary alliance against the Japanese during World War II. While intermittently cooperating with the KMT, the multi-ethnic ETR operated with Soviet support until 1949. That year, the CCP, led by Mao Zedong, defeated the KMT in the Chinese Civil War. The CCP took control of Xinjiang in late 1949 in what is officially described in Chinese sources as a “peaceful liberation.” Following the death of its central leadership in a suspicious plane crash, the ETR was subsumed by the CCP, which established the People’s Republic of China (PRC) on 1 October 1949.⁸⁴

Xinjiang under the People’s Republic of China

The PRC consolidated its control over the region through campaigns against Pan-Islamic and Pan-Turkic interests, including former ETR leaders. It encouraged Han in-migration to the area and enacted land reforms that nationalized and redistributed private property, including land held by the Islamic establishment. These campaigns weakened traditional institutions and leadership

⁸¹ “Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late Nineteenth Century [pp. 68–77].” Millward, James A. and Peter C. Perdue. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick, Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

⁸² *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 5: Between China and the Soviet Union (1910s–1940s) [pp. 197–206].” 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

⁸³ *Xinjiang – China’s Muslim Far Northwest*. Dillon, Michael. “Chapter 2: Xinjiang Before 1949: A Historical Outline [pp. 21–22].” 2004. London: Routledge.

⁸⁴ *Xinjiang – China’s Muslim Far Northwest*. Dillon, Michael. “Chapter 4: The Three Districts Revolution and ‘Peaceful Revolution’: The CCP Takes Political and Military Control [pp. 32–36].” 2004. London: Routledge.

while the PRC established its own administration under the CCP. The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, known locally as the *bingtuan* (“the corps”), a quasi-military organization composed largely of demobilized, ethnic Han troops, was founded in 1954 to secure and develop the region. In the following year, on 1 October 1955, the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region was formally established; its administrative structure included autonomous counties for various regional “nationalities,” or ethnic groups.⁸⁵

In 1956, PRC leader Mao Zedong launched the Hundred Flowers Campaign, which encouraged open criticism of the PRC government but was soon followed by a severe crackdown on dissenters. In Xinjiang, “local nationalists,” Muslim leaders, and other non-Han political figures were purged as part of the campaign. Under the Great Leap Forward (1958–1961), when a large-scale collectivization program was implemented throughout China, Xinjiang suffered from famine and economic decline. Large numbers of Uighurs and Kazakhs fled to Soviet Central Asia during this time. The Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), a reform movement targeting “counterrevolutionary” elements of Chinese society, prompted armed clashes between Red Guard revolutionaries, *bingtuan* troops, and People’s Liberation Army (PLA) forces. It also involved attacks on Uighur (Turkic Muslim) culture, which was derided by many revolutionaries as “foreign.”⁸⁶

Following the Cultural Revolution, a period of “reform and opening” in China was initiated by Deng Xiaoping, who replaced the late Mao Zedong as PRC leader in 1978. During the 1980s, Deng’s economic and sociopolitical reforms led to pronounced economic growth and a moderate revival of Islam in Xinjiang. Furthermore, while the Han remained predominant in local administration, non-Han ethnic groups gained enhanced political representation.⁸⁷ The decade also saw occasional Uighur demonstrations and riots against the PRC and its policies, including nuclear testing at Lop Nur, limits on childbirth, and the ongoing in-migration of Han.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ *Xinjiang – China’s Muslim Far Northwest*. Dillon, Michael. “Chapter 4: The Three Districts Revolution and ‘Peaceful Revolution:’ The CCP Takes Political and Military Control [pp. 35–36].” 2004. London: Routledge.

⁸⁶ “Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late Nineteenth Century [pp. 92–98].” Millward, James A. and Peter C. Perdue. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

[http://books.google.com/books?id=tfWq65DIGxkC&pg=PA94&dq=Xinjiang:+China%E2%80%99s+Muslim+Borderland+Great+Leap+policies+\(anti-Sovietism+and+antilocal+nationalism\)&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=tfWq65DIGxkC&pg=PA94&dq=Xinjiang:+China%E2%80%99s+Muslim+Borderland+Great+Leap+policies+(anti-Sovietism+and+antilocal+nationalism)&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false)

⁸⁷ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 6: In the People’s Republic of China (1950s–1980s) [pp. 276–284].” 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

⁸⁸ East-West Center Washington. *Policy Studies*, No. 6. Millward, James. “Violent Separatism in Xinjiang: A Critical Assessment [pp. 8–9].” 2004. www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/PS006.pdf

Unrest and Development

In the 1990s, ethnic tensions, independence campaigns, and long-running grievances against the government manifested themselves in additional public protests and concerted acts of violence. In January 1990, a student demonstration was held in the city of Yarkant (Yarkand) after PRC authorities shut down a privately run Islamic school.⁸⁹ Later that year, an Islam-inspired riot in protest of various PRC policies erupted at Baren in southern Xinjiang, resulting in attacks on local security forces and government infrastructure. Chinese officials claimed the incident occurred as part of an Islamic extremist separatist movement.⁹⁰ (This event is often described as the “turning point” in PRC policy toward the region.) The PRC feared further instability and responded by enhancing its restrictions on the practice of Islam; this resulted in the closure of many mosques and Quranic schools.⁹¹



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Uighur riots

Chinese officials claimed the incident occurred as part of an Islamic extremist separatist movement.⁹⁰ (This event is often described as the “turning point” in PRC policy toward the region.) The PRC feared further instability and responded by enhancing its restrictions on the practice of Islam; this resulted in the closure of many mosques and Quranic schools.⁹¹

One of the most significant incidents of the decade occurred at Yining (Ghulja) in February 1997, when Uighur protests against the government escalated into violent clashes between demonstrators and security forces. Later that month, three public buses were bombed in Urumqi, resulting in nine deaths and more than two dozen injuries. The PRC responded with a sweeping, region-wide crackdown, resulting in large numbers of arrests and executions. Human rights organizations reported that many Uighurs faced arbitrary arrest, detention, abuse, and execution; such claims were frequently repeated in coming years as the PRC government engineered successive crackdowns.⁹²

According to the PRC government, more than 200 terrorist attacks were carried out by separatists in Xinjiang between 1990 and 2001. The PRC attributed many of these attacks to the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (EITM), a small, Uighur-led militant separatist group.⁹³ Many observers have accused the PRC government of exaggerating the threat of what it calls the “three evil forces”—terrorism, separatism, and extremism—to crack down on political dissent and religious practice in Xinjiang. This has been seen particularly in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. Analysts assert that many of the “terrorist incidents” cited by Chinese officials were instead demonstrations and riots resulting from social unrest.⁹⁴ Likewise, the U.S. State Department has noted the PRC government’s “tendency to conflate concerns about separatism and religious extremism with peaceful expressions of religious beliefs and political views.”⁹⁵ Indeed, a survey of major outbreaks of civil unrest and violence in the 1990s and early 2000s indicates a wide range of participants, circumstances, and motivating factors.⁹⁶ Moreover,

⁸⁹ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 7: Between China and the World (1990s–2000s) [p. 325].” 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

⁹⁰ *Xinjiang – China’s Muslim Far Northwest*. Dillon, Michael. “Chapter 6: Political and Religious Opposition to Han Chinese Control (1949–1996): Cultural, Nationalist, and Islamist [pp. 62–65].” 2004. London: Routledge.

⁹¹ *Xinjiang – China’s Muslim Far Northwest*. Dillon, Michael. “Chapter 7: Beijing’s Response to Opposition in Xinjiang (1980–1996) [pp. 73–75].” 2004. London: Routledge.

⁹² *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 7: Between China and the World (1990s–2000s) [pp. 331–334].” 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

⁹³ Council on Foreign Relations. Fletcher, Holly and Jayshree Bajoria. “The East Turkestan Islamic Movement.” 31 July 2008. http://www.cfr.org/publication/9179/east_turkestan_islamic_movement_etim.html

⁹⁴ Council on Foreign Relations. Bhattacharji, Preeti. “Uighurs and China’s Xinjiang Region.” 6 July 2009. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/16870/>

⁹⁵ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. *International Religious Freedom Report 2009*. “China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau).” 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127268.htm>

⁹⁶ East-West Center Washington. *Policy Studies*, No. 6. Millward, James. “Violent Separatism in Xinjiang: A Critical Assessment [pp. 14–22].” 2004. www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/PS006.pdf

some analysts have asserted that the government's harsh crackdowns have incited violence by radicalizing formerly moderate Uighurs.⁹⁷

Throughout this time, two highly publicized campaigns initiated by the PRC—the “Open up the North-West” program of 1992 and the “Great Development of the West” program of 2000—targeted Xinjiang for intensive economic development. These campaigns involved massive investment in regional infrastructure and the development of Xinjiang's rich natural resources, particularly oil and gas.⁹⁸ They also entailed the continued in-migration of large numbers of Han. While the development programs have raised the general standard of living in Xinjiang, economic disparity persists between Han and Uighurs, the latter of whom have generally remained poorer. Such disparity has been attributed to systemic discrimination against Uighurs, whose religious affiliations and linguistic background often impair them from competing against the better-connected Han for jobs and resources in the largely state-controlled economy.⁹⁹



© David Vilder
Han Chinese rioting in Urumqi, 2009

These economic issues, along with the PRC's restrictions on religious practice, have contributed to continued social unrest in the region. The militant ETIM is believed operational under the name of the Turkistan Islamic Party, which claimed responsibility for terrorist attacks prior to the Beijing Olympic Games of 2008.¹⁰⁰ Tensions again erupted among the civilian population in July 2009, when Uighur protests in Urumqi culminated in clashes between Uighurs, Han residents, and security forces. The protests left nearly 200 dead according to PRC government officials. PRC authorities again responded with a sweeping crackdown—the latest of several “strike hard and punish” campaigns in the region. The security sweep brought another wave of arrests and executions, as well as reports of severe human rights abuses carried out against Uighurs.¹⁰¹ At the end of December 2009, Xinjiang adopted a regional law (effective February 2010) to “enhance ethnic unity.” The law obligates all Xinjiang citizens to work toward inter-ethnic unity and against secession, with penalties and prosecution for anyone who endangers ethnic unity or provokes secession.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ MSNBC.com. Associated Press. “China Crackdown Fueling Xinjiang Attacks.” 14 August 2008. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/26203482/>

⁹⁸ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 7: Between China and the World (1990s–2000s) [pp. 298–300].” 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

⁹⁹ Council on Foreign Relations. Bhattacharji, Preeti. “Uighurs and China's Xinjiang Region.” 6 July 2009. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/16870/>

¹⁰⁰ Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Terrorism 2008*. “Chapter 2: Country Reports: East Asia and Pacific Overview.” 30 April 2009. <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2008/122413.htm>

¹⁰¹ New York Times. Wong, Edward. “China Executes 9 for Their Roles in Ethnic Riots in July.” 9 November 2009. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/10/world/asia/10xinjiang.html>

¹⁰² China View. “Xinjiang Adopts Regional Law to Enhance Ethnic Unity.” 31 December 2009. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-12/31/content_12734112.htm

Economy

Historically, animal husbandry (or pastoralism), oasis farming, and trade were the primary economic activities in Xinjiang. Despite earlier efforts to develop the region, its economy was overwhelmingly agricultural when the PRC took power in 1949. Xinjiang—like greater China—suffered major socioeconomic setbacks from the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution. Sustained economic growth came to the region only after Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping initiated reforms, beginning in 1978, that reformed and opened up the isolated, state-controlled Chinese economy to outside market forces. Following the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, international market forces had a significant effect on Xinjiang's economy through expanded trade with the newly independent Central Asian republics.¹⁰³ As a result of the PRC's intensive development campaigns, the Xinjiang economy has grown considerably over the last few decades. According to the PRC, Xinjiang's local GDP (gross domestic product) reached 420.3 billion *yuan* (roughly USD 61.5 billion) in 2008, an almost 2000% increase from 1978. Notably, industry has now replaced agriculture as the driving economic force. Like that of greater China, the Xinjiang economy has public (state-owned and operated) and private sectors.¹⁰⁴



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Textile vendor in Kashgar



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Livestock market in Kashgar

Agriculture

Animal husbandry and oasis farming remain important economic activities, particularly among certain ethnic groups such as the Kazakhs and Uighurs. Livestock herding, mainly sheep, is more common in the north, where steppe lands provide pasture. Whereas nomadic pastoralism was once commonly practiced, especially among the Kazakhs, most livestock herders are now sedentary as a result of government-run settlement programs.¹⁰⁵ Oasis agriculture, common in the south, was

traditionally irrigated through systems such as *kariz*. Reservoirs, canals, electrical pumps, and drip and spray irrigation systems are increasingly used to sustain crops in the dry environment. Xinjiang's farms are mostly large-scale, commercial, and mechanized.¹⁰⁶ In recent decades, the area of cultivated land has greatly expanded, totaling roughly 3.4 million hectares in 2001—almost a 300% increase from 1949.¹⁰⁷

Cotton—a water-intensive crop—is the region's primary commercial crop. Xinjiang grew more than three million tons of it in 2008, making it China's largest cotton producer.¹⁰⁸ Approximately 40% of the region's cotton is grown on farms operated by the Xinjiang Production and

¹⁰³ "The Economy of Xinjiang [pp. 164-172]." Wiemer, Calla. In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*. Starr, S. Frederick, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

¹⁰⁴ China Daily. Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China. "White Paper on Development and Progress in Xinjiang: Swift Economic Development." 21 September 2009. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/ethnic/2009-09/21/content_8717461_3.htm

¹⁰⁵ *Xinjiang – China's Muslim Far Northwest*. Dillon, Michael. "Chapter 5: The Economy in the Reform and Opening Era [pp. 38–39]." 2004. London: Routledge.

¹⁰⁶ "The Economy of Xinjiang [p. 177]." Wiemer, Calla. In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

¹⁰⁷ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. "Chapter 7: Between China and the World (1990s–2000s) [pp. 313–314]." 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

¹⁰⁸ China Daily. Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China. "White Paper on Development and Progress in Xinjiang: Swift Economic Development." 21 September 2009. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/ethnic/2009-09/21/content_8717461_3.htm

Construction Corps, or *bingtuan*.¹⁰⁹ Wheat and other grains, sugar beets, and a variety of fruits, including grapes, melons, pears, and apples, are also major crops.¹¹⁰ In 2008, agriculture, animal husbandry, and related activities—collectively classified by China officials as “primary industry”—accounted for 16.4% of the Xinjiang GDP.¹¹¹

Industry

The primary focus of the PRC’s development efforts in Xinjiang has been the extraction and processing of the region’s rich energy resources and mineral deposits.¹¹² While previous exploration and extraction efforts had been made, significant oil production did not occur in Xinjiang until 1955, when the region’s primary oil field—at Karamay, in the northwest—first opened. Another significant field is located around Dushanzi, along the northern slope of the Tien Shan.¹¹³ Northern Xinjiang remains the site of most of the region’s oil and natural gas extraction, although the southern basin has been increasingly explored and developed in recent years.¹¹⁴ In 2008, Xinjiang produced more than 27 million tons of crude oil, making it China’s second largest petroleum producer. That same year, it ranked first in China for natural gas production, providing 24 billion cubic meters of the energy resource.¹¹⁵ Most of the region’s energy production is controlled by PetroChina; the Chinese government holds majority ownership in the company.¹¹⁶

In addition to oil and gas, Xinjiang also possesses significant deposits of coal, copper, zinc, iron, chrome, nickel, gold, and other minerals.¹¹⁷ Broadly, the string of cities lining the southern rim of the Junggar Basin is the major industrial and economic belt for Xinjiang. Mostly populated by Han, these cities are home to dozens of industrial parks, where refineries, petrochemical plants, iron and steel works, food processing facilities, and other factories operate. Many of these industrial cities were established by the quasi-military Xinjiang Production and Development Corps. Corresponding with the large-scale development of infrastructure in Xinjiang, the construction industry has also boomed in recent years. Newly built railways, highways, and major West–East energy pipelines have expanded transportation and trade capabilities in Xinjiang, connecting it to greater China, Central Asia, and beyond. Overall, industry accounted for 49.7% of Xinjiang’s GDP in 2008.¹¹⁸

¹⁰⁹ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 7: Between China and the World (1990s–2000s) [p. 300].” 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

¹¹⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Xinjiang: Economy: Agriculture.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-280644>

¹¹¹ China Daily. Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China. “White Paper on Development and Progress in Xinjiang: Swift Economic Development.” 21 September 2009. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/ethnic/2009-09/21/content_8717461_3.htm

¹¹² *Xinjiang – China’s Muslim Far Northwest*. Dillon, Michael. “Chapter 5: The Economy in the Reform and Opening Era [p. 39].” 2004. London: Routledge.

¹¹³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Xinjiang: Economy: Resources and Manufacturing.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-280645>

¹¹⁴ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 7: Between China and the World (1990s–2000s) [p. 301].” 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

¹¹⁵ China Daily. Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China. “White Paper on Development and Progress in Xinjiang: Swift Economic Development.” 21 September 2009. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/ethnic/2009-09/21/content_8717461_3.htm

¹¹⁶ “The Economy of Xinjiang [p. 173].” Wiemer, Calla. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland.*, S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

¹¹⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Xinjiang: Economy: Resources and Manufacturing.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-280645>

¹¹⁸ China Daily. Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China. “White Paper on Development and Progress in Xinjiang: Swift Economic Development.” 21 September 2009. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/ethnic/2009-09/21/content_8717461_3.htm

Government

The People's Republic of China (PRC) is a communist state administered by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Formally established on 1 October 1955, Xinjiang is one of China's 5 autonomous regions, or *zizhiqu*; the country also has 22 provinces, 4 municipalities, and 2 special administrative regions (SAR). The region is headed by a CCP regional secretary, who is the *de facto* leader, and a chairman of the regional government; both of these figures are appointed by the central government.¹¹⁹ The regional government also comprises various levels of people's congresses, or legislative bodies, headed by the Xinjiang Regional People's Congress.



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Statue of Mao in Hotan

Xinjiang is subdivided into a complex array of administrative units, including prefectures, counties, urban districts, cities, townships, and villages.¹²⁰ "Autonomous" prefectures and counties—such as the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture or the Tashkorgan Tajik Autonomous County—take their names from local ethnic groups, although such groups do not always comprise the majority in that region. This framework ostensibly provides these groups with a level of self-governance, although local decisions are typically subject to approval by regional and central authorities.^{121, 122}

The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps., or *bingtuan*, continues to play a large role in developing and securing Xinjiang. Comprised mainly of Han, the *bingtuan* is a quasi-military governmental organization said to operate "almost as a state within a state." In addition to managing large-scale farms, it maintains its own militia, police force, and judicial and penal systems; it also operates its own educational and health care facilities.¹²³

¹¹⁹ BBC News. "Regions and Territories: Xinjiang." 3 November 2009. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/country_profiles/8152132.stm

¹²⁰ China Daily. Xinhua. "Brief Intro to Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region." 8 July 2009. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009xinjiangriot/2009-07/08/content_8395417.htm

¹²¹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: China." August 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/China.pdf>

¹²² *Sinicization Beyond the Great Wall: China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region*. Rahman, Anwar. "Chapter 5: Uighur Autonomy & CCP Role [pp. 67–70]." 2005. Leicester, UK: Matador. [http://books.google.com/books?id=wD4GJCBLrQMC&pg=PT77&dq=Sinicization+Beyond+the+Great+Wall:+China%E2%80%99s+Xinjiang+Uighur+Autonomous+Region+xinjiang+uighur+autonomous+region+\(XUAR\)&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=wD4GJCBLrQMC&pg=PT77&dq=Sinicization+Beyond+the+Great+Wall:+China%E2%80%99s+Xinjiang+Uighur+Autonomous+Region+xinjiang+uighur+autonomous+region+(XUAR)&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false)

¹²³ *Xinjiang – China's Muslim Far Northwest*. Dillon, Michael. "Chapter 4: The Three Districts Revolution and 'Peaceful Liberation': The CCP Takes Political and Military Control [p. 35]." 2004. London: Routledge.

Media

China's electronic and print media are managed and monitored by various state organizations, including the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television; the General Administration of Press and Publication; the Ministry of Information Industry; and the CCP Central Propaganda Department. These government offices establish and enforce regulations for print and broadcast material. Major newspapers and television and radio stations are state-owned and operated. Access to the internet is also regulated, and additional government agencies track, monitor, and restrict its use.¹²⁴ In recent years, expanded privatization of commercial and media interests has provided for greater variety of coverage, but controls remain tight.¹²⁵



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Boys in Kashgar watching TV

Within Xinjiang, television and radio broadcasts are issued in Uighur, Mandarin, and, in some areas, Kazakh.¹²⁶ Print media, both scholastic and non-scholastic, is largely limited to these languages,¹²⁷ although some materials may be available for Kyrgyz, Mongolian, and Xibe (Sibo) speakers.¹²⁸ Following the Urumqi riots in July 2009, Chinese authorities suspended text-messaging and international telephone service in Xinjiang, as well as access to the internet aside from a few sites—most of them run by the PRC. As of January 2010, the international telephone and internet service restrictions remained in place, although text-messaging within China was again allowed.¹²⁹¹³⁰ In the wake of the riots, many Uighurs decried the official coverage of the incident, claiming that the PRC highlighted Uighur attacks on Han while neglecting to report violence directed at Uighurs.¹³¹

¹²⁴ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: China [p. 33–34]." August 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/China.pdf>

¹²⁵ Council on Foreign Relations. Zisis, Carin and Preeti Bhattacharji. "Media Censorship in China." 18 March 2008. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/11515/>

¹²⁶ *Xinjiang – China's Muslim Far Northwest*. Dillon, Michael. "Chapter 3: Ethnic Groups in Northwest China on the Eve of CCP Control and Uyghur Language and Culture in Twentieth-Century Xinjiang [p. 27]." 2004. London: Routledge. <http://books.google.com/books?id=hQhQ3QKDezsC&pg=PA27&dq=Xinjiang+-+China's+Muslim+Far+Northwest+Kazakh-language+transmissions&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

¹²⁷ East-West Center Washington. *Policy Studies*, No. 15. Dwyer, Arienne M. "The Xinjiang Conflict: Uyghur Identity, Language Policy, and Political Discourse [p. 45]." 2005. <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/PS015.pdf>

¹²⁸ People's Daily Online. Xinhua. "Over 70% Local Publications in Xinjiang Use Minority Languages: White Paper." 21 September 2009. <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90782/90873/6763639.html>

¹²⁹ The Globe and Mail. MacKinnon, Mark. "Urumqi's Internet, Phone Still Off 4 Months After Riots." 1 November 2009. <http://www.uyghurnews.com/american/Read.asp?UighurNews=urumqis-internet-phone-still-off-4-months-after-riots&ItemID=YW-11720099253500271896>

¹³⁰ Associated Press. Anna, Cara. "What Internet? China Region Cut Off 6 Months." 19 January 2010. http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34938977/ns/technology_and_science-security/

¹³¹ Radio Free Asia. "Media Strategy in Xinjiang." 16 July 2009. <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/China-media-strategy-07162009094444.html>

Ethnic Groups

As a Central Asian crossroads, Xinjiang has historically been home to diverse peoples. According to the PRC, it is today home to representatives of 55 ethnic groups, or “nationalities,” the three largest of which are Uighurs, Han, and Kazakhs. While they are widely distributed throughout the region, Uighurs are concentrated in the oases of the southern basin. Despite the influx of Han, Uighurs retain a slight majority in terms of population, accounting for 9.65 million, or roughly 46% of the populace, as of 2007. Han, who are by far the predominant ethnic group in China, number approximately 8.24 million, or roughly 40% of the population. They are concentrated in the urban centers of northern and eastern Xinjiang, although their presence has also grown in the south. Kazakhs, with a population of 1.48 million, comprise roughly 7% of the Xinjiang populace. Of Muslim heritage, they are concentrated in the grasslands of the northern highlands and the Ili River valley, where they traditionally practice animal husbandry.¹³²



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Elderly Uighur man

The next largest group is the Hui, who number slightly under one million, or roughly 4.5% of the population. While traditionally Muslim, Hui (known as Dungans or Tungans in Xinjiang) are similar to Han in terms of language and culture due to centuries of assimilation.¹³³ They are widely distributed throughout Xinjiang but are concentrated in various autonomous administrative divisions.¹³⁴ Additional ethnic groups in Xinjiang include Kyrgyz, Mongolians, Tajiks, Xibe (Sibo), Manchu, Uzbeks, and Russians.¹³⁵ Among these groups, the Kyrgyz, Tajiks, and Uzbeks are traditionally Muslim. Most of Xinjiang’s major nationalities, including the Uighurs, have ethnic ties that extend into neighboring countries.

¹³² China Daily. Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China. “White Paper on Development and Progress in Xinjiang: Upholding Ethnic Equality and Unity.” 21 September 2009. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/ethnic/2009-09/21/content_8717461_7.htm

¹³³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Hui.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9041437>

¹³⁴ China.org.cn. “Ethnic Minorities in Xinjiang: The Hui Ethnic Group.” 25 August 2005. <http://www.china.org.cn/english/null/139573.htm>

¹³⁵ China Daily. Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China. “White Paper on Development and Progress in Xinjiang: Upholding Ethnic Equality and Unity.” 21 September 2009. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/ethnic/2009-09/21/content_8717461_7.htm

Languages

Uighur and Mandarin (or Standard Chinese) are the most widely spoken languages in Xinjiang; both are used in official capacities. Uighur, the first language of the Uighur people, belongs to the Turkic group of the Altaic family of languages. It is closely related to Uzbek and more distantly so to Kazakh and Kyrgyz.¹³⁶ Within Xinjiang, Uighur is commonly spoken as a second or third language among non-Han ethnic groups.¹³⁷ A significant language gap persists between Uighurs and Han. Han, as well as the Hui, speak Mandarin as their first language and are generally not fluent or even functional in Uighur. Uighurs who work as government officials and teachers are required to know Mandarin; and depending on their background and schooling, younger Uighurs and those who work in service positions likely have some familiarity with the language. However, many Uighurs, especially those of older generations, may have a low level of proficiency in Mandarin.¹³⁸



© Sheila / flickr.com
Uighur girl in Kashgar

Both Uighur and Mandarin have been taught in school, although the PRC has mandated increasing instruction in Mandarin over the last three decades. While many non-Han groups formerly had a choice, Mandarin is now widely used as the language of instruction. Mandarin is often perceived as more socially and economically viable than “minority” languages.¹³⁹ Additional languages spoken among the region’s many ethnic groups include Kazakh, Mongolian, Kyrgyz, Tajik, and Xibe. Russian may be spoken in many areas due to Xinjiang’s proximity to the former Soviet Republics of Central Asia, where Russian remains widely used.¹⁴⁰ English may be spoken or understood by some.

¹³⁶ *Xinjiang – China’s Muslim Far Northwest*. Dillon, Michael. “Chapter 3: Ethnic Groups in Northwest China on the Eve of CCP Control and Uyghur Language and Culture in Twentieth-Century Xinjiang [pp. 25–28].” 2004. London: Routledge. <http://books.google.com/books?id=hQhQ3QKDezsC&pg=PA27&dq=Xinjiang+China's+Muslim+Far+Northwest+Kazakh-language+transmissions&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

¹³⁷ East-West Center Washington. *Policy Studies*, No. 15. Dwyer, Arianne M. “The Xinjiang Conflict: Uyghur Identity, Language Policy, and Political Discourse [pp. 12–13].” 2005. <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/PS015.pdf>

¹³⁸ *Xinjiang – China’s Muslim Far Northwest*. Dillon, Michael. “Chapter 3: Ethnic Groups in Northwest China on the Eve of CCP Control and Uyghur Language and Culture in Twentieth-Century Xinjiang [pp. 25–28].” 2004. London: Routledge. <http://books.google.com/books?id=hQhQ3QKDezsC&pg=PA27&dq=Xinjiang+China's+Muslim+Far+Northwest+Kazakh-language+transmissions&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

¹³⁹ East-West Center Washington. *Policy Studies*, No. 15. Dwyer, Arianne M. “The Xinjiang Conflict: Uyghur Identity, Language Policy, and Political Discourse [pp. 36–41].” 2005. <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/PS015.pdf>

¹⁴⁰ Slate. Kucera, Joshua. “Dispatches from China’s Wild West: The New Silk Road.” 6 March 2008. <http://www.slate.com/id/2185456/entry/2185460/>

Profile Assessment

1. The Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region is China's largest administrative region.

True. The Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region is located in far northwestern China. Overall, the region measures 1,664,900 sq km (642,821 sq mi), accounting for approximately one sixth of China's total land area. It is the country's largest administrative region.

2. Turpan is the capital of Xinjiang and its most populous city.

False. Urumqi is the capital of Xinjiang and its most populous city. The city's greater metropolitan population is estimated at 2.3 million.

3. Of the streams and rivers that flow into Xinjiang's basins, only one flows to the sea.

True. Of the many streams and rivers that flow into the basins in Xinjiang, only one—the Ertix (Irtysh) River—flows to the sea; all others are inland waterways that terminate in Xinjiang's lowland deserts or diversion of river waters for use in large-scale irrigation schemes.

1. Petroleum and natural gas extraction are minimal in Xinjiang.

False. In 2008, Xinjiang produced more than 27 million tons of crude oil, making it China's second largest petroleum producer. That same year, it ranked first in China for natural gas production, providing 24 billion cubic meters of the energy resource.

2. The Tarim Basin experiences the hottest temperatures in China.

False. The Turpan Depression experiences the hottest temperatures in China; here, a high of 49°C (120°F) has been recorded.

Chapter 2: Religion

Introduction

Traditionally, Uighurs are devout practitioners of a moderate form of Islam. The religion has played a major role in their social and political history, and most Uighurs continue to view it as an essential component of their culture and identity.¹⁴¹ Indeed, the modern use of the term “Uighur” derives from a broad categorization of the “Turk[ic]-speaking Muslim oasis dwellers” of Xinjiang.¹⁴² The Uighurs’ Muslim heritage reflects a long history of contact and exchange with Central Asia, from where the religion first spread into Xinjiang in the 10th century. The ancient Uighurs originally practiced shamanism, Manichaeism (a Gnostic religion), and, later, Buddhism.¹⁴³ By the 15th century, the majority of Uighurs and other Turkic-speaking peoples of central and southern Xinjiang had converted to Islam.¹⁴⁴ Today, their practice of Islam is one of several traits that tie the Uighurs more closely to the peoples of Central Asia than to mainstream Chinese culture.



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Man Praying in a Kashgar mosque

The ongoing integration and development of Xinjiang has been marked by the collision of the Uighurs’ traditional culture—one rooted in Islam—and the policies of the Han-dominated People’s Republic of China (PRC). In recent decades, the PRC government has imposed increasingly severe restrictions on the practice of Islam in Xinjiang. It has targeted the religion as part of a highly publicized campaign against terrorism, separatism, and extremism. While the region faces legitimate security threats, many observers have accused the PRC government of repressing peaceful religious practice and public dissent in the name of counterterrorism and other security concerns.¹⁴⁵ Uighurs have been profoundly affected by the restrictions, which include close government surveillance of religious activity. According to many observers, such restrictions have contributed to further unrest.¹⁴⁶ Under these conditions, the Uighurs’ practice of Islam has become more private and less open to outsiders.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴¹ “Islam in Xinjiang [pp. 338–339].” Fuller, Graham E. and Jonathan N. Lipman. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

¹⁴² “The Chinese Program of Development and Control, 1978–2001 [pp. 102–103].” Gladney, Dru C. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

¹⁴³ “Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late Nineteenth Century [p. 40].” Millward, James A. and Peter C. Perdue. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

¹⁴⁴ “Islam in Xinjiang [p. 326].” Fuller, Graham E. and Jonathan N. Lipman. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

¹⁴⁵ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. *International Religious Freedom Report 2009*. “China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau).” 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127268.htm>

¹⁴⁶ Council on Foreign Relations. Bhattacharji, Preeti. “Uighurs and China’s Xinjiang Region.” 6 July 2009. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/16870/>

¹⁴⁷ “Islam in Xinjiang [p. 331].” Fuller, Graham E. and Jonathan N. Lipman. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Islam in Xinjiang

Islam is a monotheistic religion, meaning that its followers profess faith in a single God. In the Muslim community, or *ummah*, God is known as Allah. The Arabic term *islam* means to “to submit” or “to surrender.” A Muslim, therefore, is one who submits to the will of Allah. Muslims believe that Allah revealed his message to the Prophet Muhammad, a merchant who lived in Arabia from 570 to 632 C.E. They consider Muhammad the last of a long line of prophets that included Abraham (Ibrahim), Moses (Musa), and Jesus (Esa). Allah’s message, as relayed by Muhammad, is recited in the Quran, the sacred scriptures of Islam. Additional sacred texts include the *Hadith*, a collection of the sayings of Muhammad, and the *Sunnah*, which describes the practices of Islam by way of Muhammad’s example.¹⁴⁸



© Fred Chiang
Call to prayer in Kashgar

The essential beliefs and rites of the Islamic faith are encapsulated in the five pillars of Islam. The first and foundational pillar is the sincere recitation of the Muslim declaration of faith: “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah.” The remaining pillars include: performing ritual prayers five times per day; giving alms to the poor and needy; fasting during the holy month of Ramadan; and undertaking a pilgrimage to the Islamic holy city of Mecca.¹⁴⁹ Muslims believe they will be judged for their actions on earth, with the consequences of spending their afterlife in heaven or hell.¹⁵⁰

Islam has two major branches: Sunni and Shi’a. The two sects formed in the 7th century, shortly after the initial spread of Islam, due to disagreements over the selection process for the successor to Muhammad. This issue created a deep divide between the two groups, resulting in a divergence of practices and beliefs. Most Uighurs are Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi school, a moderate form of the religion.¹⁵¹ Xinjiang is home to several additional Muslim groups, including the Kazakhs, Hui, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, and Uzbeks. Xinjiang is thus the only administrative region in China where Muslims form the majority—albeit a slight one.¹⁵² It is important to note, however, that ethnic differences among these groups trump their religious affiliations.

¹⁴⁸ BBC. “Religions: Islam: Texts: The Qur’an.” 8 September 2009. http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/texts/quran_1.shtml

¹⁴⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Islam.” 2009. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/295507/Islam>

¹⁵⁰ BBC. “Religions: Islam: Beliefs: Basic Articles of Faith.” 3 September 2009. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/beliefs/beliefs.shtml>

¹⁵¹ *Muslims in China (The Growth and Influence of Islam in the Nations of Asia and Central Asia)*. Hollihan-Elliot, Sheila. “Chapter 4: Muslim Ethnic Minorities in China [p. 59].” 2006. Philadelphia, PA: Mason Crest Publishers.

¹⁵² Human Rights Watch. *Devastating Blows: Religious Repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang*. “Background.” 11 April 2005. <http://www.hrw.org/en/node/11799/section/5>

Sufism

Sufism, known in the Muslim world as *tasawwuf*, is a mystical form of Islam. Its basic objective is to obtain a direct, personal connection with Allah. Followers seek to achieve this by adhering to the Sufi path, or *tariqah*, a long-term course of practice that involves intensive devotion and study. Sufi practices include ritual prayer (*dhikr* or *zikr*), meditation, and various ascetic or ecstatic activities. Sufi spiritual leaders (*shaykh*) are known in Xinjiang as *ishan*. Traditionally viewed as “living saints,” these holy men are believed to possess special spiritual power known as *baraka*. *Ishan* act as mentors and spiritual guides to students who form brotherhoods—also known as *ishan*—around their teachings.¹⁵³



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Mazars in Xinjiang

Sufism played a major role in the development of Islam in Xinjiang and Central Asia. From the 14th to 17th centuries, Sufi practitioners spread the religion throughout the Xinjiang region. They did so by converting regional nomads, whose migratory lifestyles made them less amenable to Islamic practice than sedentary oasis dwellers. The dominant Sufi order in Xinjiang was the Naqshbandiyya, whose major local branches included the dueling Ishaqiyya and Afaqiyya brotherhoods.¹⁵⁴ Their leaders, known as *Khojas*, periodically wielded political power in the Tarim Basin during the 17th century.¹⁵⁵ Sufi brotherhoods were known to be active through the first half of the 20th century.¹⁵⁶ Today, the Sufi legacy remains influential in Xinjiang, particularly in the historic Uighur heartland of the Tarim Basin. This region is scattered with *mazars*, the tombs of Sufi leaders; these tombs traditionally serve as shrines for Sufi practitioners.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ *Xinjiang – China’s Muslim Far Northwest*. Dillon, Michael. “Chapter 2: Xinjiang Before 1949: A Historical Outline [pp. 16–17].” 2004. London: Routledge.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=hQhQ3QKDezsC&pg=PA17&dq=Xinjiang+%E2%80%93+China%E2%80%99s+Muslim+Far+Northwest+ishan+naqshbandiyya+manchu+qing&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

¹⁵⁴ “Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late Nineteenth Century [p. 47].” Millward, James A. and Peter C. Perdue. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

¹⁵⁵ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 3: Between Islam and China (16th–19th centuries) [pp. 83–98].” 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

¹⁵⁶ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 6: In the People’s Republic of China (1950s–1980s) [p. 250].” 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

¹⁵⁷ *Xinjiang – China’s Muslim Far Northwest*. Dillon, Michael. “Chapter 2: Xinjiang Before 1949: A Historical Outline [pp. 16–17].” 2004. London: Routledge.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=hQhQ3QKDezsC&pg=PA17&dq=Xinjiang+%E2%80%93+China%E2%80%99s+Muslim+Far+Northwest+ishan+naqshbandiyya+manchu+qing&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

Folk Practices

In Xinjiang, as throughout Central Asia, Islam and Sufism are often infused with or practiced alongside folk traditions and beliefs, especially in rural areas. A primary example is the belief in *jinn*, or evil spirits, which are thought to cause sickness or misfortune. Uighurs employ several traditional methods to repel such spirits. Often hung from trees in rural villages, the *qonchaq* is a pouch wrapped in colored cloth that is thought to ward off *jinn*. Fire may also be used to repel these spirits, particularly during traditional ceremonies. Uighur women and children may also wear amulets to protect them from the “evil eye.” These include *tomar*, leather pouches stuffed with notes carrying Islamic prayers, and *koz monchaq*, black plastic balls marked with white dots. Uighurs may also rely on religious healing methods that derive from the ancient practice of shamanism.¹⁵⁸ Orthodox Muslims and religious leaders typically do not approve of these folk practices as they do not relate to traditional Islamic belief. Such notions may be perceived by educated Uighurs as superstitious.¹⁵⁹



© Dmitry Perstin
Girl wearing amulets and beads

¹⁵⁸ Scribd. *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of World Folklore and Folklife*. Light, Nathan. “Uyghur Folklore [pp. 4–5].” William M. Clements, Ed. 2006. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/16774274/Uyghur-Folklore-Article>

¹⁵⁹ *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism along China's Silk Road*. Rudelson, Justin Jon. “Chapter 3: Local Identities and Turpan Ideologies [p. 82].” New York: Columbia University Press. 1997. http://books.google.com/books?id=QCDgvgaiq-oC&pg=PA82&lpg=PA82&dq=qonchaq&source=bl&ots=iX8IAH_ZH2&sig=P94HxUTzcG958ZZ1wSWc5FTk7al&hl=en&ei=7XwiS-PJNCWtgP7_Lz8Cw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=10&ved=0CDAQ6AEwCQ#v=onepage&q=qonchaq&f=false

Religion and the State

National Policy

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the sole administrative party of the PRC, is officially atheist. “Freedom of religious belief” is provided by the country’s constitution, but the government regulates and, in many cases, restricts religious practice. Broadly, the PRC government formally recognizes only five religions according to its purview of “normal” religious activity: Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism. The activity of each of these religions is overseen by their respective “patriotic religious associations” (PRAs), which are under the domain of the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA). By law, all religious groups and sites of worship must be registered with the state. It is illegal to proselytize (attempt to convert others) in public and in unregistered religious venues; it is illegal for foreigners to proselytize in any setting.¹⁶⁰



© Eric Wilson
Uighur men outside a Kashgar mosque

Xinjiang’s Religious Background

Within Xinjiang, the PRC government’s approach to Islam has fluctuated since it took power in 1949. In the early 1950s, it implemented reforms that effectively dissolved the political, judicial, and economic capacities of the Islamic establishment, which was quite powerful in certain Uighur areas such as Kashgar. Islamic practice and education were left relatively unhindered until the Religious Reform Campaign of 1958. This corresponded with the onset of the Great Leap Forward (1958–1961), a large-scale collectivization program.¹⁶¹ During this period and the subsequent Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), Islamic culture was suppressed as part of a wave of radical leftist movements; the latter campaign attacked ethnic minorities and their cultures as “foreign.”¹⁶²

The period of “reform and opening” that followed the Cultural Revolution allowed for a moderate revival of Islam in the 1980s. Relaxed restrictions on Islamic practice allowed for the reopening or construction of mosques and Islamic schools, as well as increased travel opportunities for Muslims, many of whom studied Islam abroad.¹⁶³ During this time, small Islamic organizations were established in Xinjiang, some of them with a political bent.^{164, 165} The 1990s and 2000s brought a cycle in which acts of civil unrest and terrorism were met with increased restrictions on Islamic practice and other security measures. (Many, but not all, of the acts of unrest were in some way associated with Islam).¹⁶⁶ Following 11 September 2001, Chinese officials increasingly

¹⁶⁰ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. *International Religious Freedom Report 2009*. “China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau).” 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127268.htm>

¹⁶¹ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 6: In the People’s Republic of China (1950s–1980s) [pp. 246–251].” 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

¹⁶² “Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late Nineteenth Century [pp. 94–98].” Millward, James A. and Peter C. Perdue. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

¹⁶³ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 6: In the People’s Republic of China (1950s–1980s) [pp. 277–278].” 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

¹⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch. *Devastating Blows: Religious Repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang*. “Background: Uighur Islam.” 11 April 2005. <http://www.hrw.org/en/node/11799/section/5>

¹⁶⁵ “Islam in Xinjiang [p. 330].” Fuller, Graham E. and Jonathan N. Lipman. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

¹⁶⁶ East-West Center Washington. *Policy Studies 6*. Millward, James. “Violent Separatism in Xinjiang: A Critical Assessment [pp. 8–9].” 2004. www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/PS006.pdf

cited terrorism concerns to justify the PRC government's crackdowns on religious practice.^{167, 168} In recent years, Nuer Baikeli, the CCP party regional chairman of Xinjiang, stated that "the field of religion has become an increasingly important battlefield against enemies."¹⁶⁹

Regulations and Restrictions on Islam in Xinjiang

Today, Xinjiang remains subject to the strictest controls on Islamic practice in China.¹⁷⁰ Following national guidelines, all Muslim groups and venues must register with the state. The government supervises the operation of most mosques, the traditional sites of Muslim worship. The majority of *imams*, or Muslim prayer leaders who give sermons at mosques, are employed by the state. They are required to train at the Institute for the Study of Islamic Texts, Xinjiang's only government-sanctioned *madrassah*, or school for Islamic clerics. The coursework at the institute is determined by the Islamic Association of China (IAC), which prescribes what it deems as "acceptable" Islamic teachings. The dissemination or use of religious texts that the IAC deems inappropriate is illegal. *Imams* are subject to surveillance to ensure their conformity with state policy.¹⁷¹ They are also required to attend "reeducation" sessions to ensure "patriotism" and compliance.¹⁷²



© Andy Doró
Veiled women in front of a mosque

As a general rule, persons under age 18 are not allowed to enter mosques, nor are they permitted to study in Islamic schools. These policies hinder Uighurs' ability to pass on their Islamic faith and culture to younger generations.¹⁷³ In some areas, women in general and Muslims who belong to the CCP or work for the government are not permitted to enter mosques. Many mosques are not authorized to hold Friday or holiday prayers, which traditionally draw large assemblies.¹⁷⁴ All mosques are subject to inspection and closure. Government informants are known to attend prayer services in order to report on religious participation and activity.¹⁷⁵ Outside of mosques, prayer in public is prohibited.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁷ Jane's Security News. "China's Objectives in Xinjiang." 13 August 2007.

http://www.janes.com/news/security/jiaa/jiaa070813_1_n.shtml

¹⁶⁸ Council on Foreign Relations. Bhattacharji, Preeti. "Uighurs and China's Xinjiang Region." 6 July 2009.

<http://www.cfr.org/publication/16870/>

¹⁶⁹ New York Times. Wong, Edward. "Wary of Islam, China Tightens a Vise of Rules." 18 October 2008.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/19/world/asia/19xinjiang.html?_r=1

¹⁷⁰ "Islam in Xinjiang [p. 331]." Fuller, Graham E. and Jonathan N. Lipman. In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

¹⁷¹ "Islam in Xinjiang [pp. 331–334]." Fuller, Graham E. and Jonathan N. Lipman. In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

¹⁷² Human Rights Watch. *Devastating Blows: Religious Repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang*. "Implementation: Restrictions on Freedom of Religion in Practice." 11 April 2005. <http://www.hrw.org/en/node/11799/section/8>

¹⁷³ "Islam in Xinjiang [p. 324]." Fuller, Graham E. and Jonathan N. Lipman. In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

¹⁷⁴ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. U.S. Department of State. *International Religious Freedom Report 2009*. "China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau)." 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127268.htm>

¹⁷⁵ "Islam in Xinjiang [p. 324]." Fuller, Graham E. and Jonathan N. Lipman. In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe. <http://books.google.com/books?id=tfWq65DIgxC&pg=PA324&dq=Xinjiang:+China%E2%80%99s+Muslim+Borderland+informers+attend+prayer+services&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

¹⁷⁶ New York Times. Wong, Edward. "Wary of Islam, China Tightens a Vise of Rules." 18 October 2008.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/19/world/asia/19xinjiang.html?_r=1

Additional Islamic or Sufi traditions are restricted or banned outright. For example, Muslims in China can only participate in the *hajj*, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca (one of the five pillars), through government-sanctioned tours operated by the IAC. Uighurs are subject to especially tight travel restrictions—including the seizure of their passports—to prevent their movement into adjoining Muslim countries in Central and South Asia.¹⁷⁷ Sufism, in particular, is viewed by Chinese officials as a corrupt form of Islam, and its texts and traditional practice of *zikr*, or ritual prayer meetings, have been banned. This policy contrasts with that of Central Asian countries, where Sufism is encouraged as an alternative to Islamic fundamentalism.¹⁷⁸



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Group prayer at a mosque

All religious practices are subject to the government limits surrounding “normal religious activity.” Religious practices can therefore be restricted or banned by CCP decree. Persons accused of participating in illegal religious activities may be arrested, detained, and sentenced to prison or reeducation through labor camps, or may be subjected to other punishments. Unauthorized religious activities are often viewed by authorities as extremist in nature, or as part of a separatist or terrorist conspiracy.¹⁷⁹ Analysts have questioned the PRC government’s approach to addressing such security concerns, which are legitimate but reportedly only in relation to a small percentage of the population.¹⁸⁰ As one expert noted: “The way to respond to a small minority in a society is not to prevent the religiosity of an entire population. That’s counterproductive, and makes plenty of people resentful.”¹⁸¹ Under these conditions, Islamic practice in Xinjiang has taken on an underground character, with Uighurs often limited to practicing within their homes. Many Uighurs are said to fear punishment as well as “the loss of their religious or cultural identity.”¹⁸² At the same time, Islam has been increasingly embraced by many Uighurs as an expression of Uighur identity and solidarity in opposition to the Han-dominated PRC government.

¹⁷⁷ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. *International Religious Freedom Report 2009*. “China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau).” 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127268.htm>

¹⁷⁸ Jane’s Security News. “China’s Objectives in Xinjiang.” 13 August 2007. http://www.janes.com/news/security/jiaa/jiaa070813_1_n.shtml

¹⁷⁹ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. *International Religious Freedom Report 2009*. “China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau).” 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127268.htm>

¹⁸⁰ Council on Foreign Relations. Fletcher, Holly and Jayshree Bajoria. “The East Turkestan Islamic Movement.” 31 July 2008. http://www.cfr.org/publication/9179/east_turkestan_islamic_movement_etim.html

¹⁸¹ Foreign Policy. Larson, Christina. “How China Wins and Loses Xinjiang.” 9 July 2009.

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/07/09/how_china_wins_and_loses_xinjiang?page=0,0

¹⁸² “Islam in Xinjiang [p. 331].” Fuller, Graham E. and Jonathan N. Lipman. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Islam in Daily Life

Traditionally, Islamic societies do not differentiate between secular and religious life. When the PRC was established in 1949, Kashgar was home to a thriving Muslim establishment that wielded political power, operated judicial systems, and collected taxes on extensive land holdings.¹⁸³ Today, the government's regulations and restrictions on Islamic practice have eliminated the reach and autonomy of Muslim institutions. Moreover, the PRC has, in effect, pressured Uighurs to choose between observing the guidelines of their religion and those of the state.



© Dmitry Perstin
Women in traditional dress

Islam is a religion that traditionally requires rigid devotion to its principles and practices. The performance of daily ritual prayers—at five set times of the day—is a basic, routine demonstration of faith. Such prayers may be performed at home or at a mosque. Communal prayers are held on Friday, the holy day for Muslims. On this day, *imams* traditionally offer a sermon to the congregation, which is typically limited to men.

In Xinjiang, these basic Islamic duties may be difficult for many Uighurs to fulfill. Due to the government's restriction and surveillance of religious activity, Xinjiang is said to be marked by "a prevailing mood of fear." The consequences of practicing Islam may not only be legal but also social and economic. While the government officially promotes ethnic harmony and freedom of religious belief, perceptions of Uighurs and Islam as "backward" are said to be common among the Han-dominated ranks of the government and CCP. (Within the officially atheist CCP, religion in general is seen as a superstition or "mystification.")¹⁸⁴ As these institutions largely control the regional economy, religious restrictions and discrimination often play a role in hiring and firing practices. While religious believers are nominally allowed to hold official positions, party members or public sector employees who practice religion may be expelled from the CCP or fired from their job.^{185, 186} Thus, Uighurs who seek to work in the public sector are often forced to conceal, limit, or cease their public religious activities, including such basic practices as wearing traditional items of clothing like head scarves or *doppa* (skull caps).¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ *Xinjiang – China's Muslim Far Northwest*. Dillon, Michael. "Chapter 3: Ethnic Groups in Northwest China on the Eve of CCP Control and Uyghur Language and Culture in Twentieth-Century Xinjiang [pp. 28–30]." 2004. London: Routledge. [http://books.google.com/books?id=hQhQ3QKDezsC&pg=PA28&dq=Xinjiang+%E2%80%93+China%E2%80%99s+Muslim+Far+N](http://books.google.com/books?id=hQhQ3QKDezsC&pg=PA28&dq=Xinjiang+%E2%80%93+China%E2%80%99s+Muslim+Far+Northwest+mongol,+kazakh+and+russian+influences&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false)

¹⁸⁴ Foreign Policy. Larson, Christina. "How China Wins and Loses Xinjiang." 9 July 2009.

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/07/09/how_china_wins_and_loses_xinjiang?page=0,0

¹⁸⁵ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. *International Religious Freedom Report 2009*. "China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau)." 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127268.htm>

¹⁸⁶ Los Angeles Times. Demich, Barbara and David Pierson. "China's Flood of Fortune Seekers Unsettles Xinjiang." 11 July 2009. <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/jul/11/world/fg-china-west11>

¹⁸⁷ "Islam in Xinjiang [pp. 322–326, 331]." Fuller, Graham E. and Jonathan N. Lipman. In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=tfWq65DIgxC&pg=PA322&dq=Xinjiang:+China%E2%80%99s+Muslim+Borderland+touristic+and+entertainment+side&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

Religious Events and Holidays

Islamic events and festivals are observed according to the Islamic lunar calendar, which is shorter than the standard, internationally used Gregorian calendar. Their dates on the standard calendar thus change from year to year.

Ramadan

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. The fast held throughout this month is the major religious event for Muslims; it commemorates the revelation of the Quran to Muhammad. During this time, observant Muslims abstain from eating and drinking during daylight hours. In general, they are expected to practice self-restraint and enhance their study of the Quran. This period is an opportunity for Muslims to demonstrate their piety and devotion to the Islamic faith. Large meals are typically served after sunset to offset the rigorous demands of the daytime fast, which can cause fatigue and irritability.

Exchange 1: When does Ramadan start?

Soldier:	When does Ramadan start?	raamizaan Qaachan bashlinidu?
Local:	Tomorrow.	aetae

Observance of Ramadan is widespread among Uighurs, but the policies of the PRC government have increasingly affected such practice. The government strongly pressures children, CCP members, and government workers to not participate in the fast. Children are required to eat at school, and government and CCP officials may lose their jobs and/or party membership for fasting.¹⁸⁸ While Uighur restaurants traditionally close during the day throughout Ramadan, the government has forced some to stay open.¹⁸⁹ Crackdowns on a variety of traditional practices have occurred during Ramadan in recent years.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ "Islam in Xinjiang [pp. 337–338]." Fuller, Graham E. and Jonathan N. Lipman. In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

¹⁸⁹ Radio Free Asia. Mudie, Luisetta. "Ramadan Curbs on China's Muslims." 6 September 2008. <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/Ramadan-09062008195750.html>

¹⁹⁰ Google. Agence France-Presse. "China Imposes Ramadan Security Crackdown in Muslim Northwest." 4 September 2008. <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5hdEdZru3e81VgdC0jbXbfR0mKfhg>

Rozi Heyt (Eid al Fitr)

Rozi Heyt marks the breaking of the Ramadan fast and the return to normal habits. Uighurs traditionally celebrate this event with a large feast with family and friends. They may also exchange gifts and offer alms to the needy. Uighur men customarily buy their wives new clothes during this and other important religious festivals.¹⁹¹ Uighurs from throughout the western Tarim Basin congregate in large numbers at the Id Kah mosque in Kashgar to commemorate the holiday.¹⁹²



© Nice Logo
Busy food stall just after their end of Ramadan

Qurban Heyt (Eid al Adha)

Known as the “festival of sacrifice,” *Qurban Heyt* occurs in the 12th month of the Islamic calendar. It traditionally marks the end of the *hajj*, or pilgrimage to Mecca.¹⁹³ The festival commemorates an episode in the life of Ibrahim (Abraham), as told in the Quran. Ibrahim prepared to sacrifice his son at the request of Allah, but Allah intervened at the last moment and revealed that it was a test of faith. Allah allowed Ibrahim to sacrifice a ram in place of his son. This act is seen throughout the Muslim world as one of mercy, and the holiday represents the Muslim duty to rigidly adhere to the faith. Uighurs traditionally celebrate the holiday by slaughtering a sheep and holding a feast for family and friends. A portion of the food is customarily distributed to the poor and needy. The multi-day festival also involves public celebrations with singing and dancing at such places as the Id Kah mosque in Kashgar.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ International Institute for Asian Studies. IAS Newsletter, No. 34. Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. “Customary Law under Socialism: The Uyghur in Xinjiang.” July 2004. http://www.ias.nl/nl/34/IIAS_NL34_18.pdf

¹⁹² Foreign Policy. Larson, Christina. “How China Wins and Loses Xinjiang.” 9 July 2009.

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/07/09/how_china_wins_and_loses_xinjiang?page=0,0

¹⁹³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Id al-Adha.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9396517>

¹⁹⁴ *Frommer's China*, 2nd Ed. Lin-Liu, Jen, et al. “Chapter 2: Planning Your Trip to China [p. 31].” 2006. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publishing.

Places of Worship

The traditional site for Islamic worship is the mosque, or, in Arabic, *masjid*. The largest mosques, which can support huge assemblies, are known as Id Kah (Id Gah) or holiday mosques. In Xinjiang, the most important mosque of this kind is the Id Kah mosque of Kashgar, one of the largest mosques in China. Originally built in 1442, it can reportedly hold some 20,000 attendees in its prayer hall, courtyard, and gardens.¹⁹⁵

The term Id Kah may also apply to the major mosque of a given city or town. While generally not as large as holiday mosques, *jami masjid*, or Friday mosques, are local mosques where Muslims attend Friday communal prayers. These mosques are typically located in urban areas.¹⁹⁶ Smaller mosques are found throughout cities, towns, and rural regions. “Orphan” mosques, or *yetim*, may be found in remote, isolated areas; they historically provided a site of worship to travelers. Reflecting Sufi traditions, *mazars*, or shrines built around the tombs of revered holy men, are also found throughout Xinjiang. Festivals may occasionally be held at these sites, and some may have mosques attached to them.¹⁹⁷ Overall, according to the PRC government, there are 24,800 venues for religious activities, including mosques, in Xinjiang.¹⁹⁸ Following PRC guidelines, most are overseen by the government.



© Kaj Iversen
Kashgar mosque entrance

While many of Xinjiang’s diverse ethnic groups practice Islam, ethnic differences serve to segregate the Muslim community. This divide is most stark between Uighurs and Hui. The Hui have been described by some Uighurs as “more Chinese than Muslim” due to their cultural similarities to the Han. Thus, Uighurs generally have their own mosques and will not attend those of the Hui. While Hui mosques often resemble Chinese temples, Uighur mosques can be identified by their typical Central Asian features, including domes, minarets, and adobe walls. Id Kah and Friday mosques often consist of large courtyards.¹⁹⁹ Gender differences also affect mosque attendance. As Islam traditionally calls for the separation of the sexes, women typically do not visit mosques because male communal worship is prioritized. If women do visit the mosque, they are segregated. More often, they pray at home.²⁰⁰

In many Muslim societies, calls for daily prayers, traditionally made by the *muezzin*, are broadcast over loudspeakers. In Xinjiang, mosques are generally not permitted to have loudspeakers; it is common for calls to be bellowed from the mosque’s minarets. The government has appropriated some mosques and shrines as tourist sites and attempted to modify the atmosphere of others.²⁰¹ In the public square outside the Id Kah mosque in Kashgar, the

¹⁹⁵ *China*, 8th Ed. Harper, Damian, et al. “Id Kah Mosque [pp. 858–859].” 2002. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

¹⁹⁶ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 6: In the People’s Republic of China (1950s–1980s) [p. 247].” 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

¹⁹⁷ *Xinjiang – China’s Muslim Far Northwest*. Dillon, Michael. “Chapter 3: Ethnic Groups in Northwest China on the Eve of CCP Control and Uyghur Language and Culture in Twentieth-Century Xinjiang [pp. 28–29].” 2004. London: Routledge. <http://books.google.com/books?id=hQhQ3QKDezsC&pg=PA28&dq=Xinjiang+%E2%80%93+China%E2%80%99s+Muslim+Far+Northwest+three+times+the+area+of+France&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

¹⁹⁸ China Daily. Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China. “White Paper on Development and Progress in Xinjiang: Protecting Citizen’s Rights of Freedom of Religious Belief.” 21 September 2009.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/ethnic/2009-09/21/content_8717461_8.htm

¹⁹⁹ “Islam in Xinjiang [pp. 331–332].” Fuller, Graham E. and Jonathan N. Lipman. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

²⁰⁰ Asia Times Online. Mackerras, Colin. “Why Terrorism Bypasses China’s Far West.” 23 April 2003. <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/FD23Ad03.html>

²⁰¹ “Islam in Xinjiang [pp. 320–322, 336–337].” Fuller, Graham E. and Jonathan N. Lipman. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

government has installed a huge television screen; it reportedly broadcasts programming such as soap operas while the mosque holds its daily services.²⁰² All mosques are adorned with signs detailing government restrictions on religious practice.

Behavior in Places of Worship

In many Muslim societies, entry to mosques is traditionally reserved for male Muslims. In Xinjiang, practices may vary according to mosque and regional government restrictions. The Id Kah mosque of Kashgar allows non-Muslims and Western women to enter. (Local Muslim women remain largely absent, however).²⁰³

Exchange 2: May I enter the mosque?

Soldier:	May I enter the mosque?	maen michitkae kirsaeem bolamdu?
Local:	Yes.	bolidu

Visitors of either sex should dress conservatively before entering a mosque. For women, this includes wearing a scarf over her head. Uighur men traditionally wear a skull cap inside the mosque.

Exchange 3: Do I need to cover my head?

Soldier:	Do I need to cover my head?	beshimni yoegueshuem keraekmu?
Local:	Yes.	shundaaQ

Visitors are required to take off their shoes before entering carpeted areas where prayers are performed.

Exchange 4: Must I take off my shoes?

Soldier:	Must I take off my shoes inside the mosque?	michita choQum ayaaQni salaamdin?
Local:	Yes.	saalisiz

Visitors should take care not to disrupt or walk in front of Muslims in prayer; this is thought to invalidate their prayers.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=tfWq65DIGxkC&pg=PA322&dq=Xinjiang:+China%E2%80%99s+Muslim+Borderland+touristic+and+entertainment+side&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

²⁰² Foreign Policy. Larson, Christina. "How China Wins and Loses Xinjiang." 9 July 2009.

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/07/09/how_china_wins_and_loses_xinjiang?page=0,0

²⁰³ *China*, 8th Ed. Harper, Damian, et al. "Id Kah Mosque [pp. 858–859]." 2002. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

Religion Assessment

1. The essential beliefs of the Islamic faith are based on the five pillars of Islam.

True. The essential beliefs and rites of the Islamic faith are encapsulated in the five pillars of Islam. The first and foundational pillar is the sincere recitation of the Muslim declaration of faith: “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah.” The remaining pillars include: performing ritual prayers five times per day; giving alms to the poor and needy; fasting during the holy month of Ramadan; and undertaking a pilgrimage to the Islamic holy city of Mecca.

2. All Muslim groups in China must register with the state.

True. Today, Xinjiang remains subject to the strictest controls on Islamic practice in China. Following national guidelines, all Muslim groups and venues must register with the state. The government supervises the operation of most mosques, the traditional sites of Muslim worship.

3. Muslims fast during the daytime throughout the month of Ramadan.

True. Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. The fast held throughout this month is the major religious event for Muslims; it commemorates the revelation of the Quran to Muhammad. During this time, observant Muslims abstain from eating and drinking during daylight hours. Large meals are typically served after sunset to offset the rigorous demands of the daytime fast, which can cause fatigue and irritability.

4. The largest mosques, which can support huge assemblies, are known as Friday mosques.

False. The traditional site for Islamic worship is the mosque, or *masjid* in Arabic. The largest mosques, which can support huge assemblies, are known as Id Kah (Id Gah) or holiday mosques. While generally not as large as holiday mosques, *jami masjid*, or Friday mosques, are local mosques where Muslims attend Friday communal prayers.

5. Uighur men traditionally remove their caps inside the mosque.

False. Visitors of either sex should dress conservatively before entering a mosque. Uighur men traditionally wear a skull cap inside the mosque.

Chapter 3: Traditions

Introduction

“Uighur” was used, in the 8th century, to describe a confederation of nomadic tribes based in Mongolia. After factions of these tribes settled in Xinjiang, the Uighur name was applied to a sedentary oasis culture based in the Turpan (Turfan) region, known as Uighurstan. The Uighurs practiced Buddhism (among other religions) until the 15th century, when the spread of Islam was completed throughout Xinjiang. At this time, the “Uighur” name fell into disuse. It was revived during the first half of the 20th century to broadly categorize the Turkic Muslim oasis dwellers of Xinjiang, the majority of whom embraced the term.

While it has united these peoples in name, the modern Uighur identity masks differences between oasis communities of Xinjiang. One scholar has identified seven subgroups of Uighurs, which include: the Dolans (located near Kashgar), Lopliks (located near Lop Nur), Abdals (located in southern Xinjiang), Keriyaliks, Kashgarliks, Eastern Uighurs (located in Turpan and Hami) and Kuldjaliks or Taranchi (located in the Ili region). Local identity and loyalty for each of these oasis communities are said to be strong. Uighur customs vary, according to region.²⁰⁴ Nonetheless, Uighur culture is founded in common basic traditions influenced by Islam and folk practices.

Honor, Values, and Traditions

As throughout the greater Muslim world, the notions of honor (*namus*) and shame (*ayip*) play a role in Uighur society.²⁰⁵ These concepts are tied to the Uighurs’ traditional cultural norms, which are strongly rooted in Islam. Adherence to religious and social customs, such as proper hospitality etiquette or the proper interaction with members of the opposite sex, is a means of maintaining honor. Likewise, a breach of social norms can cause dishonor and shame, especially in conservative communities. Traditional values and practices have often conflicted with those promoted by the PRC government and its sole administrative party, the atheist Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Various PRC government policies, such as collectivization (under Mao) and restrictions on religious practice, have undermined Uighur traditions, which are often seen by Han as “backward” and “outdated.”^{206, 207}



© Dmitry Perstin
Uighurs dancing in Urumqi

In this environment, some Uighurs have revived or strengthened their embrace of Uighur traditions as a form of civil dissent and cultural preservation. *Mashrap* (*maxrap*), or traditional Uighur communal gatherings were revived in the 1990s. Described as “social clubs,” these regular gatherings served as a venue for Uighurs to celebrate their culture through musical and drama performances. The tradition was revived by Uighurs in Yining (Ghulja) and the

²⁰⁴ “Acculturation and Resistance: Xinjiang Identities in Flux [pp. 302–304].” Rudelson, Justin and William Jankowiak. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe. <http://books.google.com/books?id=tfWq65DIGxkC&pg=PA303&dq=Xinjiang:+China%E2%80%99s+Muslim+Borderland+dolans+opliks&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

²⁰⁵ Association des Ouïghours de France. *Etudes Orientales*, No. 25. Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. “Strangers, Guests and Beggars in Xinjiang: The Ambiguity of Hospitality among the Uyghur [p. 149].” 2008. http://www.ouigour.fr/recherches_et_analyses/Ildiko_Beler_Hann_page_145.pdf

²⁰⁶ “Islam in Xinjiang [pp. 325–326].” Fuller, Graham E. and Jonathan N. Lipman. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

²⁰⁷ *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism along China’s Silk Road*. Rudelson, Justin Jon. “Chapter 5: Uyghur Intellectuals: The Path of the Strong [p. 124].” New York, NY: Columbia University Press. 1997. http://books.google.com/books?id=MT2D_0_eBPQC&pg=PA124&dq=Oasis+identities:+Uyghur+nationalism+along+China’s+Silk+Road+backward,+poor,+weak,+superstitious+feudal&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false/

surrounding area as a means of combating unemployment, alcoholism, and drug abuse among Uighur youth.²⁰⁸ Accordingly, these meetings were conducted in line with Islamic customs of propriety, which include abstention from alcohol. In addition, their members were expected to adhere to Islamic principles in their daily lives. However, the practice was banned by the PRC in 1995 after *mashrap* members engaged in social activism, most notably to ban the sale of alcohol in Yining.²⁰⁹ Uighur dissent against this policy ultimately contributed to the riots that broke out in Yining in February 1997.²¹⁰

Gender Roles and Relations

The respective roles of Uighur men and women vary according to family, location, and socio-economic background. For example, the daily life and duties of a Uighur woman from a forward-thinking family in Urumqi would likely be drastically different from those of a woman belonging to an ultra-conservative family in Kashgar. The former might be a well-educated, career-minded individual whose job in the civil sector would require her to limit her religious observance, at least in public. The latter would likely be a devout practitioner of Islam whose religious and familial obligations might require her to wear a veil in public and limit the majority of her work activity to the home.



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Woman and children in Kashgar

Although gender equality has been officially promoted by the PRC government, traditional gender roles persist among the Uighurs of southern Xinjiang, especially in rural communities. These roles are, in part, tied to Islam. Muslim societies are traditionally patriarchal, meaning familial authority lies with the male head of the household. Under this system, men generally enjoy greater power and freedom than women. *Namahram*, or a code of modesty, is a traditional Islamic concept that defines gender roles. According to Islamic tradition, any male that is a potential marriage partner for a woman is *namahram* to her, meaning she must display modesty in his presence and refrain from engaging in any intimate acts or situations with him. *Namahram* may extend to male relatives in the household (aside from one's spouse) as well as unknown men in the public sphere. Traditionally, the code is most often expressed in a taboo against physical contact between women and *namahram* men.²¹¹ Segregation of the sexes is also practiced in mosques and at social events. Veiling is practiced by some women, although most simply cover their hair with a head scarf.²¹²

Division of Labor

Traditional notions of gender remain visible in the respective work roles of men and women in rural southern Xinjiang. The collectivization scheme initiated by Mao in the late 1950s encouraged the large-scale participation of Uighur women in agricultural work, a duty traditionally performed by Uighur men. While PRC officials promoted this development as an advance in women's rights, most Uighur women criticized the policy. Collectivization not only contradicted the modesty code, but it added production work to a woman's schedule without

²⁰⁸ "Islam in Xinjiang [p. 341]." Fuller, Graham E. and Jonathan N. Lipman. In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

²⁰⁹ "Public Health and Social Pathologies in Xinjiang [pp. 285–288]." Dautcher, Jay. In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

²¹⁰ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. "Chapter 7: Between China and the World (1990s–2000s) [pp. 329–333]." 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

²¹¹ Centre d'études et de recherches internationales (CERI). *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien*, No. 25. Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. "Work and Gender among Uighur Villagers in Southern Xinjiang [pp. 6–8]." 1998. <http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/publica/cemoti/textes25/beller.pdf>

²¹² "Temperamental Neighbours: Uighur-Han Relations in Xinjiang, Northwest China [pp.69–71]." Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. In *Imagined Differences: Hatred and the Construction of Identity*. Günther Schlee, Ed. 2002. Hamburg, Germany: Lit Verlag.

significantly reducing her traditional responsibilities in the home. This double burden stemmed in large part from the undervaluation of women’s household duties, a perception that persists today.²¹³

As in the pre-collectivization era, rural Uighur men remain associated with physically intensive jobs, including agricultural work (plowing, harvesting, and irrigation) and construction. Business activities, including marketing, are also viewed as men’s work. Women’s duties primarily concern the maintenance of the household, including cooking, cleaning, child-rearing, and care-taking. Rural women are also tasked with basic animal husbandry duties, such as feeding and watering livestock. Uighur women traditionally produce certain handicrafts, such as the *doppa*, or traditional Uighur skullcap. While they assist men in producing other handicrafts, they often do not receive recognition, as most handicrafts are still seen as men’s domain. Uighur women, especially those in poorer families, may also assist in agricultural work, though they may not be acknowledged for this work. Traditional perceptions about the division of labor may therefore mask the actual duties of Uighur men and women.²¹⁴



© Chris Erway
Woman in Korla

In urban areas, where the economy is not as dependent upon agriculture, Uighur men and women have greater opportunities to pursue alternate careers. For women, this includes work outside the home, such as in the civil sector. However, if they enter the public workforce, Uighur women generally remain tasked with their traditional household duties.

Greetings and Communication

Uighurs traditionally exchange greetings in a formal manner. A common greeting is the Uighur version of the standard Arabic blessing used throughout the Muslim world:

Exchange 5: May peace be upon you.

Soldier:	May peace be upon you.	aesalaamulaeykum
Local:	And upon you be peace.	wae-aelaeykum aessalaam

This greeting, which carries religious connotations, is primarily used between men. When exchanging this blessing, Uighurs typically place their right hand on their chest as a show of sincerity. They may also bow slightly.²¹⁵

Exchange 6: Good morning.

Soldier:	Good morning.	aesalaamulaeykum
Local:	Good morning.	aesalaamulaeykum

²¹³ Centre d’études et de recherches internationales (CERI). *Cahiers d’études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien*, No. 25. Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. “Work and Gender among Uighur Villagers in Southern Xinjiang [pp. 7–9].” 1998. <http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/publica/cemoti/textes25/beller.pdf>

²¹⁴ Centre d’études et de recherches internationales (CERI). *Cahiers d’études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien*, No. 25. Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. “Work and Gender among Uighur Villagers in Southern Xinjiang [pp. 11–19].” 1998. <http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/publica/cemoti/textes25/beller.pdf>

²¹⁵ The New Dominion. “Survival Uyghur: Lesson Two (A) – Basic Greetings: Peace Be Unto You.” 12 March 2008. <http://www.thenewdominion.net/82/survival-uyghur-lesson-two-a-basic-greetings-peace-be-unto-you/>

Uighur men also commonly shake hands; this may occur after or in place of the traditional blessing of peace. Elder males and respected figures are often greeted with a light handshake using two hands. In this case, the younger, subordinate man should use his left hand to lightly grasp the back of the elder's right hand during the handshake.²¹⁶ He should also address the elder using his appropriate title, if known.



© Matthew Winterburn
Man in Kashgar

Exchange 7: Hi, Mr. Ahmet

Soldier:	Hi, Mr. Ahmet.	saalaam aeKhmaet aepaendim
Local:	Hello!	saalaam
Soldier:	Are you doing well?	yaaKhshi turiwatamsiz?
Local:	Yes.	shundaaQ

Handshakes in which both men use two hands are also common, especially if the persons are well-acquainted. Such handshakes may be followed by a gesture in which the hands are raised in an outward circular motion toward the mouth and then lowered.²¹⁷

Exchange 8: How are you?

Soldier:	How are you?	QaandaaQ aehwaalingiz?
Local:	Very well.	baek yaaKhshee

²¹⁶ The New Dominion. "Survival Uyghur: Lesson Two (A) – Basic Greetings: Peace Be Unto You." 12 March 2008. <http://www.thenewdominion.net/82/survival-uyghur-lesson-two-a-basic-greetings-peace-be-unto-you/>

²¹⁷ *Central Asia Phrasebook*, 1st Ed (Revised). Rudelson, Justin Jon. "Uyghur [p. 17]." 1998. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

According to Islamic custom, Uighurs traditionally do not touch unknown or unrelated persons of the opposite sex. In traditional, rural areas even well-acquainted persons of the opposite sex do not make physical contact in public. Male visitors should not try to shake hands with Uighur women, and female visitors should not take offense if Uighur men do not shake their hand. Instead, Uighur women commonly greet both men and women with a slight bow.²¹⁸ Young Uighur women and girls may greet each other with a hug in which they touch their faces (right cheek) together.²¹⁹



© Dmitry Perstin
Men in Kashgar

Exchange 9: How is your family?

Soldier:	How is your family?	oey ichi tidjliQmu?
Local:	They are doing fine, thank you.	oey ichi tich amaan, raeKhmaet sizgae

Another common initial greeting exchanged by both parties is “*Yaxshimusiz!*”²²⁰ The expression “*Tinchliqmu?*” or “At peace?” is often used as a follow-up question after exchanging the initial greetings to inquire “Is everything all right?” This question is generally met with, “*Tinchliq! Siz-chu?*” or “At peace! And you?” The response is “*Tinchliq.*”²²¹ Even when not everything is going well, Uighurs will avoid saying “I’m not good” or “I’m in trouble.”²²²

²¹⁸ *Central Asia Phrasebook*, 1st Ed (Revised). Rudelson, Justin Jon. “Uyghur [p. 17].” 1998. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

²¹⁹ *Muslim Uyghur Students in a Chinese Boarding School: Social Recapitalization as a Response to Ethnic Integration*. Chen, Yangbin. “Chapter 7: Norms of Uyghur Students [p. 134].” 2008. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
<http://books.google.com/books?id=roiuY7bnb80C&pg=PA134&dq=Muslim+Uyghur+students+in+a+Chinese+boarding+school+uyghur+girls+too+have+their+pattern+of+greeting+ritual&lr=&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

²²⁰ *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism along China’s Silk Road*. Rudelson, Justin Jon. “Chapter 5: Uyghur Intellectuals: The Path of the Strong [p. 78].” New York: Columbia University Press. 1997.

²²¹ The New Dominion. “Survival Uyghur: Lesson Two (B) – Basic Greetings: At Peace?” 12 March 2008.
<http://www.thenewdominion.net/83/survival-uyghur-lesson-two-b-basic-greetings-at-peace/>

²²² *Greetings from the Teklimakan: A Handbook of Modern Uyghur*. Engesaeth, Tarjei, and Mahire Yakup, Arienne Dwyer. “Lesson 4: Daily Routines [p. 58].” 2009. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Scholarworks.
http://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/dspace/bitstream/1808/5624/3/EngYakDwy2009_Uyg1full_10.pdf

Hospitality and Gift-Giving

Generous hospitality is a cultural tradition and a matter of great pride for Uighurs.²²³ The PRC government’s security policies have reportedly made Uighurs leery about hosting foreigners, whose presence may raise suspicion with authorities.²²⁴ The most common form of hospitality is an invitation for tea or a meal at a person’s home. In such cases, the guest will likely receive the best the host has to offer. As a sign of respect, guests should wear, conservative clothing to a host’s home. Guests should remove their shoes upon entering the household. Guests are generally not expected to bring a gift; it is the host’s honor to provide for the guest, rather than vice versa. It is, however, an acceptable gesture for guests to bring small presents for the children of the household. Traditionally, Uighurs will refuse to accept a gift several times before ultimately accepting it with gratitude.²²⁵



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Elderly Uighur man

Exchange 10: This gift is for you.

Soldier:	This gift is for you.	boo soghaa siz uechuen
Local:	I cannot accept this.	maen buni Qobul Qilaalmaymaen

Guests who choose to bring a small gift should respect Islamic dietary customs, which prohibit the consumption of pork and alcohol. Uighurs will traditionally use both hands to receive a gift as a sign of gratitude and respect; visitors should do the same.

²²³ Association des Ouïghours de France. *Etudes Orientales*, No. 25. Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. “Strangers, Guests and Beggars in Xinjiang: The Ambiguity of Hospitality among the Uyghur [p. 145].” 2008.
http://www.ouigour.fr/recherches_et_analyses/Ildiko_Beler_Hann_page_145.pdf

²²⁴ Untold Stories, Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting. Anson, Ryan. “China: Wedding Drums and Uyghur Hospitality.” 3 September 2008. http://pulitzercenter.typepad.com/untold_stories/2008/09/china-wedding-d.html

²²⁵ Untold Stories, Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting. Anson, Ryan. “China: Wedding Drums and Uyghur Hospitality.” 3 September 2008. http://pulitzercenter.typepad.com/untold_stories/2008/09/china-wedding-d.html

Dining Habits

When hosting guests, Uighur meals are typically lengthy social affairs involving an elaborate array of foods.

Meals are traditionally served on a large cloth on the floor—known in Central Asia as a *dastarkhan*, or at a low table.²²⁶ Traditional Uighur homes have a raised area, known as a *supa* or *kang*, where meals are typically eaten, guests are entertained, and people sleep. This area will be covered with carpets and may be heated from below by a fireplace.²²⁷ Guests should wait to be seated by the host in a particular place. They should not step on the dining cloth or in front of anyone who is already seated. They should avoid pointing the soles of their feet at others while sitting down, and they should not stretch their legs out. Sitting is typically done in a crossed-legged, sometimes atop pillows. Prior to eating, guests will be provided the opportunity to wash their hands. Washing may be done by passing around a pitcher of water and a bowl. Guests should not splash the water or shake their hands dry, but rather use the provided cloth. Uighurs believe that shaking water from the hands is impolite and unlucky.²²⁸



© Matthew Miaow
Uighur family having lunch

While means and circumstances vary, Uighur meals often consist of several courses, with various trays and dishes laid out on the cloth or table. Prior to the main course, guests may be served tea or milk and snacks such as bread, fruits, nuts, and/or sweets. Tea is traditionally poured by the host; it should be received using two hands. *Nan*, or bread, should be broken into pieces before eating. The host may say prayers before and/or after the meal. Guests may be served by the host or they may serve themselves from communal plates using a large spoon. Chopsticks may be used to eat. Guests should use their right hand to eat and pass dishes to fellow diners. In Muslim societies, the left hand is traditionally associated with personal hygiene and is considered unclean. Although Chinese influence has reduced the prevalence and importance of this custom in Xinjiang, it may still be observed by Uighurs in rural areas where tradition remains strong. It is also considered rude to sneeze during meals.

²²⁶ Asia Sentinel. Mozur, Paul. "Han Chinese Uproot Uighur Culture." 15 October 2009.

http://www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2100&Itemid=206

²²⁷ University of Washington. Faculty Website of Stevan Harrell. Dautcher, Jay. "Down a Narrow Road: Identity and Masculinity in a Uyghur Community in Xinjiang, China. [p. 4]" 2007. <http://faculty.washington.edu/stevehar/Dautcher.pdf>

²²⁸ Peace Corps. Fearnside, Jeff. "Itam." 29 September 2008.

http://www.peacecorps.gov/index.cfm?shell=learn.whatlike.story&story_id=1938&assign_cat_id=0&dis_code=0

Pollo, or rice pilaf, is traditionally provided to guests at dinners and special events. It was customarily eaten by hand, although today it may be served with a spoon.²²⁹



© felibrilu / flickr.com
Laghman

Exchange 11: This food is very good.

Soldier:	This food is very good.	boo tamaaQ baek mizlik ikaen
Local:	It's <i>pollo</i> .	boo polo

Another signature Uighur dish is *laghman*, or homemade noodles with various sauces, served with meat and vegetables, or served in a soup broth.

Exchange 12: What is the name of this dish?

Soldier:	What is the name of this dish?	boo tamaaQning ismee nimae?
Local:	This is <i>laghman</i> .	boo leghmaen

It is polite for guests to express satisfaction with the meal.

Exchange 13: The food tastes so good.

Soldier:	The food tastes so good.	boo tamaaQning taemi baek yaaKhshiken
Local:	Thank you.	raeKhmet

Guests are expected to eat heartily. They should leave their plate or bowl empty as a sign of satisfaction and respect. They should also remain seated until the plates and utensils have been cleared from the cloth or table.²³⁰ In this, as in other situations, guests should follow the lead of others. Guests should thank their hosts for their hospitality. Uighurs will customarily thank their guests in return. One expert described the reasoning behind this tradition: “All that had been placed on the table-cloths was the property of the guests and all that was not eaten was a gift from them to the host. So the host had to thank them for it.”²³¹

²²⁹ Uighur Tour. “Pilaf (Uighur Local Rice).” 2008.

<http://www.uyghurtour.com/Tipsview.aspx?cid=158&action=Uighur%20food%20guide>

²³⁰ China Travel. “Uyghur Ethnic Minority: Taboo.” 1998–2009. <http://www.chinatravel.com/facts/chinese-ethnic-groups/uygur-ethnic-minority.htm>

²³¹ Association des Ouïghours de France. *Etudes Orientales*, No. 25. Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. “Strangers, Guests and Beggars in Xinjiang: The Ambiguity of Hospitality Among the Uyghur [p. 151].” 2008.

http://www.ouigour.fr/recherches_et_analyses/Ildiko_Beler_Hann_page_145.pdf

Food and Drink

Dietary Customs

Uighur dietary habits are shaped by Islamic custom. Like most devout Muslims, Uighurs generally limit their diet to foods that are deemed *halal*, or acceptable, according to Islam. Prohibited foods are deemed *haram*.²³² These notions are tied to the closely related Islamic traditions of physical hygiene and ritual purity. Islam prohibits the consumption of pork and alcohol. While some Uighurs drink, they widely and rigidly adhere to the prohibition against pork. Islamic custom also requires animals to be slaughtered in an appropriate manner by Muslim butchers.



© Matthew Winterburn
Kebab vendor

In practice, food that is not prepared by Muslims may be considered *haram*. This is the case among Uighurs, who often refuse to eat at Han homes and restaurants, where the notion of *halal* is foreign and pork is frequently consumed.²³³ Such discrimination is a reflection of both Islamic tradition and the Uighurs' ethnic rift with Han. Uighurs also often refuse to purchase meat from Hui (Dungan) butchers, who are Muslim but culturally similar to Han.²³⁴ These practices reflect the importance of food in shaping the Uighurs' broader sense of community and identity. Even as some dishes that characterize Uighur cuisine may be common throughout Central Asia they are perceived by Uighurs as their own. Likewise, in some cases, food can become "Uighur" by virtue of it being prepared by one.²³⁵

Cuisine

Uighur cuisine reflects the Uighurs' traditional agricultural economy. It closely resembles the cuisine of Central Asia but also demonstrates some Chinese influence. Meat is a component of most meals. Mutton, or sheep meat, is by far the most popular and widely eaten meat; various other parts of the sheep are used in an array of dishes. Lamb, beef, chicken, and fish are also consumed.²³⁶ Xinjiang's agricultural oases are famed for producing fruits such as melons, peaches, apricots, grapes, pears, apples, figs, and pomegranates.²³⁷ Fruits and nuts commonly serve as snacks and appetizers, and they are used to complement meats and vegetables in a variety of dishes. Grain products—including rice pilaf, noodles, and bread are also staples.

Pollo—known elsewhere as pilaf, *pilau*, or *plov*—is common throughout Central Asia but is embraced by Uighurs as their own.²³⁸ Made in large batches for special events, *pollo* traditionally consists of rice, mutton, onions, carrots, and spices.

²³² Islamic Food and Nutritional Council of America. "What is Halal?" 1999–2009. <http://www.ifanca.org/halal/>

²³³ Slate. Kucera, Joshua. "Dispatches from China's Wild West: Ramadan in China." 4 March 2008. <http://www.slate.com/id/2185456/entry/2185458/>

²³⁴ "Acculturation and Resistance: Xinjiang Identities in Flux [p. 312]." Rudelson, Justin and William Jankowiak. In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

²³⁵ Cesàro, M. Cristina. "Polo, Lāghmān, So Sāy: Situation Uyghur Food Between Central Asia and China [pp. 185–202]." In *Situating the Uyghurs between China and Central Asia*. Ildikó Bellér-Hann, et al, Eds. 2007. Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing.

²³⁶ Austin Bush Photography. *Chili Pepper*. Bush, Austin. "From Kebab to Nan." February 2006.

<http://www.austinbushphotography.com/wp-content/bio/From%20Kebab%20to%20Nan.pdf>

²³⁷ Scribd. Light, Nathan. "Uyghur Folklore [p. 11]." Originally published in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of World Folklore and Folklife*. William M Clements, Ed. 2006. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/16774274/Uyghur-Folklore-Article>

²³⁸ "Series Editors' Preface: The Complex Pathways of History: Uyghurs and Formations of Identity [p. xxi]." Strathern, Andrew and Pamela J. Stewart. In *Situating the Uyghurs between China and Central Asia*. Ildikó Bellér-Hann, et al, Eds. 2007. Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing.

Exchange 14: What ingredients are used to make *pollo*?

Soldier:	What ingredients are used to make <i>pollo</i> ?	poloni QaandaaQ Khurujlar bilen pushurudu?
Local:	Rice, meat, carrots and onions.	gueruech, goesh, saewzae wae piyaaz bilaen

Laghman, known in Mandarin as *lamian*, is another popular dish. It consists of homemade noodles covered in one of various meat sauces—usually mutton, tomatoes, peppers, and garlic. Kebabs (*kawab*)—meat chunks grilled on a skewer—are also common. *Chuchura* is a meat-dumpling soup. *Manta*, also known as *mantı*, are meat dumplings are specially prepared by steaming.²³⁹ Roasted whole lamb may be served at large social events. Other dishes include *qordaq*, a vegetable and meat stew, *samsa*, baked buns stuffed with mutton and onion, and *souman*, fried noodles served with meat and vegetables.²⁴⁰ Various raw and fried vegetables are used to make cold and hot salads. Breads include *nan*, a common flat bread, *girde nan*, a bagel-like bread, and *sanzi* (*sangza*), fried pastries that are typically eaten as snacks during holidays.



© Matthew Winterburn
Men baking nan in Kashgar

Tea is the most widely consumed beverage. Green tea (*kok chai*) often comes flavored with nutmeg or rose petals; black tea (*sin chai*) is often served after meals. Other varieties may come with salt and milk (*atkan chai*) or cream, sour cream, and butter (*aqpur cina*). *Kawa* is a honey-flavored carbonated beverage.²⁴¹ Juices, milk, and yogurt drinks are also popular. Typical Uighur desserts include ice cream (*maroji* or *marojna*), fruit and nut cake (*matang*), and fried dough filled with sugar, nuts, and raisins (*kharsen meghiz*).²⁴²

²³⁹ Friends of the Museum, Singapore. Thomas, Premoj. “Xinjiang Food.” No date. <http://www.fom.sg/XinjiangFood.pdf>

²⁴⁰ *China*, 8th Ed. Harper, Damian, et al. “Uyghur Food [p. 846].” 2002. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

²⁴¹ Friends of the Museum, Singapore. Thomas, Premoj. “Xinjiang Food.” No date. <http://www.fom.sg/XinjiangFood.pdf>

²⁴² *China*, 8th Ed. Harper, Damian, et al. “Uyghur Food [p. 846].” 2002. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

Traditional Dress

Manners of dress vary among Uighurs depending upon their location, job, age, and means. Modern, western-style clothing is widely worn, especially in urban areas, among younger generations and those who work in the civil sector. Civil sector employees, such as teachers and government officials, may be prohibited from wearing items of traditional Uighur dress, especially those with religious connotations.²⁴³ Traditional dress is more common in rural areas and among older generations and conservative Muslim families. It is widely worn on special occasions. Whether they dress in modern or traditional fashion, Uighurs are known to place great value on clothing and personal appearance.²⁴⁴



© kenpower / flickr.com
Street vendor in Khotan

Traditional Uighur dress consists of loose-fitting clothing that is generally well-maintained and often colorful. For men, this includes a button-less cotton robe or tunic worn over baggy pants. This may be complemented by a long coat, boots, and traditional headgear. Headgear is an important symbol of Uighur identity and is widely worn by Uighur men whether they dress in modern or traditional fashion. The most common type is the *doppa*, a round or four-pointed skullcap, which is associated with Islamic tradition. *Doppa* are typically finely embroidered with colorful thread. Other forms of headgear include caps, straw hats, and tall wool hats lined with fur.²⁴⁵ Uighur men can also be identified by their facial hair. Mustaches are “an important sign of manhood.”²⁴⁶ Beards are worn by older Uighur men, typically those over 40, in accordance with Islamic tradition.²⁴⁷ PRC restrictions prohibit civil-sector employees from wearing the *doppa*,²⁴⁸ and, in some instances officials have reportedly made Uighur men shave their beards.²⁴⁹

For Uighur women, traditional clothing consists of long, loose-fitting dresses worn with a vest and a headscarf. In recent years, traditional baggy pants (worn under the dress) have been increasingly replaced by thick nylon stockings, even in rural areas. Today, Uighur women continue to wear loose-fitting dresses, typically without a belt (to not emphasize the waistline), although such dresses are often more modern in fashion. Both traditional and modern clothing for Uighur women is typically bright and colorful. Gold jewelry is common and high heels are worn in urban areas and to special events. Uighur women also wear headgear. Colorful synthetic headscarves are widely worn in line with the Islamic custom requiring women to cover their hair while in public. Civil sector employees are not allowed to wear headscarves, however.²⁵⁰ While women also traditionally wore skullcaps, this practice is less common today and is largely limited

²⁴³ “Islam in Xinjiang [p. 324].” Fuller, Graham E. and Jonathan N. Lipman. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

²⁴⁴ 4 Deserts, Racing the Planet. Gobi March China 2010 Official Website. “History/Culture: The Uyghurs.” 1996–2010. <http://www.4deserts.com/gobimarch/rtpgmtp.php?SID=2&SBID=RD4>

²⁴⁵ “Temperamental Neighbours: Uighur Han Relations in Xinjiang, Northwest China [pp. 68–69].” Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. In *Imagined Differences: Hatred and the Construction of Identity*. Günther Schlee, Ed. 2002. Hamburg, Germany: Lit Verlag.

²⁴⁶ Fuller, Graham E. and Jonathan N. Lipman. “Islam in Xinjiang [p. 324].” In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

²⁴⁷ “Temperamental Neighbours: Uighur-Han Relations in Xinjiang, Northwest China [p. 69].” Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. In *Imagined Differences: Hatred and the Construction of Identity*. Günther Schlee, Ed. 2002. Hamburg, Germany: Lit Verlag.

²⁴⁸ “Islam in Xinjiang [p. 324].” Fuller, Graham E. and Jonathan N. Lipman. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

²⁴⁹ Bureau of Democracy, Humans Rights, and Labor, U.S. State Department. 2008 *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*. “2008 Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau).” 25 February 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/eap/119037.htm>

²⁵⁰ “Islam in Xinjiang [p. 324].” Fuller, Graham E. and Jonathan N. Lipman. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

to young girls. Elderly Uighur women may wear fur hats over white headscarves, the latter of which are traditionally worn to funerals and Islamic ceremonies. Women who belong to ultra-conservative Muslim families wear brown veils to conceal their faces. This is reportedly most common in Kashgar, although some Uighurs view such practice as extreme.²⁵¹

While a variety of styles may be seen in Xinjiang, foreigners should dress conservatively when visiting Uighur homes or sacred venues.

Exchange 15: Is this acceptable to wear?

Soldier:	Is this acceptable to wear?	bundaaQ kiyinsaem bolaamdu?
Local:	Yes.	boludu

Non-Religious Holidays

Nowruz (Naurooz)

Nowruz is an ancient festival marking the coming of spring, or the beginning of a new year in the natural cycle. This pre-Islamic tradition came to Central Asia and Xinjiang from Persia (Iran), where it is celebrated as Persian New Year. The festival is typically held around 21 March, the vernal equinox.



© Matthew Miaow
Uighur family having lunch

Exchange 16: Will you be celebrating Nowruz?

Soldier:	Will you be celebrating Nowruz?	silaer noruzni taebriklaemsilaer?
Local:	Yes!	taebriklaeymiz

Broadly, the holiday celebrates “the victory of good over the bad, joy over sadness, life over death, and warmth over cold.”²⁵² Uighurs traditionally mark this lively and hopeful event with food, song, storytelling, and dance. Conservative Muslims and Muslim leaders may not approve of the observance due to its pre-Islamic roots.²⁵³

²⁵¹ “Temperamental Neighbours: Uighur-Han Relations in Xinjiang, Northwest China [pp. 69–71].” Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. In *Imagined Differences: Hatred and the Construction of Identity*. Günther Schlee, Ed. 2002. Hamburg, Germany: Lit Verlag.

²⁵² U.S. Consulate General Munich, Germany, U.S. State Department. “Uyghurs Celebrate New Year.” 24 March 2007.

http://munich.usconsulate.gov/munich/pat_uyghur.html

²⁵³ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 4: Between Empire and Nation (Late 19th–Early 20th Century)” [p. 162].” 2007. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Do's and Don'ts

Do greet Uighurs in a formal manner.

Do treat elders with utmost respect.

Do wear clean and conservative clothing when visiting Uighur homes and religious venues.

Do keep the soles of your feet flat on the ground while sitting.

Don't initiate handshakes or make physical contact with Uighur women.

Don't shake water from your hands while washing them.

Don't point the soles of your feet at people.

Don't eat with your left hand or use it to give or receive gifts.

Don't leave food on your plate at the end of a meal.

Don't point at others.

Traditions Assessment

1. The notions of honor and shame play an important role in Uighur society.

True. As throughout the greater Muslim world, the notions of honor (*namus*) and shame (*ayip*) play a role in Uighur society. These concepts are tied to the Uighurs' cultural traditions, which are strongly rooted in Islam.

2. All Uighur women are required to wear a veil in public.

False. The respective roles of Uighur men and women vary according to family, location, and socio-economic background. Veiling is practiced by some women, although most simply cover their hair with a head scarf.

3. Uighur men greet each other by hugging.

False. Uighur men commonly shake hands; this may occur after or in place of the traditional blessing of peace. Elder males and respected figures are often greeted with a light handshake using two hands. In this case, the younger, subordinate man should use his left hand to lightly grasp the back of the elder's right hand during the handshake.

4. Uighurs traditionally do not touch unknown or unrelated persons of the opposite sex.

True. According to Islamic custom, Uighurs traditionally do not touch unknown or unrelated persons of the opposite sex. Male visitors should not try to shake hands with Uighur women, and female visitors should not take offense if Uighur men do not shake their hand. Instead, Uighur women commonly greet both men and women with a slight bow.

5. An empty plate or bowl is a sign of satisfaction and respect to the Uighur host.

True. Guests to a Uighur home are expected to eat heartily. They should leave their plate or bowl empty as a sign of satisfaction and respect.

Chapter 4: Urban Life

Introduction

Xinjiang has undergone rapid urbanization over the last few decades.²⁵⁴ As of 2008, its urban areas were home to approximately 8.45 million people, or roughly 40% of the region's total population.²⁵⁵ The expansive growth of urban centers has occurred as part of the People's Republic of China (PRC) government's intensive economic development of the region. The government, which maintains a commanding influence over the economy, has for several decades pursued industrialization programs targeting the extraction and processing of Xinjiang's rich energy and mineral resources and large-scale commercial agriculture. Booming urban centers have emerged around sites of industry, particularly in northern Xinjiang. At the same time, the region's ancient cities—such as Urumqi and Kashgar—have undergone modernization programs involving the construction of new transportation links, commercial districts, and high-rise buildings. Urbanization is expected to continue at a significant pace in coming years; by 2015, urban residents are expected to comprise some 47% of the total population.²⁵⁶



© Gilad Rom
Central train station, Urumqi

This development has engendered a “highly visible and startling transformation” of areas of Xinjiang, an otherwise thinly inhabited region that outsiders have historically viewed as remote and underdeveloped. Urban areas have disproportionately benefited from the government's efforts, as many rural communities remain impoverished and without modern infrastructure and services.²⁵⁷ Yet stark discrepancies can also be found between different districts of the same metropolitan area. In Urumqi, for example, the modern skyscrapers of the city's bustling downtown overshadow the ancient mud-brick houses of nearby settlements.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁴ “Modernization, Economic Development and Inter-Ethnic Relations in China [pp. 220–221].” Han, Enze. In *Challenges Facing Chinese Development*. Sujian Guo and Baogang Guo, Eds. 2007. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

²⁵⁵ Center for Environmental Remote Sensing, Chiba University. Maimaitiming, Anwaer, and Huhua Cao, Xiaolei Zhang. “Spatial Pattern of Urban Growth in Xinjiang, 1982–2008: A GIS Based Statistical Approach (abstract).” 2009. <http://www2.cr.chiba-u.jp/symp2009/documents/AbstractAnwaerMaimaitiming.pdf>

²⁵⁶ Asian Development Bank. “Proposed Loan: People's Republic of China: Xinjiang Urban Transport and Environmental Improvement Project [p. 2].” June 2009. <http://www.adb.org/Documents/RRPs/PRC/40643-PRC-RRP.pdf>

²⁵⁷ *Xinjiang – China's Muslim Far Northwest*. Dillon, Michael. “Chapter 5: The Economy in the Reform and Opening Era [pp. 37–38].” 2004. London: Routledge.

²⁵⁸ BBC News. Lim, Louisa. “China's Uighurs Lose Out to Development.” 19 December 2003. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/3330803.stm>

Urban Conditions

Ethnic Composition

A major factor in the growth of Xinjiang's urban areas—and one that has been extremely controversial among Uighurs—has been the large-scale in-migration of Han. Han, the predominant ethnic group in China, have long had a presence in Xinjiang, but their numbers have grown considerably over the last several decades. In 1949, when the PRC was established, Han comprised 6% of the regional population. Today, they comprise roughly 40%.²⁵⁹ The PRC government has historically enabled this process through official resettlement programs or, more recently, through economic development campaigns.²⁶⁰ Many Uighurs claim the government has encouraged Han in-migration to change the ethnic composition of the region. PRC officials have described the process as a necessary factor for economic development.²⁶¹ The majority of Han migrants have been poor peasants from the east who came to Xinjiang in pursuit of economic opportunity.²⁶² Most of them have settled in urban areas. As a result, aside from Uighur-dominated cities such as Kashgar and Hotan (Khotan), most of Xinjiang's cities have Han majorities.²⁶³



© Shoko / flickr.com
Han migrants arriving in Kashgar

²⁵⁹ New York Times. Wong, Edward. "Rumbles on the Rim of China's Empire." 11 July 2009.

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/12/weekinreview/12wong.html?_r=1&pagewanted=1

²⁶⁰ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. "Chapter 3: In the People's Republic of China (1950s–1980s) [pp. 309–310]." 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

²⁶¹ Council on Foreign Relations. Bhattacharji, Preeti. "Uighurs and China's Xinjiang Region." 6 July 2009.

<http://www.cfr.org/publication/16870/>

²⁶² Los Angeles Times. Demich, Barbara and David Pierson. "China's Flood of Fortune Seekers Unsettles Xinjiang." 11 July 2009.

<http://articles.latimes.com/2009/jul/11/world/fg-china-west11>

²⁶³ "The Demography of Xinjiang [p. 257]." Toops, Stanley W. In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Ethnic Divisions

Cultural stereotypes and prejudices strongly influence the relations between Uighurs and Han. While perceptions may vary according to individual, Han are said to generally view Uighurs as “backward” and not as intelligent or hard-working as Han. Such perceptions are in part tied to the Uighurs’ practice of Islam, which many Han view as outdated and superstitious.²⁶⁴ Many Uighur intellectuals share a similar view. Perceptions of Uighurs as rowdy and prone to violence and criminality also exist among Han.²⁶⁵ Han are said to see their culture as “one of progress, opportunity, science, and reason.”²⁶⁶ In this way, many Han see themselves as part of a civilizing force in an uncivilized region. On the other hand, Uighurs tend to view Han as outsiders whose discrimination has threatened Uighur cultural identity and limited opportunities to succeed in the Han-dominated economy. As a result, many Uighurs feel the development of Xinjiang—their historic homeland—has benefited Han to the detriment of the native Uighur people.²⁶⁷



The Uighur–Han divide is expressed in numerous ways. Economic disparity in Xinjiang tends to fall along ethnic lines, as Uighurs are generally poorer than Han. In Urumqi, this disparity manifests in the prevalence of Uighur beggars.²⁶⁸ The economic divide has been attributed, in part, to discriminatory hiring practices that favor Han over Uighurs. For example, the latter may be passed over for employment due to their practice of Islam or lack of fluency in Mandarin. In some cases, the government simply reserves the majority of new openings in the civil sector for Han.²⁶⁹ As a result of such practices, Han fill most positions in the public sector, including the government, security forces, education system, and state-owned industrial and agricultural operations. Positions are reserved for ethnic minorities in certain areas of the public sector, but these are often few and nominal.²⁷⁰ Even businesses that cater to or benefit from the Uighur community—such as ethnic-themed tourism companies and the Muslim food industry—are said to be dominated by Han.²⁷¹

The segregation of Uighur and Han is common; it is practiced either by choice or as a product of PRC government policy. While circumstances may vary, neighborhoods and housing settlements are often ethnically divided.²⁷² Urumqi, in particular, is said to be sharply divided along ethnic lines.²⁷³ Broadly, older urban areas are often populated and frequented by Uighurs, while newer

²⁶⁴ “Islam in Xinjiang [pp. 325–326].” Fuller, Graham E. and Jonathan N. Lipman. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

²⁶⁵ *Under the Heel of the Dragon: Islam, Racism, Crime, and the Uighur in China*. Kaltman, Blaine. “Chapter 3: Han-Uighur Relations [p. 64].” 2007. Athens, OH: Center for International Studies, Ohio University.

²⁶⁶ *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism along China’s Silk Road*. Rudelson, Justin Jon. “Chapter 5: Uyghur Intellectuals: The Path of the Strong [p. 124].” New York: Columbia University Press. 1997.

²⁶⁷ Council on Foreign Relations. Bhattacharji, Preeti. “Uighurs and China’s Xinjiang Region.” 6 July 2009. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/16870/>

²⁶⁸ *Under the Heel of the Dragon: Islam, Racism, Crime, and the Uighur in China*. Kaltman, Blaine. “Chapter 4: Migration: Overcoming Blocked Mobility [p. 103].” 2007. Athens, OH: Center for International Studies, Ohio University.

²⁶⁹ Council on Foreign Relations. Bhattacharji, Preeti. “Uighurs and China’s Xinjiang Region.” 6 July 2009. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/16870/>

²⁷⁰ “Temperamental Neighbours: Uighur-Han Relations in Xinjiang, Northwest China [pp. 63–64].” Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. In *Imagined Differences: Hatred and the Construction of Identity*. Günther Schlee, Ed. 2002. Hamburg, Germany: Lit Verlag.

²⁷¹ Wall Street Journal. Johnson, Ian. “Uighurs Lose Economic Ground to Han.” 21 July 2009.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124811293085765891.html>

²⁷² “Modernization, Economic Development and Inter-Ethnic Relations in China [p. 221].” Han, Enze. In *Challenges Facing Chinese Development*. Sujian Guo and Baogang Guo, Eds. 2007. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

²⁷³ New York Times. Wong, Edward. “Riots in Western China Amid Ethnic Tension.” 5 July 2009.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/06/world/asia/06china.html>

districts are commonly inhabited by Han. Restaurants, entertainment venues, small businesses, and different sections of marketplaces often cater specifically to Uighurs, Han, or other groups. In these cases, segregation is not always rigid but it is often pronounced. For example, Han will reportedly not visit Uighur dance halls, as they are often perceived by Han as sites of drunkenness and potential conflict. Yet some Uighurs, especially those who have been assimilated through education or employment, will visit Han dance halls.²⁷⁴

Throughout Xinjiang, a significant difference in timekeeping also falls along the Uighur–Han divide. Han adhere to official time, which corresponds with Beijing despite the capital city’s distant eastern location. Official time is thus also known as “Beijing time;” it is the time seen on public clocks. Yet Uighurs commonly follow local time, or “Xinjiang time,” which is two hours behind official time.²⁷⁵

In their most extreme form, ethnic tensions between Uighurs and Han have manifested in violent civil conflicts, several of which have taken place in urban centers. A well-publicized outbreak occurred in Urumqi in July 2009, when Uighur protests against the death of two Uighurs in southeastern China turned violent. In this case, Uighur riots and clashes with security forces were followed by attacks on Uighurs by groups of Han who roamed the city armed with clubs and other weapons.²⁷⁶

Exchange 17: Did these people threaten you?

Soldier:	Did these people threaten you?	boo KheKhlæ sizni QorQaatimu?
Local:	No.	yaaQ

Because of the potential for such conflict, security is often tight in Xinjiang’s ethnically diverse urban centers, particularly in Urumqi.

Urban Development

Urban modernization programs have been a significant component of the PRC’s development campaigns in Xinjiang. While they have contributed to a higher standard of living in urban areas, they have also been a point of contention between the Han-dominated PRC government and the Uighur community. According to observers, such development projects have often been carried out by the PRC government with little consideration or understanding of Uighur culture. For example, in Urumqi, the government constructed a modern five-story market complex as part of its “Xinjiang Minority Street” project. Yet the “exotic-looking” complex did not reflect Uighur needs or traditions and is said to remain largely unused by Uighurs. The government has also appropriated historic venues, including religious sites, for commercial purposes. In doing so, it has recast them with a cultural and historical significance that accords with PRC policy, rather than with local tradition.^{277,278} In Kashgar, Han-



© Pollenoid / flickr.com
Kashgar's Old City

²⁷⁴ “Temperamental Neighbours: Uighur-Han Relations in Xinjiang, Northwest China [pp. 60–62].” Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. In *Imagined Differences: Hatred and the Construction of Identity*. Günther Schlee, Ed. 2002. Hamburg, Germany: Lit Verlag.

²⁷⁵ “Temperamental Neighbours: Uighur-Han Relations in Xinjiang, Northwest China [p. 60].” Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. In *Imagined Differences: Hatred and the Construction of Identity*. Günther Schlee, Ed. 2002. Hamburg, Germany: Lit Verlag.

²⁷⁶ BBC News. “Riots Engulf Chinese Uighur City.” 7 July 2009. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8137824.stm>

²⁷⁷ “Islam in Xinjiang [pp. 320–322].” Fuller, Graham E. and Jonathan N. Lipman. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

²⁷⁸ Slate. Kucera, Joshua. “Dispatches from China’s Wild West: Ramadan in China.” 4 March 2008. <http://www.slate.com/id/2185456/entry/2185458/>

run tourist toll booths in some traditional residential neighborhoods charge tourists entry fees.²⁷⁹ Moreover, while the government has posted modern signage in both Mandarin and Uighur, Uighurs claim the Uighur transliterations are often inaccurate and nonsensical.²⁸⁰

Another controversial project involves the large-scale reconstruction of Kashgar’s old quarter, the historic Uighur stronghold in southwestern Xinjiang. Initiated in 2009, the project is slated to demolish at least 85% of the old city and the resettlement of 13,000 Uighur families that live there. As of May 2009, 900 Uighur families had already been moved. While such practice is relatively typical in China—similar modernization programs have reshaped Beijing, for example—the project has been criticized as another assault on Uighur culture.²⁸¹ The city’s old quarter has been described as “the best-preserved example of a traditional Islamic city to be found anywhere in central Asia.” Officials have cited the need to replace the quarter’s ancient mud-brick housing settlements with modern infrastructure capable of withstanding earthquakes, a viable threat in the region. The project will also bring modern services to a district that has lacked sewer systems and other public works. Uighur families affected by the program have claimed the government’s compensation for their homes will not be enough to rebuild. Instead, many residents will be moved to distant public housing units.²⁸²

Telecommunications

The development of Xinjiang has involved a vast expansion of its telecommunication capabilities. This includes landlines, cell phones, and internet access.²⁸³



© Kaj Iversen
Market stall with telephones, Kashgar

Exchange 18: What is your telephone number?

Soldier:	What is your telephone number?	sizing tilfun numuringiz Qaanchae?
Local:	My phone number is 122-3456.	mening tilfun numurum bir iki iki uech toet baesh altae

²⁷⁹ *Frommer’s China*, 2nd Ed. Lin-Liu, Jen, et al. “Chapter 7: The Silk Routes [p. 311].” 2006. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publishing.

²⁸⁰ Foreign Policy. Larson, Christina. “How China Wins and Loses Xinjiang.” 9 July 2009.

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/07/09/how_china_wins_and_loses_xinjiang?page=0,0

²⁸¹ Washington Post. Fan, Maureen. “An Ancient Culture, Bulldozed Away.” 24 March 2009. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/23/AR2009032302935.html>

²⁸² New York Times. Wines, Michael. “To Protect an Ancient City, China Moves to Raze It.” 27 May 2009.

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/28/world/asia/28kashgar.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&ref=global-home

²⁸³ People’s Daily Online. “Xinjiang Sees Fast Development of Telecommunications Services.” 1 October 2005. Xinhua.

http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200510/01/eng20051001_211988.html

Mobile phones are relatively common in urban areas, where there are approximately 144 cell phones in use for every 100 households.²⁸⁴

Exchange 19: May I use your phone?

Soldier:	May I use your phone?	tilfuningizni ishlaetsaem bolaamdu?
Local:	Sure.	aelwaetae

The PRC government tightly controls telecommunication services, which are provided by state-owned corporations. Following the ethnic conflict in Urumqi in July 2009, Chinese authorities suspended text-messaging and international telephone service in Xinjiang.²⁸⁵ They also cut off internet access aside from a few government-run sites. These restrictions remained in place for several months following the riots.²⁸⁶

Health Care

The health care system in Xinjiang has dramatically expanded under the PRC.²⁸⁷ The quality and availability of care varies widely, however. In general, health care services in China do not meet the standards of those in the U.S.²⁸⁸ As an indication of the stark divide between Xinjiang’s urban and rural areas, approximately 80% of the region’s health care services were located in urban centers as of 2001.²⁸⁹ Urumqi is said to have the best hospitals in the region, although they, too, have been described as “under-equipped” and staffed with “ill-trained” doctors.²⁹⁰



© Shoko / flickr.com
Dentist's sign, Kashgar

Exchange 20: Is there a hospital nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a hospital nearby?	aetraapta doKhturKhaana baarmu?
Local:	Yes, in the center of town.	baar, shaehaerning otursidaa

As a communist state, the PRC government historically funded all medical facilities and provided free or inexpensive health care to all citizens.²⁹¹ As the economy has been increasingly privatized, however, hospitals have progressively been expected to generate their own revenue. This has required more people to pay for their treatment. Under this system, in which health insurance

²⁸⁴ China Daily. Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China. “White Paper on Development and Progress in Xinjiang: Remarkable Improvement in People’s Life.” 21 September 2009. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/ethnic/2009-09/21/content_8717461_4.htm

²⁸⁵ The Globe and Mail. MacKinnon, Mark. “Urumqi’s Internet, Phone Still off 4 Months after Riots.” 1 November 2009. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/urumqis-Internet-phone-still-off-4-months-after-riots/article1347523/>

²⁸⁶ Wall Street Journal. China Realtime Report. Back, Aaron. “Xinjiang Internet Blackout (Very) Partially Lifted.” 29 December 2009. <http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2009/12/29/xinjiang-Internet-blackout-very-partially-lifted/>

²⁸⁷ China Daily. Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China. “White Paper on Development and Progress in Xinjiang: Steady Development of Social Programs.” 21 September 2009. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/ethnic/2009-09/21/content_8717461_5.htm

²⁸⁸ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “China: Country Specific Information.” 20 July 2009. http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1089.html#medical

²⁸⁹ Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. China Environment Forum. Scull, Erika. “Environmental Health Challenges in Xinjiang.” 2008. http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1421&fuseaction=topics.documents&doc_id=494849&group_id=233293

²⁹⁰ Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst*. Ingram, Ruth. “Health in Xinjiang.” 1 August 2001. <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/451>

²⁹¹ MedHunters. Moreton, Michael J. “Healthcare in China – Medhunters Medical Community.” No date. <http://www.medhunters.com/articles/healthcareInChina.html>

coverage is not universal, only the wealthy can afford higher quality health care.²⁹² Foreigners will likely be expected to pay upfront for medical services.²⁹³ In Xinjiang, this translates to a disparity in access to health care services between Uighurs and Han, the latter of whom tend to be wealthier. Furthermore, because medical students are required to be fluent in Mandarin, ethnic minorities such as Uighurs are less likely to obtain medical degrees and, in turn, provide services to their own communities.²⁹⁴

Exchange 21: Is Dr. Mehmet in?

Soldier:	Is Dr. Mehmet in?	doktur meh-met kaeldimu?
Local:	Yes.	kaeldee

As in greater China, population growth and environmental pollution have greatly affected public health in Xinjiang. Xinjiang’s already limited health care services have been strained by its growing population, driven by the influx of Han. Moreover, the intensive industrialization of the region has led to increased air and water pollution, factors that contribute to higher mortality rates from respiratory and heart disease, as well as from cancer. Urumqi, in particular, has been cited as one of the most polluted cities in China. Its exceptionally high level of air pollution—as seen in its blackened skies—is a product of the city’s heavy consumption of coal, the most of any Chinese city.²⁹⁵



© indfusion / flickr.com
Hospital room in Urumqi

Exchange 22: Do you know what is wrong?

Soldier:	Do you know what is wrong?	uning naeri Khaata ikaenlikini bilaemsiz?
Local:	No.	yaaQ

Xinjiang has a high rate of HIV/AIDS in comparison to other parts of the country. According to one estimate, the region contains roughly 10% of the country’s total HIV population despite accounting for just over 1% of its total population. Intravenous drug users and commercial sex workers in urban areas are among the groups most affected by the disease. Regional drug use is in large part an outgrowth of Xinjiang’s role as a hub for drug trafficking into and out of Central Asia.²⁹⁶

²⁹² Washington Post. Mufson, Steven. “In China, Too, a Health-Care System in Disarray.” 29 October 2009.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/28/AR2009102805081.html>

²⁹³ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “China: Country Specific Information.” 20 July 2009.

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1089.html#medical

²⁹⁴ Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. China Environment Forum. Scull, Erika. “Environmental Health Challenges in Xinjiang.” 2008.

http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1421&fuseaction=topics.documents&doc_id=494849&group_id=233293

²⁹⁵ Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. China Environment Forum. Scull, Erika. “Environmental Health Challenges in Xinjiang.” 2008.

http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1421&fuseaction=topics.documents&doc_id=494849&group_id=233293

²⁹⁶ Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program. *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 3. Gill, Bates and Song Gang. “HIV/AIDS in Xinjiang: A Growing Regional Challenge.” 2006.

http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/CEF/Quarterly/August_2006/GillGang.pdf

Education

A significant product of the PRC era has been the vast expansion of Xinjiang's education system, which has contributed to a rise in literacy rates. Throughout Xinjiang, primary and junior secondary schooling—a total of nine years—is free and compulsory. Upon completing basic education, students must pass an entrance exam to attend high school. High school facilities are typically located in urban areas, as are the region's 32 universities and colleges.²⁹⁷ Ethnic minorities, including Uighurs, benefit from “favorable enrollment policies” regarding admission to higher education institutions; these include special examinations and acceptance scores.²⁹⁸ Akin to affirmative action programs, such policies are designed to increase minority enrollment. Urban ethnic minorities are typically better prepared for entry into higher education facilities because they are more likely to receive sufficient instruction in Mandarin at the primary and secondary levels.²⁹⁹ In general, the availability and quality of education is greater in urban areas.



© Peter Morgan
Uighur children in school

Language of instruction in the education system is a controversial issue in Xinjiang. The region's two most widely spoken languages, Uighur and Mandarin, are both taught in schools. However, over the last few decades, the PRC has increasingly mandated instruction in Mandarin. In the past, Mandarin was taught as a second language to Uighurs and other non-Han groups; these groups generally had the option of attending “minority-language schools,” such as those using Uighur, or “Chinese-language schools.” Many minority language schools, however, have been eliminated by way of consolidation with Chinese-language institutions. Today, the government requires students, regardless of their ethnic background, to receive instruction in Mandarin beginning in the first grade. The first language of an ethnic minority may be taught as a secondary language. But at the university level, the use of Uighur has narrowed significantly. Instruction at Xinjiang University in Urumqi has, been limited to Mandarin since 2002.³⁰⁰

As the language of the Han-dominated PRC government, Mandarin is generally perceived as more socially and economically viable than “minority” languages. In practice, a strong command of Mandarin is essential for anyone who wishes to pursue a career in the public sector, especially at higher levels.³⁰¹ For Uighurs, the language divide presents a serious dilemma. Uighurs who do not pursue a Han-style, Mandarin-language education will likely not be able to compete against the better-connected Han for jobs. Yet those who do may lose touch with their own culture by forgoing a Uighur education, which would include studies in Uighur history and culture. Education at Mandarin-language schools has been identified as “the greatest integrating force” for ethnic minorities assimilating into Han culture. While Uighurs may gain esteem in the eyes of Han for studying at Chinese-language schools, they may be looked down upon by other Uighurs

²⁹⁷ China Daily. “Xinjiang Education Efforts Expanding.” 20 May 2009. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-05/20/content_7794738.htm

²⁹⁸ China Daily. Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China. “White Paper on Development and Progress in Xinjiang: Steady Development of Social Programs.” 21 September 2009. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/ethnic/2009-09/21/content_8717461_5.htm

²⁹⁹ “Temperamental Neighbours: Uighur-Han Relations in Xinjiang, Northwest China [p. 64].” Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. In *Imagined Differences: Hatred and the Construction of Identity*. Günther Schlee, Ed. 2002. Hamburg, Germany: Lit Verlag.

³⁰⁰ East-West Center Washington. Dwyer, Arienne M. “The Xinjiang Conflict: Uyghur Identity, Language Policy, and Political Discourse [pp. 36–41].” 2005. <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/PS015.pdf>

³⁰¹ “Temperamental Neighbours: Uighur-Han Relations in Xinjiang, Northwest China [p. 64].” Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. In *Imagined Differences: Hatred and the Construction of Identity*. Günther Schlee, Ed. 2002. Hamburg, Germany: Lit Verlag.

for neglecting or abandoning their own culture.³⁰² Furthermore, due to discrimination, an education in Mandarin does not guarantee employment for Uighurs or social acceptance among Han.³⁰³

Restaurants

In Xinjiang, restaurants and other food vendors often cater to specific ethnicities, namely Uighurs, Han, Hui (Dungans), or Kazakhs. Most Uighurs will not eat at non-Uighur restaurants due, in large part, to their Islamic beliefs concerning *haram* (taboo) and *halal* (acceptable) foods. Uighurs especially avoid Han restaurants due to their heavy use of pork, a *haram* food that is strictly avoided by Muslims. For related reasons, some Uighurs may refuse to eat any food that is not prepared by a fellow Uighur or, at least, a fellow Muslim.³⁰⁴ Uighurs sometimes eat at Hui restaurants, but they typically do not buy meat from Hui butchers.^{305, 306} Uighur cuisine, however is said to be enjoyed by Han.



© nozomiigel / flickr.com
Uighur restaurant in Urumqi, Xinjiang

Uighur restaurants are common in urban areas. They can be identified by their use of Arabic script—the script used for Uighur—and/or the Islamic architecture and decor. They are also often identified as *halal*, although alcohol may be consumed at some. The most important distinction is “no pork.” As in Uighur homes, the most commonly served beverage at Uighur restaurants is tea.

Exchange 23: I would like tea.

Soldier:	I would like tea, please.	maen chaay Khaalaaymen
Local:	Sure.	boludu

Green tea (*kok chai*) often comes flavored with nutmeg or rose petals. Black tea (*sin chai*) is typically served after meals. Other varieties may come with salt and milk (*atkan chai*) or cream, sour cream, and butter (*aqpur cina*).³⁰⁷ Breakfast often consists of tea, bread, yogurt, fruits, and/or nuts.

Exchange 24: Are you still serving breakfast?

Soldier:	Are you still serving breakfast?	silaer haazirmu naashtaliQ mulaazimaet Qilamsilaer?
Local:	Yes.	shundaaQ

Most Uighur meals are meat-based; vegetarianism is practically unheard of among Uighurs. The most commonly served meats are mutton (sheep) and lamb.

³⁰² East-West Center Washington. Dwyer, Arienne M. “The Xinjiang Conflict: Uyghur Identity, Language Policy, and Political Discourse [p. 38].” 2005. <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/PS015.pdf>

³⁰³ Asia Times. Robles, Paloma. “Uyghurs Face an Education Dilemma.” 6 October 2009. <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/KJ06Ad01.html>

³⁰⁴ Slate. Kucera, Joshua. “Dispatches from China’s Wild West: Ramadan in China.” 4 March 2008. <http://www.slate.com/id/2185456/entry/2185458/>

³⁰⁵ “Acculturation and Resistance: Xinjiang Identities in Flux [p. 312].” Rudelson, Justin and William Jankowiak. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

³⁰⁶ “Islam in Xinjiang [p. 337].” Fuller, Graham E. and Jonathan N. Lipman. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

³⁰⁷ Friends of the Museum, Singapore. Thomas, Premoj. “Xinjiang Food.” No date. <http://www.fom.sg/XinjiangFood.pdf>

Exchange 25: What type of meat is this?

Soldier:	What type of meat is this?	boo nimae goeshi?
Local:	It's lamb.	Qoy goeshi

Pollo—known elsewhere as pilaf, *pilau*, or *plov*—is a signature Uighur dish. It traditionally consists of rice, mutton, onions, carrots, and spices. A popular dish is *chuchura*, a meat-dumpling soup. Noodle soups with mutton or lamb-based broths are also common.

Exchange 26: I'd like some soup.

Soldier:	I'd like some hot soup.	maanga QiziQ shorpa keraek
Local:	Sure.	aelwaetae

Typical Uighur desserts include ice cream (*maroji* or *marojna*), fruit and nut cake (*matang*), and fried dough filled with sugar, nuts, and raisins (*kharsen meghiz*). *Kat-kat* is a cake-like dessert layered with cream.

Exchange 27: Do you have dessert?

Soldier:	Do you have a dessert?	silaerdae taatliQ tueruem baarmu?
Local:	Yes, we have <i>kat-kat</i> .	bizdae Qat-Qat baar

A dessert known as *dogh*, or *durap*, which consists of shaved ice, yogurt, and syrup, should be avoided because it may be prepared under unsanitary conditions and cause illness.³⁰⁸ For similar reasons, it is recommended that one choose bottled water over tap water. Ice should also be avoided.



© nozomiigel / flickr.com
Dogh, an Uighur dessert dish

Exchange 28: May I have a glass of water?

Soldier:	May I have a glass of water?	maangaa bir istikaan soo baersingiz?
Local:	Yes, right away.	boludu haazir kilidu

It is customary throughout greater China for the person who arranges the meal to pay the bill in whole. Such practice accords with Uighur notions of hospitality.

Exchange 29: Put this all in one bill.

Soldier:	Put this all in one bill please.	bulaarning haemmisini bir taalungha Qoshup hisaaplaansun
Local:	Okay.	boludu

Tipping is not commonly practiced in Xinjiang. Instead, a service charge may be included in the bill, although this may not always be the case.³⁰⁹

Exchange 30: Can I have my total bill?

Soldier:	Can I have my total bill, please?	maangaa omumi taaluni biraemsiz?
Local:	Yes, of course.	boludu, aelwaetae

³⁰⁸ *China*, 8th Ed. Harper, Damian, et al. "Uyghur Food [p. 846]." 2002. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

³⁰⁹ *China*, 8th Ed. Harper, Damian, et al. "Facts for the Visitor: Tipping and Bargaining [p. 78]." 2002. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

In addition to providing food, Uighur restaurants commonly feature entertainment in the form of music or dance.

Marketplace

Xinjiang's urban centers host a wide range of shopping venues. Modern commercial districts are home to multinational chain and department stores with upscale merchandise. The traditional marketplace, especially for Uighurs, is the bazaar. Bazaars may range from rustic alleyways in old city districts to modern complexes combining small-scale businesses with corporate chain stores. In Urumqi, the modern bazaar complex is located just across from the remnants of the traditional bazaar that it replaced. The former is dominated by Han merchants, while Uighurs frequent the latter.³¹⁰



© taylorandayumi / flickr.com
Meat vendors in Xinjiang

Exchange 31: Is the bazaar nearby?

Soldier:	Is the bazaar nearby?	aetraapta baazaar baarmu?
Local:	Yes, over there on the right.	baar aa yearning ong taeripidae

Bazaars traditionally consist of an array of stalls with vendors selling food, drink, and a wide range of goods, including traditional crafts and tourist trinkets. Among Uighur vendors and shoppers, the *doppa*, a traditional skull cap, is a favorite item.

Exchange 32: Do you sell *doppa*?

Soldier:	Do you sell <i>doppa</i> *?	dopaa sataamsilaer?
Local:	Yes.	saatimiz

*traditional Uighur hat

Kashgar is the site of the massive open-air Sunday Bazaar, the largest in the region and one of the most well-known in Asia. Due to increased government regulation, the bazaar now consists of two parts. The primary site is known as the Kashgar International Trade Market of Central and Western Asia. This section is open throughout the week but is busiest on Sunday, when huge crowds flood into the city from the surrounding region. The second part of the bazaar, known as the Ivan Bazaar, consists of a traditional livestock market where Uighurs trade such animals as sheep and goats. Unlike the larger site, this smaller but lively market is said to retain a traditional character. It opens early on Sunday morning and lasts throughout the day.³¹¹

Exchange 33: How much longer will you be here?

Soldier:	How much longer will you be here?	siz boo yaerdae Qaanchae uzun turisiz?
Local:	Three more hours.	yaenae uech saa-aet

³¹⁰ Wall Street Journal. Johnson, Ian. "Uighurs Lose Economic Ground to Han." 21 July 2009. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124811293085765891.html>

³¹¹ *Frommer's China*, 2nd Ed. Lin-Liu, Jen, et al. "Chapter 7: The Silk Routes [p. 312]." 2006. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publishing.

In bazaars and at small-scale businesses, bargaining is the norm. Depending upon the item, the bargaining process may be lengthy and involved. A vendor's initial asking price will typically be high; customers should respond with counteroffers until a reasonable price can be reached.



© Matthew Winterburn
Kashgar carrot stall

Exchange 34: Can I buy a *gilam*?

Soldier:	Can I buy a <i>gilam</i> (rug) with this much money?	mooshinchilik pulgha gilaem alaalamdim?
Local:	No.	yaaQ

It is important for customers to familiarize themselves with the market and its practices by visiting a number of different stalls and comparing the price and quality of goods.

Exchange 35: May I examine this?

Soldier:	May I examine this close up?	booni yeQinraQ aekilip taekshueruep baaQsaam bolaamdu?
Local:	Sure.	aelwaetae

Such research allows customers to better conduct negotiations with vendors, who will generally seek to charge foreigners more than locals for the same item.³¹²

Exchange 36: Do you have any more of these?

Soldier:	Do you have any more of these?	sizdae buningdin yaenae baarmu?
Local:	No.	yoQ

Chinese currency is known as Renminbi (RMB). The basic unit is the *yuan*, which is known informally as *kuai*. It comes in bills with denominations of 1 (also available in coin form), 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, and 100 *yuan*. *Yuan* are further broken down into *jiao* (.10 *yuan*) and *fen* (.01 *yuan*), although the latter is so minimal it is rarely used. *Jiao* are also known as *mao* and may come in either coin or paper form with denominations of 1, 2, and 5 *jiao*.³¹³

Exchange 37: Do you accept U.S. currency?

Soldier:	Do you accept U.S. currency?	aamreekaa doliri aalaamsilaer?
Local:	No we only accept Yuan.	yaaQ biz KhaeliQ pulilaa aalimiz

³¹² *China*, 8th Ed. Harper, Damian, et al. "Facts for the Visitor: Tipping and Bargaining [p. 78]." 2002. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

³¹³ *China*, 8th Ed. Harper, Damian, et al. "Facts for the Visitor: Money: Currency [p. 75]." 2002. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

Shoppers should carry small bills for use in bazaars and other small-business venues, where vendors may not have change.



© Matthew Winterburn
An elderly Uighur Muslim

Exchange 38: Can you give me change for this?

Soldier:	Can you give me change for this?	maangaa buni tigiship biraemsiz?
Local:	No.	yaaQ

After a price has been agreed upon, the customer should follow through with the transaction, as it is inappropriate to withdraw an offer that has been accepted. Some vendors may be assertive in selling their goods despite a customer's polite refusal to buy.

Exchange 39: Buy something from me.

Local:	Please, buy something from me.	maendin bir naersae setiwaalsingizchu?
Soldier:	Sorry, I have no money left.	kaechuerueng maendae pul tuegidi

Beggars are relatively common in Xinjiang's urban areas.³¹⁴ They may be encountered in busy public venues such as marketplaces or outside mosques.

Exchange 40: Give me money

Local:	Give me money	pulnee maaangaa baer
Soldier:	I don't have any.	maendae pul yoQ

Child beggars, including those who are injured or deformed, may be indentured workers for human traffickers who collect all of their earnings.³¹⁵

³¹⁴ BBC News. Lim, Louisa. "China's Uighurs Lose Out to Development." 19 December 2003. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/3330803.stm>

³¹⁵ Guardian. The Observer. Ray, John. "China's Disabled Children are Sold into Slavery as Beggars." 22 July 2007. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/jul/22/china.theobserver>

Transportation

The upgrading and expansion of Xinjiang's urban transportation infrastructure has been a major component of the PRC government's regional development efforts. As part of this ongoing process, Xinjiang received a USD 100-million loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for urban improvement projects in 2009. The funds were primarily allocated for the construction or enhancement of urban roads and highways, as well as for the installation of new traffic signals and other safety



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Transportation

systems. Such projects are vital for improving the region's often poor and insufficient urban infrastructure, which has been strained by the influx of migrants to Xinjiang's urban areas. The ADB loan was also slated for building new public restrooms and other sanitation facilities in cities.³¹⁶ Existing facilities may be old and in poor condition, and some may require payment for use.³¹⁷

Exchange 41: Where is your restroom?

Soldier:	Where is your restroom?	oburni naedae
Local:	That room to your left, over there.	aawu oeydin sol taeraepkae aegilisiz

Xinjiang's major cities are transportation hubs for regional and international travel by air and train. In recent years, the construction and upgrading of several regional airports has enhanced the Xinjiang aviation network. By 2010, Xinjiang was expected to have 17 regional airports in operation, the most of any administrative region in China.³¹⁸ The Urumqi International Airport is the region's main airport.

Exchange 42: Which road leads to the airport?

Soldier:	Which road leads to the airport?	aayriportQaa Qaaysi yol bilaen baaridu?
Local:	The road heading east.	shaeriQae mangidighaan yol bilaen

³¹⁶ China Daily. Xinhua. "China's Xinjiang to Get \$100m Loan from ADB." 1 July 2009. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-07/01/content_8343240.htm

³¹⁷ *China*, 8th Ed. Harper, Damian, et al. "Facts for the Visitor: Toilets [pp. 108–109]." 2002. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

³¹⁸ People's Daily Online. "5 Regional Airports to Be Built in Xinjiang." 25 November 2008. <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90882/6540243.html>

The major railway in Xinjiang is known as the Lanzhou-Xinjiang, or Lanxin, Railway. Its main line runs generally east–west through north-central Xinjiang, connecting the region with greater China to the east and Kazakhstan to the west. Entering Xinjiang from the east, this line runs south of Hami, north of Turpan, through Urumqi, and westward across the southern Junggar Basin into Kazakhstan via the Dzungarian Gate, or Alatau Pass. From a hub at Daheyan (north of Turpan), a newer branch of the line runs southwestward across the northern Tarim Basin to Kashgar.



© CJ Shane
Urumqi train station

Exchange 43: Is there a train station nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a train station nearby?	aetraaptaa poyiz istaansisi baarmu?
Local:	Yes.	baar

Busses provide service within and between Xinjiang’s major urban centers, as well as to greater China and surrounding countries. Models may vary from large public buses to minibuses and sleeper buses for long-distance travel. There are different stations for local, long-distance, and international travel.³¹⁹

Exchange 44: Will the bus be here soon?

Soldier:	Will the bus be here soon?	aaptuwuz buyaergae paat aarida kilaemdu?
Local:	Yes.	shundaaQ

In China, foreigners are required to have a resident permit before they can apply for a PRC driver license.³²⁰ Car rentals therefore include a driver.³²¹

Exchange 45: Where can I rent a car?

Soldier:	Where can I rent a car?	maashinini naedin ijaare alalayaemaen
Local:	Downtown.	shehaer ichidin

Traffic conditions are notoriously poor in China, where the rate of accidents is among the highest in the world.

Exchange 46: Is there a auto mechanic nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?	aetraaptaa yaaKhshi maashina rimunutchisi baarmu?
Local:	Yes.	baar

Drivers are often inexperienced and reckless, and right-of-way courtesies are frequently ignored.³²² The general driving style has been described as “no-holds-barred.”³²³

³¹⁹ *China*, 8th Ed. Harper, Damian, et al. “Xinjiang: Urumqi [pp. 847–848].” 2002. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

³²⁰ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “China: Country Specific Information.” 20 July 2009. http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1089.html#medical

³²¹ *Frommer’s China*, 2nd Ed. Lin-Liu, Jen, et al. “Chapter 2: Planning Your Trip to China [p. 59].” 2006. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publishing.

³²² Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “China: Country Specific Information.” 20 July 2009. http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1089.html#medical

Exchange 47: Is there a gas station nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a gas station nearby?	aetraptaa maay Qaachilash ponkiti baarmu?
Local:	Yes.	baar

Under these conditions, it is preferable—and less expensive—to travel by taxis rather than by rental car. Taxis may be found cruising the streets or at traffic-heavy locations such as airports and bus stations.



© Malcolm M
Hotan taxi

Exchange 48: Where can I get a cab?

Soldier:	Where can I get a cab?	taaksini naedin taapimaen?
Local:	Over there.	oo yeardae

Official taxis are metered in Xinjiang. Regardless, passengers may wish to ask for a receipt to ensure fair service.

Exchange 49: Can you take me there?

Soldier:	Can you take me there?	mini oo yaergae aapirip Qoyalaamsiz?
Local:	Yes, I can.	aapirip Qoyalaaymaen

Other forms of transportation include pedicabs (auto-rickshaws), bicycles (for rent), and, in some places, donkey carts. The latter is a traditional method of transport for Uighurs. Fares for pedicab and donkey-cart rides should be negotiated in advance and paid using correct change. High-traffic areas, including transportation venues and bazaars, are known to be frequented by pickpockets and other petty thieves.

³²³ *Frommer's China*, 2nd Ed. Lin-Liu, Jen, et al. "Chapter 2: Planning Your Trip to China [p. 59]." 2006. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publishing.

Urban Life Assessment

1. Economic disparity in Xinjiang tends to fall along ethnic lines, with Uighurs being wealthier than Han Chinese

False. The Uighur–Han divide is expressed in numerous ways. Economic disparity in Xinjiang tends to fall along ethnic lines; Uighurs are generally poorer than Han. The economic divide has been attributed, in part, to discriminatory hiring practices that favor Han over Uighurs

2. Approximately 80% of Xinjiang’s health care services are located in urban areas

True. As an indication of the stark divide between Xinjiang’s urban and rural areas, approximately 80% of the region’s health care services were located in urban centers as of 2001

3. Urumqi is one of the most polluted cities in China.

True. As in greater China, population growth and environmental pollution have greatly affected public health in Xinjiang. Urumqi, in particular, has been cited as one of the most polluted cities in China. Its exceptionally high level of air pollution—as seen in its blackened skies—is a product of the city’s heavy consumption of coal, the most of any Chinese city

4. Most Uighurs are vegetarians

False. Most Uighur meals are meat-based; vegetarianism is practically unheard of among Uighurs. The most commonly served meats are mutton (sheep) and lamb.

5. Chinese currency is known as *yuan*.

False. Chinese currency is known as Renminbi (RMB). The basic unit is the *yuan*, which is known informally as *kuai*.

Chapter 5: Rural Life

Introduction

While rapid urbanization has profoundly reshaped pockets of Xinjiang, the majority of the region remains rural, with large expanses of uninhabited land. Most of the Uighur population lives in southern Xinjiang. Approximately 60% of Xinjiang's population lived in rural areas in 2008.^{324,325} This percentage is expected to steadily decrease in the coming years.³²⁶ Uighurs have historically lived in the region's scattered oases, which are mostly found in transitional zones between the lowland deserts and the surrounding mountains. Daily life in Uighur villages revolves around subsistence activities, such as small-scale agriculture, animal husbandry, and handicraft production.³²⁷ Uighur traditions remain strong in rural Xinjiang. The practice of Islam, for example, tends to be more devout and less regulated in rural areas.^{328,329}



© Richard Edkins
Uighur child

Despite the ongoing development and modernization of Xinjiang, many rural regions remain without modern services such as plumbing, electricity, sanitation facilities, and health care.³³⁰ Economic development has also bypassed much of rural Xinjiang, where poverty is rampant, especially in the south. Life in these areas remains difficult and highly dependent upon ecological conditions; most notably, snowmelt and runoff from the mountains are vital for local agriculture.

Land Distribution and Tenure

In the late 1950s, the PRC government implemented a large-scale collectivization scheme throughout China. This program involved establishing huge rural communes, which ultimately failed and led to widespread famine and loss of life.³³¹ Under the government's scheme, privately owned land was made property of the state, with nominal ownership given to the regional commune. Rural residents retained private ownership of their houses and small, surrounding tracts of land that could support small gardens. Livestock was also redistributed, with residents allowed to keep only two sheep at home. For the Uighurs, this collectivization scheme disrupted their traditional land tenure and inheritance practices, as well as their traditional division of labor. Among Uighurs, the collectivization period is known as the era of the "Big Pot," or *Cong Qazan*. A saying associated with this era is "The big pot is full, the little pot is

³²⁴ Center for Environmental Remote Sensing, Chiba University. Maimaitiming, Anwaer and Huhua Cao, Xiaolei Zhang. "Spatial Pattern of Urban Growth in Xinjiang, 1982–2008: A GIS Based Statistical Approach (Abstract)." 2009. <http://www2.cr.chiba-u.jp/symp2009/documents/AbstractAnwaerMaimaitiming.pdf>

³²⁵ Council on Foreign Relations. Bhattacharji, Preeti. "Uighurs and China's Xinjiang Region." 6 July 2009. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/16870/>

³²⁶ Asian Development Bank. "Proposed Loan: People's Republic of China: Xinjiang Urban Transport and Environmental Improvement Project [p. 2]." June 2009. <http://www.adb.org/Documents/RRPs/PRC/40643-PRC-RRP.pdf>

³²⁷ Centre d'études et de recherches internationales (CERI). *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien*, No. 25. Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. "Work and Gender among Uighur Villagers in Southern Xinjiang [pp. 11–17]." 1998. <http://www.cerisciencespo.com/publica/cemoti/textes25/beller.pdf>

³²⁸ East-West Center Washington. Dwyer, Arienne M. "The Xinjiang Conflict: Uyghur Identity, Language Policy, and Political Discourse [p. 3]." 2005. <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/PS015.pdf>

³²⁹ Amnesty International. "China: Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region." 2009. <http://thereport.amnesty.org/en/regions/asia-pacific/china>

³³⁰ Springerlink. "Photovoltaic for Rural Electrification in Xinjiang." Lei, Ting and Shenguha Yang. In *Proceedings of ISES World Congress 2007* (Vol. I – Vol. V). 2009. Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany: Springer. <http://www.springerlink.com/content/w36g123j3r358697/>

³³¹ Encyclopedia Britannica Online. "Great Leap Forward." 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9037865>

empty.” Uighurs were among the nation’s many rural residents that suffered famine during this time.³³²

Exchange 50: Do you own this land?

Soldier:	Do you own this land?	boo zimin sizningmu?
Local:	No.	yaaQ

With the reform era of the late 1970s, collectively held agricultural land was redistributed to the local population, with each household receiving an equal plot of land. However, residents did not receive ownership rights, but rather a long-term lease for the property.³³³ Recent reform plans include a potential increase of the standard lease term from 30 to 70 years. Landholders can reportedly trade their leases.³³⁴ Following tradition, some Uighur landholders have transferred portions of their property to their sons.³³⁵

Rural Livelihoods

The majority of Uighurs continue to earn their living through traditional, small-scale oasis agriculture and animal husbandry. (As of 2006, an estimated 82% of Uighur households engaged in farming.³³⁶) Others may work in craft production, commerce, or in various trades. Many Uighurs grow cotton, a water-intensive cash-crop that is among the more profitable crops grown in Xinjiang. Various food crops—primarily grains and fruits—are grown throughout the region, with each oasis producing local specialties. The Turpan region, for example, is known for its grapes and the Hami for its melons.³³⁷ Uighur farms are typically small, averaging 0.7 hectares (1.7 acres).³³⁸ This contrasts greatly with the large-scale commercial farms, especially in northern Xinjiang, that have been developed by the PRC government and related organizations. One such organization is the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, known locally as *bingtuan*. This organization, which is predominantly composed of Han, is responsible for 40% of the region’s cotton production.³³⁹ Disparities between the amount of resources needed to run large-scale versus small-scale farms (e.g., water), as well as their respective profits, have contributed to perceptions that Uighurs have benefited less than Han from PRC-directed agricultural development in Xinjiang.³⁴⁰



© taylorandayumi / flickr.com
Front door of a Uighur house

³³² Centre d’études et de recherches internationales (CERI). *Cahiers d’études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien*, No. 25. Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. “Work and Gender among Uighur Villagers in Southern Xinjiang [p. 8].” 1998. <http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/publica/cemoti/textes25/beller.pdf>

³³³ Centre d’études et de recherches internationales (CERI). *Cahiers d’études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien*, No. 25. Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. “Work and Gender among Uighur Villagers in Southern Xinjiang [pp. 11–12].” 1998. <http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/publica/cemoti/textes25/beller.pdf>

³³⁴ Asian Surveying and Mapping. “Xinjiang Considers Australian Land Information System.” 10 December 2008. <http://www.asmmag.com/news/xinjiang-considers-australian-land-information-system>

³³⁵ International Institute for Asian Studies. IAS Newsletter, No. 34. Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. “Customary Law Under Socialism: The Uyghur in Xinjiang.” July 2004. http://www.iias.nl/nl/34/IIAS_NL34_18.pdf

³³⁶ Virginia Consortium of Asian Studies, Washington and Lee University. *Virginia Review of Asian Studies*. Grose, Timothy A. “Educating Xinjiang’s Uyghurs: Achieving Success or Creating Unrest [pp. 7–8].” 2008. <http://vcas.wlu.edu/VRAS/2008VRAS/Grose.pdf>

³³⁷ Encyclopedia Britannica Online. “Xinjiang: Economy: Agriculture.” 2009. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-280644>

³³⁸ International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam. Spoor, Max. “ISS/XUA/KNOW Research Project in Rural Xinjiang.” 6 February 2009. <http://www.iss.nl/DevISSues/Articles/ISS-XAU-KNOW-Research-Project-in-Rural-Xinjiang>

³³⁹ *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. Millward, James A. “Chapter 7: Between China and the World (1990s–2000s) [p. 300].” 2007. New York: Columbia University Press.

³⁴⁰ Council on Foreign Relations. Bhattarhari, Preeti. “Uighurs and China’s Xinjiang Region.” 6 July 2009. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/16870/>

Exchange 51: Where do you work?

Soldier:	Where do you work?	siz naedae ishlaeysiz?
Local:	I am a farmer.	maen diKhaan

In general, small-scale agriculture is a low-paying, seasonal profession in which labor is concentrated during the growing season and minimal profits come when the crop is harvested. These factors greatly contribute to high rates of poverty and unemployment among Uighurs. In 2008, the average income for farmers in Xinjiang was 3,503 *yuan*, or about USD 513, well below the national average of 4,761 *yuan*, or USD 697.³⁴¹ The average income in rural southern Xinjiang, however, is said to be “much lower.” In the rural outskirts around the city of Hotan (Khotan), for example, the average income is 2,226 *yuan*, or USD 326.³⁴² Because of the low average income provided by seasonal agriculture, Uighur men migrate to regional cities in search of employment during the off-season.³⁴³ Yet, off-farm employment opportunities are limited. This is especially the case for Uighurs, who have difficulty competing against Han for jobs, due in part to discriminatory hiring practices. One Uighur scholar estimated that, in contrast to official figures, up to 1.5 million capable Uighur workers were unemployed.³⁴⁴



© Jan Reurink
Vendor in Xinjiang

The PRC government has made efforts to combat poverty and unemployment in rural Xinjiang. It has provided “soft” loans, with below-market interest rates, to small-scale farmers in order to help them expand their operations. It has also facilitated long-term contracts between small farmers and large food corporations that purchase, process, and distribute their produce.³⁴⁵ A more controversial program has involved the relocation of large numbers of workers from poor rural villages in Xinjiang to cities in greater China, where they are provided with industrial jobs, training, and other benefits. Many Uighurs claim that participation in the program has been forced, with families facing fines from local government officials if they do not send a member of their family. A large number of these exported workers have been young Uighur women, including teenage girls, who traditionally do not leave their families until they are married. In June 2009, a brawl broke out between Han and Uighurs at a toy factory in Guangdong Province (in southeastern China) where Uighurs had been relocated for work. Following the death of two Uighurs in the brawl, Uighurs in Urumqi held protests demanding an investigation into the incident. These protests culminated in deadly ethnic conflicts in Urumqi in July 2009.³⁴⁶

³⁴¹ Reuters. Blanchard, Ben. “China Blames Xinjiang Violence for Slowed Development.” 21 September 2009. <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE58K0V920090921>

³⁴² Wall Street Journal. Johnson, Ian. “Uighurs Lose Economic Ground to Han.” 21 July 2009. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124811293085765891.html>

³⁴³ Virginia Consortium of Asian Studies, Washington and Lee University. *Virginia Review of Asian Studies*. Grose, Timothy A. “Educating Xinjiang’s Uyghurs: Achieving Success or Creating Unrest [p. 8].” 2008. <http://vcas.wlu.edu/VRAS/2008VRAS/Grose.pdf>

³⁴⁴ Los Angeles Times. Demich, Barbara and David Pierson. “China’s Flood of Fortune Seekers Unsettles Xinjiang.” 11 July 2009. <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/jul/11/world/fg-china-west11>

³⁴⁵ Wall Street Journal. Johnson, Ian. “Uighurs Lose Economic Ground to Han.” 21 July 2009. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124811293085765891.html>

³⁴⁶ Washington Post. Cha, Ariana Eunjung. “China Unrest Can Be Traced to Program that Sends Uighurs Across Country to Work.” 15 July 2009. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/07/14/AR2009071403321.html?sid=ST2009071500155>

Health Care

As of 2001, only 20% of Xinjiang's health care facilities were located in rural areas.³⁴⁷ This disparity in health care coverage leaves many rural residents without access to modern medical attention. Moreover, throughout China, the quality of health care is significantly lower in rural areas than in cities.³⁴⁸ Broadly, medical care in the PRC, even at advanced hospitals in urban areas, is generally below U.S. standards of quality.³⁴⁹



© taylorandayumi / flickr.com
Medicine shop

Exchange 52: Is there a medical clinic nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a medical clinic nearby?	aetraaptaa shipaaKhana baarmu?
Local:	Yes, over there.	baar, aa yaerdae

In rural areas, the lack of modern medical services compels rural residents to seek alternative treatments, including folk healing remedies. These may include shamanistic methods—a legacy of ancient Uighur culture—and traditional Uighur medicine, the latter of which incorporates herbal remedies.³⁵⁰ Due to demand, unregistered clinics staffed with poorly trained doctors have been established in rural areas. These clinics have generally provided less expensive services in comparison to the government's rural clinics, but they provide it at an even lower quality. Nonetheless, they have reportedly been heavily used.³⁵¹

Exchange 53: Can you help me?

Soldier:	My arm is broken, can you help me?	mining biligim sunup kaeti siz maangaa yaardaem Qilalamsiz?
Local:	Yes, I can help you.	shundaaQ, maen yaardaem Qilalaaymaen

One factor affecting the availability of health care among Uighur communities is a shortage of Uighur doctors. Laws requiring medical students to be fluent in Mandarin have contributed to this trend. Uighur doctors are likely to return to their home regions after studying medicine, and they are preferred by Uighurs themselves. Han generally have no incentive to practice in rural Uighur areas, where pay and hospital conditions are often poor. These factors contribute to a health care gap between Uighurs and Han.³⁵²

³⁴⁷ Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst*. Ingram, Ruth. "Health in Xinjiang." 1 August 2001. <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/451>

³⁴⁸ China Daily. Shan Juan. "Rural Areas' Healthcare Lags Behind: Vice Minister." 15 August 2009. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-08/15/content_8573968.htm

³⁴⁹ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "China: Country Specific Information." 20 July 2009. http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1089.html#medical

³⁵⁰ Scribd. Light, Nathan. "Uyghur Folklore [pp. 4–5]." Originally published in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of World Folklore and Folklife*. William M. Clements, Ed. 2006. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/16774274/Uyghur-Folklore-Article>

³⁵¹ Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst*. Ingram, Ruth. "Health in Xinjiang." 1 August 2001. <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/451>

³⁵² Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst*. Ingram, Ruth. "Health in Xinjiang." 1 August 2001. <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/451>

As part of its broader efforts to reform the national health care system, the PRC government implemented a rural cooperative medical system in Xinjiang in 2003. This program, which has been expanded nationwide, provides government-subsidized health insurance to poor rural families. Administered at the county-level, the program focuses on inpatient and major medical treatment.³⁵³ According to the PRC government, nearly 95% of Xinjiang’s rural population was covered under the program as of 2008. In 2009, the government also claimed that “health services in farming and pastoral areas have significantly improved, and a three-tier disease-prevention and healthcare network has been established in counties, townships, and villages.”³⁵⁴



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Dried snakes at a Kashgar market

Education in Rural Areas

Although the PRC government has greatly expanded the availability and quality of education, rural residents, in comparison to their urban counterparts, remain at a disadvantage. Primary schools are present in populated rural areas (either at the village or county level); however, higher-level schools, especially colleges and universities, are concentrated in urban areas.

Exchange 54: Is there a school nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a school nearby?	boo yeQindaa maektaep baarmu?
Local:	Yes.	baar

Boarding schools have historically allowed some families in remote villages to send their children to primary or secondary schools when no local school is available.³⁵⁵ Although primary and junior secondary education—a total of nine years—is compulsory and nominally free, additional school fees keep many students from attending or graduating. This is particularly the case among Uighurs in rural areas, where the income provided by seasonal agriculture is minimal. Such financial constraints are exacerbated at advanced levels of education.³⁵⁶

Exchange 55: Do your children go to school?

Soldier:	Do your children go to school?	baliringiz maektaepkae baaramdu?
Local:	Yes.	baaridu

³⁵³ Munich Re Foundation. Wei Zheng and Chunyan Zhang. “Efficiency Evaluation of China’s New Rural Cooperative Medical System Using DEA Method.” 2008. http://www.munichre-foundation.org/NR/rdonlyres/3CA5B135-DD86-4276-A689-1FDE1512A1D8/0/S8_MIC09_Paper_Zheng.pdf

³⁵⁴ China Daily. Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China. “White Paper on Development and Progress in Xinjiang: Steady Development of Social Programs.” 21 September 2009. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/ethnic/2009-09/21/content_8717461_5.htm

³⁵⁵ “Education and Social Mobility among Minority Populations [p. 207].” Benson, Linda. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick, Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

³⁵⁶ Virginia Consortium of Asian Studies, Washington and Lee University. *Virginia Review of Asian Studies*. Grose, Timothy A. “Educating Xinjiang’s Uyghurs: Achieving Success or Creating Unrest [pp. 7–8].” 2008. <http://vcas.wlu.edu/VRAS/2008VRAS/Grose.pdf>

Another challenge encountered by rural Uighurs is the dilemma posed by disparities in the language of instruction at educational facilities. Uighurs have historically had the option of attending “minority-language schools,” which primarily use Uighur, or “Chinese-language schools,” where Mandarin is used almost exclusively. The government now requires all institutions to use Mandarin as the language of instruction beginning in the third grade, with minority languages taught as a secondary subject.³⁵⁷ However, due to the slow and incomplete implementation of this policy, some schools reportedly continue to use Uighur as the primary language of instruction. This is due, in part, to a lack of Uighur teachers who are fluent in Mandarin, although efforts have been made to train them or replace them with Mandarin-speaking teachers. While many Uighurs desire the opportunity to study their native language and culture, those who do not attend Chinese-language schools may fail to develop the Mandarin language skills required to pursue an advanced education or a career in the civil sector.³⁵⁸ Rural students, in particular, are less likely to develop such skills, as many of them come from regions where Uighur is still the most widely spoken language.³⁵⁹



© Peter Morgan
Teacher training in Shanshan

As of 2006, 33% of Uighurs aged 15 or older had completed middle school, 6.9% had finished high school, and 3.1% had acquired a college or specialized degree.³⁶⁰ In recent years, the PRC government has expanded a program in which high-performing ethnic minority students, often from underdeveloped rural areas, attend secondary educational institutions in urban areas in Xinjiang or greater China.³⁶¹ Students admitted to the program, known broadly as “Xinjiang classes,” receive their education free of charge. The program, however, has been criticized by the Uighur community as an effort to remove its children from their native cultural environment and assimilate them into Han culture.³⁶²

³⁵⁷ East-West Center Washington. Dwyer, Arienne M. “The Xinjiang Conflict: Uyghur Identity, Language Policy, and Political Discourse [pp. 36–41].” 2005. <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/PS015.pdf>

³⁵⁸ Asia Times. Robles, Paloma. “Uyghurs Face an Education Dilemma.” 6 October 2009. <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/KJ06Ad01.html>

³⁵⁹ *Muslim Uighur Students in a Chinese Boarding School: Social Recaptalization as a Response to Ethnic Integration*. Yangbin Chen. “Chapter 6: Social Networks [p. 107].” 2008. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

³⁶⁰ Virginia Consortium of Asian Studies, Washington and Lee University. *Virginia Review of Asian Studies*. Grose, Timothy A. “Educating Xinjiang’s Uyghurs: Achieving Success or Creating Unrest [pp. 7–8].” 2008. <http://vcas.wlu.edu/VRAS/2008VRAS/Grose.pdf>

³⁶¹ China.org. Yunxing, Zhang. “More Poor Students in Xinjiang Get Quality Education.” 15 May 2009. http://www.china.org.cn/government/local_governments/2009-05/15/content_17781448.htm

³⁶² U.S. Government Printing Office. Congressional-Executive Commission on China. “Human Rights in Xinjiang: Recent Developments [p. 5].” 13 February 2009. http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=111_house_hearings&docid=f:48222.pdf

Local Administration

Xinjiang is subdivided into a complex hierarchy of administrative units, which include (in descending order) prefectures, counties, townships, and villages.³⁶³ In general, each of these units is headed by a government leader and a corresponding Chinese Communist Party (CCP) official(s), as well as an administrative committee known as a “people’s congress.” The people’s congress for each layer of government elects its respective government heads.



© Roy Berman
Planning a new road near Turpan

Under communism, the rural administrative hierarchy was organized as commune (*gong she*), brigade (*da dui*), and team (*xiao dui*). After market reforms, these were reorganized as county (*xian*), township (*zhen*), and village (*cun*). (Elderly people may still refer to them by the earlier names.) While subject to the regional and prefecture-level government, rural areas generally fall under the local jurisdiction of counties and villages. Some prefectures and counties are designated “autonomous,” which implies that local ethnic minorities, who may or may not comprise the majority of the local population, are vested with political power. Likewise, many townships with concentrated populations of ethnic minorities are designated as “ethnic townships.” In such areas, the appointment of an ethnic minority to a leadership position is required by law. However, such appointments are often nominal, with real power lying with a Han deputy or CCP secretary.³⁶⁴ In any case, local decisions are subject to approval by higher-level authorities.³⁶⁵ This is especially the case for townships, villages, and other sub-county-level governments, which are primarily tasked with implementing the policies handed down to them from higher-level authorities.³⁶⁶ Throughout this system, CCP officials typically hold greater practical power than their government counterparts.³⁶⁷

³⁶³ China Daily. Xinhua. “Brief Intro to Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.” 8 July 2009. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009xinjiangriot/2009-07/08/content_8395417.htm

³⁶⁴ “Temperamental Neighbours: Uighur-Han Relations in Xinjiang, Northwest China [p. 64].” Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. In *Imagined Differences: Hatred and the Construction of Identity*. Günther Schlee, Ed. 2002. Hamburg, Germany: Lit Verlag.

³⁶⁵ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. “Country Profile: China.” August 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/China.pdf>

³⁶⁶ China.org. China Internet Information Center. “China’s Political System: The Local Administrative System.” No date. <http://www.china.org.cn/english/Political/28842.htm>

³⁶⁷ *Sinicization Beyond the Great Wall: China’s Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region*. Rahman, Anwar. Chapter 5: Uighur Autonomy & CCP Role [pp. 67–77]. 2005. Leicester, UK: Matador.

At the most basic level, villages have a government-appointed leader. These leaders may serve as intermediaries between local residents and higher-level authorities.



© Peter Morgan
Karakoram Highway

Exchange 56: Does your *daduizhang** live here?

Soldier:	Does your <i>daduizhang</i> live here?	daadueyjaang boo yaerdae turaamdu?
Local:	Yes.	shundaaQ

*government appointed village leader

As such, they are typically tasked with implementing government policy at the grassroots level. In some cases, they may also serve as an advocate or mouthpiece for the local community. Uighur villages may also appoint an unofficial community leader, typically a man in his 50s, known as the *zhigit beshi*.³⁶⁸

Exchange 57: Can you take me to your *daduizhang*?

Soldier:	Can you take me to your <i>daduizhang</i> ?	mini daadueyjaangning yenigha bashlap apiraalaamsiz?
Local:	Yes.	boludu

A local government official's political and bureaucratic connections can be highly valuable due to the far-reaching command of the PRC government, which oversees a large share of economic activity and is a primary source of employment.

Exchange 58: We need your help.

Soldier:	Respected <i>daduizhang</i> , we need your help / advice / opinion.	hoermaetlik daadueyjang bizgae sizning yaardimingiz/taeklipingiz/waepikiringiz keraek
Local:	Yes.	boludu

Government policies often determine access to education and housing, and even extend into family planning. Because government approval and allocation is so frequently and widely needed, currying favor with officials can be a practical necessity. Corruption is therefore a major problem in China.³⁶⁹ Corruption is facilitated, in part, by the lack of popular elections, a free press, and independent judicial institutions—none of which are conceded under the single-party, CCP-controlled PRC government. At the same time, the multi-layered government is so expansive and unwieldy that it is susceptible to abuse of power at any level.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁸ “‘The Dawn of the East’: A Portrait of a Uyghur Community [p. 214].” Roberts, Sean R. In *Situating the Uyghurs between China and Central Asia*. Ildikó Bellér-Hann, et al, Eds. 2007. Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing.

³⁶⁹ Bureau of Economic, Energy and Business Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “2009 Investment Climate Statement – China.” February 2009. <http://www.state.gov/e/eeb/rls/othr/ics/2009/120870.htm>

³⁷⁰ New York Times. Minzner, Carl. “Corruption in China: The Anger Boils Over.” 29 May 2007. <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/29/opinion/29iht-edminzer.1.5912729.html>

Rural Transportation

The PRC government's economic development of Xinjiang has required an extensive and ongoing expansion of the region's transportation network. In addition to improving urban infrastructure, the government has sought to upgrade and extend highway links between Xinjiang's major cities and throughout its rural areas.³⁷¹ By the end of 2008, Xinjiang had approximately 147,000 km (91,342 mi) of roadway, including 8 national highways, 66 regional highways, and more than 600 county-level roads. The main highways form circles around the two major basins, which are connected by a link running from Urumqi to Korla (in the northern Tarim Basin) through the Turpan region. This network has links extending into greater China and surrounding countries, including high-altitude highways into Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, and Tibet. (Notably, the Karakoram Highway, which links Kashgar to Islamabad in Pakistan, crosses over the Khunjerab Pass at an altitude of 4,730 m, or 15,518 ft.)³⁷² The PRC has also engineered highways spanning the two massive deserts of the north (Gurbantunggut) and south (Taklamakan). Additional highways run throughout the rugged Tien Shan region.³⁷³



© Matthew Winterburn
Rural transportation

Exchange 59: Do you know this area?

Soldier:	Do you know this area very well?	siz boo jaayni yaaKhshi bilaemsiz?
Local:	Yes.	shundaaQ

³⁷¹ China.org. Xinhua. "China's Investment in Highway Construction Soars." 4 March 2006. <http://www.china.org.cn/english/2006/Mar/160089.htm>

³⁷² Lonely Planet. "Karakoram Highway: Introducing Karakoram Highway." 3 June 2009. <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/pakistan/karakoram-highway>

³⁷³ China Daily. Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China. "White Paper on Development and Progress in Xinjiang: Swift Economic Development." 21 September 2009. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/ethnic/2009-09/21/content_8717461_3.htm

While the PRC has considerably expanded the road network, Xinjiang’s massive size and extreme topography leave many rural villages isolated and unconnected.³⁷⁴ Transportation into rural areas may be available by bus or hired vehicle, including minibuses and sport-utility vehicles. Carts driven by donkeys or other draught animals are a traditional mode of transportation still used by Uighurs in rural areas, as well as cities.³⁷⁵ Private vehicle ownership is rare, especially in rural areas. (As of 2007, throughout Xinjiang, there were 35 privately owned vehicles for every 1000 people.)³⁷⁶ Unimproved roads in rural areas are often in poor and treacherous condition, especially in regions with rugged terrain. Travel may also be affected by extreme climate conditions ranging from heavy snow and cold, to high winds and sand storms. Modern services remain sparse outside of cities and away from major highways. Travelers facing emergencies may find themselves long distances from shelter and medical attention.



Exchange 60: Is there lodging nearby?

Soldier:	Is there lodging nearby?	aetraapta yaataaQ baarmu?
Local:	Yes.	baar

Border Crossings and Checkpoints

Xinjiang is a strategically important region. It shares international borders with eight countries, including hot spots such as Afghanistan and the disputed Jammu and Kashmir region (where Pakistan and India have conflicting claims). To the west, the former Soviet Republics of Central Asia are affected by drug trafficking and insurgent activity.³⁷⁷ For these reasons, as well as the region’s domestic security concerns, travel in and out of Xinjiang is tightly monitored at border crossings and other security checkpoints.

Exchange 61: Where is the nearest checkpoint?

Soldier:	Where is the nearest checkpoint?	aeng yeQin taekshueruesh noKhtisi naedae?
Local:	It’s two kilometers.	iki kilomitir yiraaQtaa

³⁷⁴ China Daily. Xinhua. “Xinjiang to Invest Heavily in Rural Highways.” 29 January 2009. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-01/29/content_7768452.htm

³⁷⁵ *China*, 8th Ed. Harper, Damian, et al. “Xinjiang: Kashgar [pp. 862–863].” 2002. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

³⁷⁶ Asian Development Bank. “Proposed Loan: People’s Republic of China: Xinjiang Urban Transport and Environmental Improvement Project [p. 2].” June 2009. <http://www.adb.org/Documents/RRPs/PRC/40643-PRC-RRP.pdf>

³⁷⁷ Federation of American Scientists. Congressional Research Service. Nichol, Jim. “CRS Report: Central Asia’s Security: Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests. [p. 7]” 25 February 2009. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30294.pdf>

Despite intensive security efforts, Xinjiang’s international borders—especially with Central Asia—remain porous.³⁷⁸ This is due to their sheer length and rugged terrain. Uighurs may receive special attention at checkpoints as they are subject to travel restrictions imposed by the PRC government.³⁷⁹



© nozomiigel / flickr.com
China-Pakistan border security

Exchange 62: Is this all the ID you have?

Soldier:	Is this all the ID you have?	sizdae baar kimlikning haemisi mushumu?
Local:	Yes.	shundaaQ

Militant activity—especially of a “separatist” nature—is of particular concern for security officials in Xinjiang, where small terrorist and opposition groups are known to operate, sometimes in cooperation with insurgent groups in surrounding countries.^{380, 381}

Exchange 63: Are you carrying any guns?

Soldier:	Are you carrying any guns?	silerdae Qoraal baarmu?
Local:	No.	yoQ

Attacks at security checkpoints are a threat. In August 2008, three volunteer guards were killed at a road checkpoint near Kashgar during a routine identity check. According to PRC authorities, the victims and their attackers were all Uighurs.³⁸² This occurred during the Beijing Olympic Games, when special roadblocks were in place between villages in rural Xinjiang.

Exchange 64: Please get out of the car.

Soldier:	Please get out of the car.	maashinidin chueshueng
Local:	OK.	maaQul

Roadblocks are commonly established during times of heightened security.

Exchange 65: Show us the car registration.

Soldier:	Show us the car registration.	maashinining tizimlitish Qaeghizini chiQiring
Local:	Right away.	maaQul

In Xinjiang, foreigners passing through border crossings and checkpoints are likely met with inspection of their passport and questions regarding the purpose of their visit. Foreigners are restricted from entering certain regions, such as the disputed territory of Aksai Chin (on the

³⁷⁸ The Jamestown Foundation. *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 3, No. 8. Mili, Hayder. “Xinjiang: An Emerging Narco-Islamist Corridor?” 5 May 2005. http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=298

³⁷⁹ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. *International Religious Freedom Report 2009*.

“International Religious Freedom Report 2009: China.” 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127268.htm>

³⁸⁰ Council on Foreign Relations. Bhattacharji, Preeti. “Uighurs and China’s Xinjiang Region.” 6 July 2009.

<http://www.cfr.org/publication/16870/>

³⁸¹ Human Rights Watch. *Devastating Blows: Religious Repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang*. “Background: A History of Restiveness.”

11 April 2005. <http://www.hrw.org/en/node/11799/section/5>

³⁸² Wall Street Journal. Fairclough, Gordon. “Attack in Xinjiang Kills Three at a Road Checkpoint.” 13 August 2008.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121853493349433061.html>

southern Xinjiang frontier) and most areas of nearby Tibet, which the PRC government views as another restive region.³⁸³

Land Mines

The People’s Republic of China is not a signatory to the Mine Ban Treaty, also known as the Ottawa Treaty. The U.S. is also not a signatory to this agreement. Negotiated in 1997, this pact requires all signatories to cease the “use, stockpiling, production, and transfer of anti-personnel mines.” Signatories are also required to clear all mines from their territory within 10 years of signing the agreement. The PRC is thought to have the largest supply of anti-personnel mines in the world; its stockpile is estimated at 110 million. It is known to have mined areas along its borders with Russia, India, and Vietnam.³⁸⁴ Within Xinjiang, the area most likely to be affected by mines is the southwestern frontier of the disputed Aksai Chin region.



© United Nations Photo
Unexploded landmines

Exchange 66: Is this area mined?

Soldier:	Is this area mined?	boo jaayghaa minaa koemuelgaenmu?
Local:	No.	yaaQ

Aksai Chin is located along the contested China–India border near the Jammu and Kashmir region, the subject of a long-running territorial dispute between India, Pakistan, and China. Aksai Chin is administered by China but also claimed by India as part of Jammu and Kashmir, which it currently administers. In 1962, China and India fought a short-lived border war over this area and portions of the Arunachal Pradesh region of northeastern India (along the southern reaches of the Tibet region of China). These territorial disputes remain unresolved.³⁸⁵ Isolated and largely uninhabited, Aksai Chin remains strategically important to China in part because a national highway passes through it from southern Xinjiang to Tibet, linking Kashgar with the Tibetan capital, Lhasa.³⁸⁶

³⁸³ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “China: Country Specific Information.” 20 July 2009. http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1089.html#medical

³⁸⁴ Landmine Monitor, International Campaign to Ban Landmines. *Landmine Monitor Report 2009*. “China.” 2009. http://lm.icbl.org/index.php/publications/display?act=submit&pqs_year=2009&pqs_type=lm&pqs_report=china&pqs_section=#footnote-11284-16

³⁸⁵ Wall Street Journal. Smith, Jeff M. “The China-India Border Brawl.” 24 June 2009. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124578881101543463.html>

³⁸⁶ CNN. Easen, Nick. “Aksai Chin: China’s Disputed Slice of Kashmir.” 24 May 2002. <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/east/05/24/aksai.chin/>

Rural Life Assessment

1. Only about 20% of Uighurs still earn their living by farming.

False. The majority of Uighurs continue to earn their living through traditional, small-scale agriculture and animal husbandry. As of 2006, an estimated 82% of Uighur households engaged in farming

2. Since education is free, most Uighurs have graduated from high school.

False. Although primary and junior secondary education is compulsory and technically free, additional school fees keep many students from attending or graduating. This is particularly the case among Uighurs in rural areas, where the income provided by seasonal agriculture is minimal.

3. The PRC's economic development of Xinjiang has included an extensive and ongoing expansion of the transportation network.

True. In addition to improving urban infrastructure, the government has sought to upgrade and extend highway links between Xinjiang's major cities and throughout its rural areas.

4. Private vehicle ownership in rural Xinjiang is quite high at about 500 privately owned vehicles for every 1000 people.

False. As of 2007, throughout Xinjiang there were 35 privately owned vehicles for every 1000 people. Private vehicle ownership is rare, especially in the rural areas

5. Xinjiang's international borders are closed to international traffic.

False. Xinjiang shares international borders with eight countries. Despite intensive security efforts, Xinjiang's international borders—especially with Central Asia—remain porous. This is due to their sheer length and rugged terrain.

Chapter 6: Family Life

Introduction

The family is the most important social unit in Uighur society. Extended families and their broader kinship networks serve as lifelong support systems for their members, both socially and economically.³⁸⁷ This is especially the case in rural Xinjiang, where traditional ways of life remain strong and state-run social services and employment may be limited or undesirable. The family remains the central arena for preserving and propagating Uighur culture. This is a significant concern for many Uighurs amid the ongoing integration and development of Xinjiang by the People’s Republic of China (PRC) government. Because of these and other factors, Uighurs place utmost importance on familial welfare, relations, and cultural propagation; marriage and childbirth are absolute norms. Yet traditional Uighur practices concerning life-cycle events, as well as other familial practices, have been increasingly affected by government policy.



© Mike Locke
Women weaving carpets in Hotan

Typical Household

Household size and composition vary according to a family’s socioeconomic background and location. Households comprised of extended families are the traditional norm, although smaller, nuclear-family households have become increasingly common in the modern era, especially among the urban, educated class.

Exchange 67: Does your family live here?

Soldier:	Does your family live here?	aayilingiz boo yaerdae turamdu
Local:	Yes.	shundaaQ



© kenpower / flickr.com
Courtyard of a Uighur house

In rural areas and old quarters of cities, Uighur families traditionally live in mud-brick, adobe-style homes. These homes typically have flat roofs and walled, gated courtyards where fruit trees, grape vines, and small gardens can grow. In the Yining (Ghulja) region, a two-room layout is standard. This includes an “all-purpose” room known as a *dawan*, which serves as a living and dining room, as well as a sleeping chamber. The other room, known as the *saray*, is used for hosting and entertaining guests. Typically, both rooms have a *supa* (also known as a *kang*), which is an elevated area of the room where meals are served and family members sleep. The *supa* often houses a fireplace that heats the raised platform from below. It may also contain storage space beneath the platform, or it may consist of solid earth topped with brick flooring.³⁸⁸ Multiple housing units inhabited by related families may open onto a single courtyard, which forms a family compound. Some traditional

³⁸⁷ *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism along China’s Silk Road*. Rudelson, Justin Jon. “Chapter 4: Social Group Identity in Turpan [p. 107].” 1997. New York: Columbia University Press.

³⁸⁸ Stevan Harrell Faculty Webpage. University of Washington. *Down a Narrow Road: Identity and Masculinity in a Uyghur Community in Xinjiang China*. Dautcher, Jay. “Chapter 1: The Blessed Home: Residence and Identity in a Uyghur Neighborhood [pp. 17–18].” 2007. <http://faculty.washington.edu/stevehar/Dautcher.pdf>

homes may consist of multiple levels and rooms—often the product of expansion over the centuries.³⁸⁹ The interiors of traditional Uighur homes are typically appointed with carpets and rugs.

Traditional Uighur homes and compounds allow extended families to live in close proximity. In rural areas where tradition remains strong, custom may require newlywed couples to move in with the groom’s family, even when it is not a financial necessity. In this situation, members of four generations may live under the same roof. After an agreed-upon amount of time, the couple may move into their own home.³⁹⁰ Relatives who do not live in the same compound often live in the same neighborhood. In Yining, Uighur residential neighborhoods are known as *mehelle*, each of which may carry an unofficial name used by its residents.³⁹¹



© Gustavo Jeronimo
Woman in Kashgar

Exchange 68: How many people live in this house?

Soldier:	How many people live in this house?	boo oeydae naechchae aadaem turidu?
Local:	Six.	altae

In modern urban districts, Uighurs may live in public housing units or privately owned apartments; this is especially the case for those who work in the civil sector. Urban residents generally have smaller families, due in part to government family planning policies, as well as personal choice or necessity related to education, career, and financial standing.³⁹² Some Uighurs have been forced to move from their traditional, privately owned homes to state-owned apartments due to urban modernization projects. In 2009, a Uighur man affected by the extensive renovation of Kashgar lamented the loss of his home as a family asset that could be passed from generation to generation. Following the demolition of his house, which he claimed had been in his family for 500 years, he and his family were slated to move into a distant public housing unit.³⁹³

³⁸⁹New York Times. Wines, Michael. “To Protect an Ancient City, China Moves to Raze It.” 27 May 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/28/world/asia/28kashgar.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&ref=global-home

³⁹⁰Centre d’études et de recherches internationales (CERI). *Cahiers d’études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien*, No. 25. Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. “Work and Gender among Uighur Villagers in Southern Xinjiang [p. 13].” 1998. <http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/publica/cemoti/textes25/beller.pdf>

³⁹¹Stevan Harrell Faculty Webpage. University of Washington. *Down a Narrow Road: Identity and Masculinity in a Uyghur Community in Xinjiang China*. Dautcher, Jay. “Part I: Local Identities of Place and Space [p. 2].” 2007. <http://faculty.washington.edu/stevehar/Dautcher.pdf>

³⁹²Informaworld. *Asian Ethnicity*, Vol. 2, No. 2. Clark, William. “Childbearing Strategies among the Uighur Urban Educated Elite in Urumqi (Abstract).” September 2001. <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all~content=a713611734>

³⁹³New York Times. Wines, Michael. “To Protect an Ancient City, China Moves to Raze It.” 27 May 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/28/world/asia/28kashgar.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&ref=global-home

Family Roles and Responsibilities

The roles of family members may vary according to a family's location and socio-economic background. For example, circumstances among poor families in rural southern Xinjiang will likely differ greatly from those of the urban, educated class. Traditionally, Uighur families are organized according to gender and age. The eldest male, typically the father or grandfather, has authority over the household. Older members have authority over younger ones, with males generally having authority over females of the same or younger age. The eldest



© Gustavo Jeronimo
Uighur woman

generation, in particular, is treated with the utmost respect. While the father may be the dominant figure in the home, the eldest woman is often in charge of the other females in the household, namely her daughter-in-law. The latter may be required to spend a few years working within the household before she and her husband establish their own home.³⁹⁴

Although gender equality has been officially promoted by the PRC government, traditional gender roles persist among the Uighurs of southern Xinjiang, especially in rural communities. In these areas, the traditional division of labor typically allocates income-earning positions in the public sphere to men. These positions include labor-intensive jobs in agriculture (plowing, harvesting, and irrigating) and construction. In addition, business activities, including marketing, and most handicraft production are also viewed as men's work. Women are traditionally tasked with the maintenance of the household, including cooking, cleaning, child-rearing, and care-taking. Elderly family members are traditionally cared for by their offspring.

³⁹⁴ Centre d'études et de recherches internationales (CERI). *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien*, No. 25. Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. "Work and Gender among Uighur Villagers in Southern Xinjiang [p. 13]." 1998. <http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/publica/cemoti/textes25/beller.pdf>

The association of men with the public sphere and women with the domestic sphere contributes to the perception of men as the primary breadwinners. However, many Uighur women, especially those from poorer families, contribute greatly to the family's economic activity.



© Gustavo Jeronimo
Kashgar Sunday market

Exchange 69: Are you the only one who has a job?

Soldier:	Are you the only person in your family who has a job?	siz boo aayilidiki birdin-bir Khizmiti baar aadaemmu?
Local:	No.	yaaQ

This includes performing basic animal husbandry chores, and assisting in agricultural work. Uighur women produce certain craft items, such as the *doppa* (a traditional skullcap), and other handicrafts, although they might not receive credit. In this way, perceptions about the division of labor may mask the actual duties of Uighur men and women.³⁹⁵ In urban areas, especially among the educated class, Uighur women have greater opportunities to pursue professional careers outside the home. This includes work as teachers or officials in the civil sector. They may, however, be required to simultaneously fulfill their traditional duties within the home.

Children may assist in household chores. While a minimum of nine years of school is officially required for every child, financial necessity may keep children from graduating, especially at higher levels. This is often due to either inability to pay the associated school fees or the need for children to contribute to the family's economic activity.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁵ Centre d'études et de recherches internationales (CERI). *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien*, No. 25. Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. "Work and Gender among Uighur Villagers in Southern Xinjiang [pp. 11–19]." 1998. <http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/publica/cemoti/textes25/beller.pdf>

³⁹⁶ Virginia Consortium of Asian Studies, Washington and Lee University. *Virginia Review of Asian Studies*. Grose, Timothy A. "Educating Xinjiang's Uyghurs: Achieving Success or Creating Unrest [pp. 7–8]." 2008. <http://vcas.wlu.edu/VRAS/2008VRAS/Grose.pdf>

Marriage, Childbirth, and Divorce

Marriage

Marriage is an essential rite of passage for Uighurs. It would be considered a serious and potentially shameful inadequacy for a Uighur not to marry in his or her lifetime.³⁹⁷ For Uighurs, the selection of marriage partners remains heavily influenced by customary views and practices. Traditionally, Uighur marriages were social contracts between two families rather than romantic unions between two individuals. Marriages were typically arranged by the families, often when the bride and groom were very young.³⁹⁸ Today, arranged marriages are still common in rural areas, although the match may require the consent of the potential bride and groom. In these cases, the families of prospective marriage partners will meet before introducing their offspring to each other. If both the young couple and their families approve the match, the marriage may proceed, although typically only after protracted negotiations over dowry. It is increasingly common for Uighurs, especially those living in urban areas, to individually meet and choose their marriage partners. However, even in such cases custom dictates that a couple receives parental permission before the marriage occurs.³⁹⁹



© kenpower / flickr.com
Veiled woman in Hotan

Exchange 70: Are you married?

Soldier:	Are you married?	siz toy Qilghaanmu?
Local:	Yes.	shundaaQ

Uighurs typically marry other Uighurs. This practice reflects the strength and pervasiveness of ethnic divisions in Xinjiang, even between groups who share religious ties through Islam. Uighurs, in particular, have been described as “the most culturally impenetrable” of all of China’s ethnic groups due to their exclusiveness in realms such as marriage. Marriages between Uighurs and Han are particularly taboo due to the ethnic tensions and stark religious differences between them. (As Muslims, Uighurs are traditionally required to marry fellow Muslims.) Even educated, urban-dwelling Uighurs who socialize with Han are said to avoid this taboo.⁴⁰⁰ One recorded case of intermarriage between a Uighur man and a woman of mixed Uighur and Han descent “ended in violence and divorce” after the Uighur husband discovered that his wife was not of “pure” Uighur descent.⁴⁰¹ Uighurs who do choose to marry outside of their ethnic group may be disowned from their families, and their children may encounter stigmatization. Due to the strength of this taboo, intermarriage in Xinjiang has been described as “so infrequent as to be virtually nonexistent.”⁴⁰²

³⁹⁷ “Situating Uyghur Life Cycle Rituals between China and Central Asia [p. 141].” Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. In *Situating the Uyghurs between China and Central Asia*. Ildikó Bellér-Hann et al, Eds. 2007. Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing.

³⁹⁸ Hartford Web Publishing. Reinhold, Christiane. “PRC Demographers on Mongols, Tibetans, Uighurs: Reading Notes from Christiane Reinhold.” Notes taken from *China’s Minority Populations: Surveys and Research*. Zhang Tianlu and Huang Rongqing, Eds. March 1996. Beijing, China: Gaodeng Jiaoyu Chubanshe. <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/55/344.html>

³⁹⁹ *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism along China’s Silk Road*. Rudelson, Justin Jon. “Chapter 3: Local Identities and Turpan Ideologies [pp. 86–87].” New York: Columbia University Press. 1997.

⁴⁰⁰ “Acculturation and Resistance: Xinjiang Identities in Flux [p. 311].” Rudelson, Justin and William Jankowiak. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

⁴⁰¹ “Temperamental Neighbours: Uighur-Han Relations in Xinjiang, Northwest China [p. 76].” Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. In *Imagined Differences: Hatred and the Construction of Identity*. Günther Schlee, Ed. 2002. Hamburg, Germany: Lit Verlag.

⁴⁰² “Acculturation and Resistance: Xinjiang Identities in Flux [p. 311].” Rudelson, Justin and William Jankowiak. In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. S. Frederick Starr, Ed. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2004. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Exchange 71: Is this your wife?

Soldier:	Is this your wife?	boo sizning Khotuningizmu?
Local:	Yes.	shundaaQ

In some Uighur communities, especially in rural areas, tradition requires Uighurs to marry within their cultural sphere.⁴⁰³ This practice serves to cement communal bonds and contributes to the maintenance of strong local identities.⁴⁰⁴



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Uighur woman in Kashgar

Officially, the PRC government maintains a minimum age requirement for marriage: 20 for women and 22 for men.⁴⁰⁵ However, it is reportedly common for Uighurs in rural areas to marry as teenagers.⁴⁰⁶ While polygamy was practiced among Uighurs in the past (it is allowed by Islam under certain conditions), monogamy is the norm. Uighur men typically marry younger women.

Exchange 72: Is this your entire family?

Soldier:	Is this your entire family?	boo sizning puetuen aayilingizmu?
Local:	No.	yaaQ

Childbirth



© Tian Yake
Mother and child

Childbirth can be controversial in China, where family planning policies are enforced by the government. The PRC government generally limits couples from having more than one child. This policy primarily applies to Han who live in urban areas. Exceptions are made for the nation’s ethnic minorities, certain rural residents, and couples in which both partners are an only child.⁴⁰⁷ The policy was implemented in 1979 to limit the country’s explosive population growth; PRC officials claim it prevented 250 million births within the first two decades of its implementation.⁴⁰⁸ The policy is enforced through the imposition of steep fines against couples who have a second child without government permission. Forced abortions and sterilization have been widely reported. Job loss, demotion, and other administrative punishments may also result from non-compliance.⁴⁰⁹ While the policy has slowed population growth, analysts claim it has contributed to social problems such as a

⁴⁰³ “Situating Uyghur Life Cycle Rituals between China and Central Asia [p. 141].” Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. In *Situating the Uyghurs between China and Central Asia*. Ildiko Bellér-Hann et al, Eds. 2007. Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing.

⁴⁰⁴ *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism along China’s Silk Road*. Rudelson, Justin Jon. “Chapter 3: Local Identities and Turpan Ideologies [p. 86].” 1997. New York: Columbia University Press.

⁴⁰⁵ Bureau of Democracy, Humans Rights, and Labor, U.S. State Department. *2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*. “2008 Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau).” 25 February 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/eap/119037.htm>

⁴⁰⁶ *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism along China’s Silk Road*. Rudelson, Justin Jon. “Chapter 3: Local Identities and Turpan Ideologies [p. 86].” New York: Columbia University Press. 1997.

⁴⁰⁷ Bureau of Democracy, Humans Rights, and Labor, U.S. State Department. *2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*. “2008 Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau).” 25 February 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/eap/119037.htm>

⁴⁰⁸ BBC News. “China Steps Up ‘One Child’ Policy.” 25 September 2000. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/941511.stm>

⁴⁰⁹ Bureau of Democracy, Humans Rights, and Labor, U.S. State Department. *2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*. “2008 Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau).” 25 February 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/eap/119037.htm>

significant gender imbalance in which, according to recent estimates, 119 boys are born for every 100 girls.⁴¹⁰ The traditional Chinese preference for boys has been intensified by the one-child policy, thereby contributing to the selective abortion of female fetuses—an illegal but persistent practice. The one-child policy has also been tied to potential shortages of youth for labor markets and elder care.⁴¹¹

Uighurs have described the one-child policy as “unfair and anti-Islamic.” (Many Han also oppose the policy.)⁴¹² As an ethnic minority, Uighurs are exempt from the one-child limit but remain restricted to having two or three children depending upon whether they live in urban or rural areas. This is a small number for rural Uighur couples, who would traditionally have twice as many children or more.⁴¹³ As part of the government’s implementation of the policy, Uighur women may be subjected to regular exams at family planning bureaus. These may include inspections of implanted birth control devices (intra-uterine devices or IUDs) and pregnancy tests.⁴¹⁴ Women found to be pregnant without proper approval may face forced abortion and/or sterilization. This may also apply to women who do not allow the requisite four year intervals between children. In Xinjiang in 2008, local officials attempted to perform a forced abortion on a Uighur woman who was more than six-months pregnant with her third child.⁴¹⁵ PRC authorities allowed the woman to have the child after her case drew international attention.⁴¹⁶



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Father and child

The incident demonstrated the forceful tactics employed by family-planning authorities, who pursued the woman after she went into hiding. Such practices are reinforced by rewards or penalties given to local officials for achieving the population goals established by regional and central authorities.⁴¹⁷ For Uighurs, the issue of population control is particularly significant due to the demographic changes in the region caused by the influx of Han. In this light, the government’s birth control policies are seen by many Uighurs as another form of assimilation.⁴¹⁸ Forced abortion has also been identified as a serious health issue faced by Uighur women, who may be required to have several abortions over the course of their lifetime.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁰ BBC News. “China Faces Growing Gender Imbalance.” 11 January 2010. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8451289.stm>

⁴¹¹ Time. Fitzpatrick, Laura. “A Brief History of China’s One-Child Policy.” 27 July 2009.

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1912861,00.html>

⁴¹² *Under the Heel of the Dragon: Islam, Racism, Crime, and the Uighur in China*. Kaltman, Blaine. “Chapter 2: Cultural Marginalization and Institutionalization of Blocked Uighur Mobility [p. 29].” 2007. Athens, OH: Center for International Studies, Ohio University.

⁴¹³ Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst*. Ingram, Ruth. “Health in Xinjiang.” 1 August 2001. <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/451>

⁴¹⁴ CNN. “Uighur Women in Remote Chinese Province Clash with Family Planning Restrictions.” 14 November 2000. <http://archives.cnn.com/2000/ASIANOW/east/11/13/china.birth.control/index.html>

⁴¹⁵ Bureau of Democracy, Humans Rights, and Labor, U.S. State Department. *2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*. “2008 Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau).” 25 February 2009.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/eap/119037.htm>

⁴¹⁶ Radio Free Asia. “Uyghur Woman Released, Without Forced Abortion.” 18 November 2008.

<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/release-11182008110804.html>

⁴¹⁷ Bureau of Democracy, Humans Rights, and Labor, U.S. State Department. *2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*. “2008 Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau).” 25 February 2009.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/eap/119037.htm>

⁴¹⁸ CNN. “Uighur Women in Remote Chinese Province Clash with Family Planning Restrictions.” 14 November 2000.

<http://archives.cnn.com/2000/ASIANOW/east/11/13/china.birth.control/index.html>

⁴¹⁹ Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst*. Ingram, Ruth. “Health in Xinjiang.” 1 August 2001. <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/451>

Birthing conditions vary widely according to a mother's means, location, and access to health care. Especially in remote villages, female relatives and/or a midwife gather to assist in the process. By custom, Uighur women are allowed to return to their parents' home to give birth to their first and/or second child. (This contrasts with Han custom.)⁴²⁰ Even Uighur women who give birth in a hospital may go directly to their parents' house in accordance with this custom. Such practice was traditionally associated with rites celebrating the women's entrance into motherhood such as a hair-braiding ceremony during which the new mother's hair was styled into two braids, a sign of her enhanced status.⁴²¹ This hairstyle remains a sign of marriage and motherhood among Uighurs.



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Infant in Kashgar

Today, returning to the natal home for childbirth is advantageous when the expectant mother does not have approval for the pregnancy. At her parents' home, which may be in a different region, the birth may be kept with greater secrecy. Children born without government approval are often registered as the offspring of a childless sibling of the mother or father.⁴²² Tradition restricts the mother from receiving visitors, especially strangers, for the first 40 days after birth. In some areas, Uighurs may follow customary folk practices by burying the afterbirth in a special place.⁴²³ The birth of the child is followed by additional rites and celebrations during the ensuing months and years; these include name-giving and ritual-washing ceremonies and, for boys, circumcision. The latter is especially important for first-born sons.⁴²⁴ In line with patriarchal traditions, sons are valued more highly than daughters.

Exchange 73: Do you have any brothers?

Soldier:	Do you have any brothers?	sizning aakaa-ukiliringiz baarmu?
Local:	Yes.	yaaQ

⁴²⁰ "Situating Uyghur Life Cycle Rituals between China and Central Asia [p. 141]." Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. In *Situating the Uyghurs between China and Central Asia*. Ildikó Bellér-Hann et al, Eds. 2007. Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing.

⁴²¹ *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures, Vol. 3: Family, Body, Sexuality, and Health*. Joseph Suad and Afsaneh Najmabadi, Eds. "Childhood: Coming of Age Rituals: Turkey, the Caucasus, and Central Asia [p. 76]." Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. 2006. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.

⁴²² International Institute for Asian Studies. IAS Newsletter, No. 34. Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. "Customary Law under Socialism: The Uyghur in Xinjiang." July 2004. http://www.iias.nl/nl/34/IIAS_NL34_18.pdf

⁴²³ *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism along China's Silk Road*. Rudelson, Justin Jon. "Chapter 3: Local Identities and Turpan Ideologies [p. 84]." New York: Columbia University Press. 1997.

⁴²⁴ The Uighurs. "Uighur Customs and Traditions." No date. http://the_uighurs.tripod.com/Traditions.htm

Divorce

Divorce and remarriage are relatively common. Uighurs have higher divorce rates than other groups in Xinjiang,⁴²⁵ and the region has had the highest rates of divorce in China in recent years.⁴²⁶ There is reportedly no social stigma attached to divorce and remarriage within the Uighur community. Under PRC law, both men and women have the right to initiate the separation. Notably, Uighur women have enjoyed this right for centuries.⁴²⁷ Divorce has commonly arisen from arranged marriages in which the bride and/or groom were joined at a young age and later found to be incompatible. Freedom in partner selection is reportedly much greater for second marriages.⁴²⁸ Remarriage is expected, even for the elderly and especially for men.⁴²⁹



© Gary Leeming
Dowry chests for sale in Kashgar

In the event of divorce, Uighur women have enjoyed the right to retrieve their dowry from their in-laws, as well as make claims to household property in compensation for the work they invested in the home during the marriage. This latter custom remains influential in the secular court system of modern Xinjiang, where a Uighur woman will receive due compensation according to the time spent within the husband's household. Uighur custom dictates that, following a divorce, a woman should allow at least three months to pass before remarrying. During this time, they seek assistance from their own family, with whom they typically remain close. This is in part due to customary rights that allow Uighur women to regularly visit their own families at their natal homes during their marriage.⁴³⁰ In this way, their natal family ties remain intact in the event of divorce. The custom of giving birth in the natal home is tied to this notion.⁴³¹

Exchange 74: Did you grow up here?

Soldier:	Did you grow up here?	siz boo yaerdae chong bolghaanmu?
Local:	Yes.	shundaaQ

⁴²⁵ *Dictionary of the Politics of the People's Republic of China*. Mackerras, Colin. "Marriage Laws [p. 153]." Colin Mackerras and Donald H. McMillen, Andrew Watson, Eds. 1998. London: Routledge.

⁴²⁶ Department of Community Development and Applied Economics, University of Vermont. Qingbin Wang and Qin Zhou. "China's Divorce and Remarriage Rates: Trends and Regional Disparities [p. 5]." 2009.

<http://www.uvm.edu/~rsingle/JournalClub/papers/Wang+Zhou-2010-JDivorceAndRemarriage.pdf>

⁴²⁷ Human Rights Watch. *Devastating Blows: Religious Repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang*. "Background: Uighur Islam." 11 April 2005. <http://www.hrw.org/en/node/11799/section/5>

⁴²⁸ Hartford Web Publishing. Reinhold, Christiane. "PRC Demographers on Mongols, Tibetans, Uighurs: Reading Notes from Christiane Reinhold." Notes taken from *China's Minority Populations: Surveys and Research*. Zhang Tianlu and Huang Rongqing, Eds. March 1996. Beijing, China: Gaodeng Jiaoyu Chubanshe. <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/55/344.html>

⁴²⁹ Centre d'études et de recherches internationales (CERI). *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien*, No. 25. Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. "Work and Gender among Uighur Villagers in Southern Xinjiang [p. 12]." 1998. <http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/publica/cemoti/textes25/beller.pdf>

⁴³⁰ International Institute for Asian Studies. IAS Newsletter, No. 34. Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. "Customary Law under Socialism: The Uyghur in Xinjiang." July 2004. http://www.ias.nl/nl/34/IIAS_NL34_18.pdf

⁴³¹ *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures, Vol. 3: Family, Body, Sexuality, and Health*. Joseph Suad and Afsaneh Najmabadi, Eds. "Childhood: Coming of Age Rituals: Turkey, the Caucasus, and Central Asia [p. 76]." Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. 2006. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.

Social Events

Weddings

Uighur weddings are typically elaborate, joyous affairs that serve to display familial wealth and hospitality while securing social connections. The actual wedding ceremony may follow many previous meetings between the involved families concerning the negotiation and approval of the marriage. These traditionally include a tea ceremony in which the groom's family offers gifts to the bride's family as part of the marriage pact,⁴³² as well as a lively engagement party at which the parents of the bride may offer betrothal gifts in return.⁴³³ The wedding itself is typically a large, communal event that involves several stages and may continue over multiple days. A special meal for the elderly may be held before the wedding; separate, gender-specific parties for the bride and groom (similar to bachelor and bachelorette parties) may also be held.⁴³⁴



© Gustavo Jeronimo
Wedding party in Kashgar

Exchange 75: Congratulations on your wedding!

Soldier:	Congratulations on your wedding!	toyunglargha mubaaraek bolsun
Local:	We are honored you could attend.	sizing QatnashQingizdin shaeraepliniz

Weddings traditionally occur at the home of the bride, although the setting may vary according to location and family. The religious portion of the ceremony—known as *nikka*, or *neka*—entails the performance of Islamic wedding rites by a Muslim cleric. Customarily, only Muslims are allowed to attend this ceremony. The bride's presence was traditionally not required, although today both the bride and groom may be present.⁴³⁵ When she does not attend, she waits with female relatives and friends in a separate area; she may be segregated from the activities for most of the day. Corresponding wedding festivities include the presentation of gifts and lively receptions with food, music, and dancing. The latter may be held in banquet halls, depending upon the family's means and wishes. Seating at such events will likely be segregated by gender.⁴³⁶

Exchange 76: I wish you both happiness.

Soldier:	I wish you both happiness.	ikinglarghaa baeKhit tilaeymaen
Local:	We are honored.	raeKhmaet

The festivities also include a procession in which the bride is taken from her family home to the home of her husband. Today, these processions may consist of lively and lengthy tours around town. For wealthier Uighurs in urban areas, limos or motorcades may be used to carry large numbers of friends and relatives. Musical accompaniment, and often loud drums, announce the procession, and the celebration of the wedding, throughout the city.⁴³⁷ In rural areas, processions may be performed by cart and/or on foot. Following the wedding day, additional ceremonies

⁴³² The Uighurs. "Uighur Customs and Traditions." No date. http://the_uighurs.tripod.com/Traditions.htm

⁴³³ *Dragon Fighter: One Woman's Epic Struggle for Peace with China*. Kadeer, Rebiya and Alexandra Cavalius. "Hunger of the Soul [p. 71]." 2009. Carlsbad, CA: Kales Press.

⁴³⁴ Untold Story, Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting. Anson, Ryan. "China: Wedding Drums and Uyghur Hospitality." 3 September 2008. http://pulitzercenter.typepad.com/untold_stories/2008/09/china-wedding-d.html

⁴³⁵ The Uighurs. "Uighur Customs and Traditions." No date. http://the_uighurs.tripod.com/Traditions.htm

⁴³⁶ Princeton University Blog Service. *This is Xinjiang*. "Have You Ever Been to a [Xinjiang] Wedding? Where's the Vodka, Where's the Marinated Herring?" 29 April 2009. http://blogs.princeton.edu/pia/personal/xinjiang/2009/04/have_you_ever_b.html

⁴³⁷ Untold Story, Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting. Anson, Ryan. "China: Wedding Drums and Uyghur Hospitality." 3 September 2008. http://pulitzercenter.typepad.com/untold_stories/2008/09/china-wedding-d.html

commemorate the young bride’s incorporation into the husband’s family, as well as the maintenance of close ties with her own family. This may include a hair-braiding ceremony in which the bride is symbolically identified as a wife.⁴³⁸ Thereafter, the newlywed couple may live with the groom’s family or in their own home. Group weddings in which several couples are married at the same time are becoming popular in rural areas.⁴³⁹

Funerals

Uighur burial rites are shaped by both Islamic custom and traditional folk practices. Specific rites may vary from community to community (i.e., oasis to oasis) and according to a family’s background. Broadly, for Uighurs, funeral rites serve the dual purpose of comforting the living while facilitating the transition of the deceased into the afterlife.⁴⁴⁰ The death of a family member draws relatives, friends, and community members to the household of the deceased. The active participation of extended kin and community members in the process allows the immediate family members of the deceased to focus on mourning rather than the organization of the funeral.⁴⁴¹



DoD image
Uighur in mourning

Exchange 77: I would like to give my condolences to you and your family.

Soldier:	I would like to give my condolences to you and your family.	siz wae sizning aayilingisgae uezaemning hisdaxhliQini bilduerimaen
Local:	Thank you.	raeKhmaet

Following Islamic custom, the body of the deceased is washed and shrouded in white linen as part of its ritual preparation for burial. This rite may be performed by family members or appointed members of the community, such as an attendant from the local mosque. It is performed by persons of the same sex as the deceased. Mourning takes place inside the deceased’s home; men and women typically gather in different areas of the house. Women traditionally wear white headscarves or veils and men wear white sashes and white turbans to show that they are in mourning.

Exchange 78: Please be strong.

Soldier:	Please be strong.	jaasaaraetlik bolung
Local:	We will try.	tireeshimiz

⁴³⁸ The Uighurs. “Uighur Customs and Traditions.” No date. http://the_uyghurs.tripod.com/Traditions.htm

⁴³⁹ Chinaa2z.com. “Rural Group Wedding Becomes Fashion in Xinjiang’s Baicheng.” 11 May 2009. <http://news.chinaa2z.com/news/html/2009/20090511/20090511105715248192/20090511105945467542.html>

⁴⁴⁰ “Situating Uyghur Life Cycle Rituals between China and Central Asia [pp. 134–135].” Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. In *Situating the Uyghurs between China and Central Asia*. Ildikó Bellér-Hann et al, Eds. 2007. Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing.

⁴⁴¹ The Uighurs. “Uighur Customs and Traditions.” No date. http://the_uyghurs.tripod.com/Traditions.htm

The burial is generally held within one to three days of the death.⁴⁴² The body may be stored at the local mosque until the funeral. On the day of the funeral, men carry the body on a covered stretcher to the burial grounds. Following Islamic tradition, women may be restricted from attending the burial ceremony, especially in rural areas where custom remains strong.⁴⁴³ When women do attend, their graveside prayer services may be segregated from those of the male attendees. The men are led in prayer by a Muslim cleric. They may also say funerary prayers at the local mosque.⁴⁴⁴ Because Muslims are traditionally buried facing Mecca, Uighurs in Xinjiang are buried facing west.⁴⁴⁵ Uighurs of high social status or wealth may be buried in large tombs or mausoleums.⁴⁴⁶



© Chris Erway
Cemetery in Korla

Mourning ceremonies are customarily held on the 3rd, 7th, and 40th days after death, as well as on anniversaries. Known as *nazir* (or *nazir-chiraq*), these ceremonies traditionally involve animal sacrifices and meals with family, friends, and community members. Related sacrificial rites involve the burning of cooking oil, lamps, or incense, which is thought to nourish the lingering spirit of the dead. (These “oil sacrifices” are also associated with other rites.) Money may be distributed to the attendees of the funeral as a form of payment (*isqat*) for the redemption of the deceased’s sins. Attendees may also receive small items as symbolic payment for any material debts owed by the deceased. In the Turpan region, Uighurs are known to burn jars filled with paper and medicine on or around the burial plot to pacify the spirit of the dead.⁴⁴⁷ Although the PRC government has discouraged its employees from observing religious rites, Uighur civil sector employees are said to be adamant about participating in funerary practices.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴² Encyclopedia.com. *Junior Worldmark Encyclopedia of World Cultures*. “Uighurs: Rites of Passage.” 1999. Farmington Hills, MI: The Gale Group, Inc. <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3435900109.html>

⁴⁴³ *Xinjiang: The Land and the People*. “Chapter 7: Folk Customs [p. 196].” 1989. Beijing, China: New World Press.

⁴⁴⁴ “Situating Uyghur Life Cycle Rituals between China and Central Asia [p. 135].” Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. In *Situating the Uyghurs between China and Central Asia*. Ildikó Bellér-Hann et al, Eds. 2007. Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing.

⁴⁴⁵ The Uighurs, Tripod. “Uighur Customs and Traditions.” No date. http://the_uighurs.tripod.com/Traditions.htm

⁴⁴⁶ *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism along China’s Silk Road*. Rudelson, Justin Jon. “Chapter 3: Local Identities and Turpan Ideologies [pp. 84–85].” New York: Columbia University Press. 1997.

⁴⁴⁷ *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism along China’s Silk Road*. Rudelson, Justin Jon. “Chapter 3: Local Identities and Turpan Ideologies [pp. 84–85].” New York: Columbia University Press. 1997.

⁴⁴⁸ “Situating Uyghur Life Cycle Rituals between China and Central Asia [pp. 134–135].” Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. In *Situating the Uyghurs between China and Central Asia*. Ildikó Bellér-Hann et al, Eds. 2007. Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing.

Naming Conventions

Uighur naming conventions vary from region to region according to family and local custom or influence. Historically, Uighurs did not widely use surnames, or family names, until the 1930s–1940s. Instead, they simply used a given name. Thereafter, Uighurs adopted different naming conventions according to regional cultural influences (e.g., Russian, Chinese, Persian, or Turkic). Today, Uighurs generally follow the practice of using a given name, listed first, and a surname, listed second. (This practice contrasts with that of the Han, who list their family name first.) Two names are required when precise identification is necessary, such as on an official passport. It is more common in everyday situations for Uighurs to be referred to by their given names. Uighur surnames are generally derived from the father’s given name, which becomes a family name. This naming convention has been described as an “unstable surname” form because it does not involve the passage of a single, established family name from generation to generation. “True” surnames are thus uncommon among Uighurs.⁴⁴⁹



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Grandmother in Kashgar

Roughly 80–85% of modern Uighur names derive from Arabic or Persian. Many Uighur names originate in the hope that the name will have a magical effect on the baby’s character. Typical names include objects from nature, Muslim and Turkic historical figures, wishes, animals, and descriptions of the time or circumstances of birth.⁴⁵⁰ For males, examples include: Tomur (“iron”), Toqsun (an ancient Turkic tribal name), Mamat (a derivation of Mohammad), Ahmat (a historic Muslim name), Tursun (“may he survive”), and Turdi (“stopped” or “stayed”). The latter two examples reflect the traditional folk practice of applying names thought to repel evil spirits and protect the child from sickness amid high rates of infant and child mortality. Tursun remains especially popular among rural Uighurs. For females, traditional Uighur names include Ap’aq (“white” or “pure”), Qarakoz (“black eyes”), Tarkan (an ancient Turkic title), Koydurguch (“sweetheart”), and Aygul (“moon rose”).

⁴⁴⁹ “Hybrid Name Culture in Xinjiang: Problems Surrounding Uyghur Name/Surname Practices and Their Reform [pp. 115–116].” Sulayman, Asad. In *Situating the Uyghurs between China and Central Asia*. Ildikó Bellér-Hann et al, Eds. 2007. Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing.

⁴⁵⁰ Chinese and Oriental Languages Information Processing Society. *Journal of Chinese Language and Computing*, Vol. 15, No. 4. Altenbek, Gulila. “Rule-based Person Name Recognition for Xinjiang Minority Languages [p. 220].” 2005. http://www.colips.org/journal/volume15/JCLC_V15_N4_5.pdf

Certain naming practices are associated with specific regions. In recent years, urban Uighurs have increasingly given Russian and other European names to their children. In the Ili region, Uighur names may be Russified by adding the following suffixes to a given name to form a surname: *-ov/-yev*, *-ova/-yeva*, or *-in/-ina* (e.g., Mursultan Osmanov or Amina Ghapparova). In the Hotan region, the prefix *Mät-*, a shortening of the name Muhammad, is often applied to male given names (e.g., Mätqasim or Mätqurban). Likewise, in the Aksu region of the northern Tarim Basin, the prefixes *Tu-* or *Mu-* are commonly added, such as in Tusayim or Muniyaz. The prefixes *Nur-* and *Mir-* are associated with the Ili region (e.g., Nurahmat or Mirsultan). In many areas repetitive name use is common. In the Turpan region, for example, 10% of local males—roughly 20,000 people—were named Ahmat as of 2002. This is also common in rural southern Xinjiang, where many residents share a single, identical name.⁴⁵¹



© Mike Locke
Uighur boy

Exchange 79: Are these your children?

Soldier:	Are these your children?	boolaar sizning baaliringizmu?
Local:	Yes.	shundaaQ

Research studies and reform efforts have emerged in response to the problems caused by the lack of a standard naming principle for Uighurs. One such problem concerns the registration of Uighurs for the issuance of passports. When listing names on passports the PRC government typically reverses the order of a Uighur’s name in line with the Han custom of placing the family name first. It also transliterates the name using *pinyin*, the system used to transliterate Mandarin to the Roman alphabet. In this way, a Uighur’s name on a passport is reversed and spelled in a non-traditional manner; the reversal results in the loss of gender specificity for a women—her father’s given name is listed in place of her own first name. The Uighur Surname Project, an outgrowth of a research group based at Xinjiang University, has suggested implementing a standard formula including first, middle, and surnames, listed in that order.⁴⁵²

⁴⁵¹ “Hybrid Name Culture in Xinjiang: Problems Surrounding Uyghur Name/Surname Practices and Their Reform [pp. 114–117].” Sulayman, Asad. In *Situating the Uyghurs between China and Central Asia*. Ildikó Bellér-Hann et al, Eds. 2007. Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing.

⁴⁵² “Hybrid Name Culture in Xinjiang: Problems Surrounding Uyghur Name/Surname Practices and Their Reform [pp. 120–126].” Sulayman, Asad. In *Situating the Uyghurs between China and Central Asia*. Ildikó Bellér-Hann et al, Eds. 2007. Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing.

Family Life Assessment

1. The tribe is the most important social unit in Uighur society.

False. The family is the most important social unit in Uighur society. Extended families and their broader kinship networks serve as lifelong support systems for their members, both socially and economically.

2. Traditionally, the eldest female has authority over all other members in a Uighur household.

False. The eldest male, typically the father or grandfather, has authority over the household. Older members have authority over younger ones, with males generally having authority over females of the same or younger age. The eldest woman is often in charge of the other females in the household.

3. A minimum of 12 years of school is officially required for every child by the PRC government.

False. A minimum of nine years of school is officially required for every child, but financial necessity may keep Uighur children from graduating, especially at higher levels. This is often due to either inability to pay the associated school fees or the need for children to contribute to the family's economic activity.

4. Uighurs often marry while they are teenagers.

True. Officially, the PRC government maintains a minimum age requirement for marriage: 20 for women and 22 for men. However, it is reportedly common for Uighurs in rural areas to marry as teenagers.

5. Divorced Uighur women are entitled to retrieve their dowry from their in-laws.

True. In the event of divorce, Uighur women have the right to retrieve their dowry from their in-laws, as well as make claims to household property in compensation for the work they invested in the home during the marriage. This latter custom remains influential in the secular court system of modern Xinjiang.

Final Assessment

1. Uighur and Cantonese are the most widely spoken languages in Xinjiang.
2. Representatives of 15 different ethnic groups live in Xinjiang.
3. Cotton is Xinjiang's primary commercial crop.
4. Industry has replaced agriculture as the driving force of Xinjiang's economy.
5. The Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region was formally established in 1991.
6. Most Uighurs are Shi'a Muslims.
7. Prayer in public is prohibited in Xinjiang.
8. The Chinese government formally recognizes Islam as one of five national religions.
9. Visitors are required to take off their shoes before entering a mosque.
10. Muslims perform prayers at three set times each day.
11. Physical contact between women and unrelated men is unacceptable in Uighur culture.
12. Uighurs use the left hand to eat and pass food.
13. *Laghman* is a popular Uighur dish of noodles in pork sauce.
14. Guests should remove their shoes upon entering a Uighur household.
15. Uighurs believe that shaking water from one's hands brings fortune and good luck.
16. Today, Han Chinese comprise roughly 40% of Xinjiang's population.
17. Both Uighur and Mandarin are taught in Xinjiang schools.
18. Bargaining is the norm in bazaars.
19. The PRC government provides free health care to all citizens.
20. Traffic conditions are notoriously poor in China, where the rate of accidents is among the highest in the world.
21. Approximately 20% of Xinjiang's population lives in rural areas.
22. The average income for farmers in Xinjiang is well above the Chinese national average.
23. Only 20% of Xinjiang's health care facilities are located in rural areas.
24. About two thirds of Uighurs in Xinjiang have not completed middle school.
25. The *zhigit beshi* is the unofficial community leader of a Uighur village.
26. Uighur women are restricted to working inside the home.
27. Nowadays, young Uighur couples no longer seek parental consent before marriage.
28. Inter-marriage between Uighurs and Han Chinese is common in Xinjiang.
29. Uighur families are exempt from China's one-child policy.
30. Uighurs avoid divorce as they feel it is a shameful event.

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