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History, identity, and mother-tongue education in Xinjiang

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An ethnic identity is not simply a catalyst for collective action; rather, it is an idea, a social variable shaped by its own intellectual history and by the historical consciousness of those who, wittingly or otherwise, engage with and articulate it. As one example, modern Uyghur identity, as it is most widely understood today, is the product, in part, of the action of a series of educational institutions operating in the years before 1949. Intellectuals and activists, beginning in the 1880s, formed networks of schools that provided an organizational basis for social and political movements, as well as a site for the negotiation of the ideas of those movements. Uyghur identity, along with a broader scheme of ethno-national classification, gained currency among a particular sector of Xinjiang society through participation in a set of broader organizations in the Sheng Shicai era. This history is reflected today in the actions and attitudes of contemporary Uyghur intellectuals, who react to encroachment on mother-tongue education with ideas and organizations informed by historical knowledge of this earlier period.

Keywords: China; history; identity; institutions; Uyghur; Xinjiang

Introduction

Recent events in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region have brought into focus a complicated relationship between ethnicity, identity and the state.[1] As international media covered the demonstrations and riots of July 2009, it became increasingly clear that the discontent was multi-dimensional, arising from a variety of complaints against the state on the part of individuals mostly identified by the People's Republic of China (PRC) as Uyghurs. Suggested sources of discontent included not only problems of representation and of corruption found generally in the PRC, but also cultural, religious and moral issues of special importance to certain sectors of Xinjiang society, such as increasing restrictions on Islamic practice and, significantly, institutions of modern Chinese education that many see as assimilationist in intent and detrimental to children's moral and social development. This latter issue, although not necessarily a major concern of the rioters themselves, has been a point of contention since 2002, when the PRC began to replace native-language education for minorities with Mandarin-only schooling throughout Xinjiang.

Why and how did the intersection of language and education become a site of political contestation in Xinjiang, and for whom? This paper represents some first steps towards answering these questions. Below, in discussing the historical contestation of Turkic Muslim identities, in particular that of the Uyghurs, I contribute to shifting the agency of historical change from 'the Uyghurs' to organizations acting on behalf of that community and inhabited by disparate networks of thinkers actively involved in articulating ideas of ethnicity. As such, I will focus not on major political leaders, but on certain activists who trained and taught them, the men and women who founded the schools that transmitted their ideas to greater masses of students and facilitated their organization for political and social movements. The focus is not on great

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men and women, but on networks of intellectuals engaged in negotiating ideas (Collins 1998): here, the form and content of parallel modernist projects of reform and progress. At the same time, I will discuss some of the ways in which those thinkers and their movements have been integrated into historical narrative and collective memory and continue to inspire and inform activism through the present day.

The best-known accounts of Uyghur identity and history are those of the secular elite, as they are identified by Eden Naby's (1985) preliminary observations. At the time, Naby saw not only a division between Xinjiang's Turkic secular and religious elites, the former of which is expanding, but a generational periodization of their attitudes and social roles. The oldest, who have since largely passed away, recalled their education in Sheng Shicai's (1897–1970, g. 1933–1944) 1930s Xinjiang; their descendants, as I will argue below, preserve the memory of this period of ethnic prominence and perceived freedom. Indeed, contra Rudelson's (1997, pp. 57–59) assertion that Uyghur elites only formed with the appearance of stable higher education in the 1980s, they have their philosophical and ethnic roots in the early twentieth century. These elites have, furthermore, contrary to Naby's expectations (1986, pp. 252–253), maintained the associations and institutions for the advancement of their groups and cultures, continuing the work of pre-1949 educational activists. It is also these elites who, in the exile community, have brought the image of the Uyghur ethnos to the world.

Uyghur identity, as understood and articulated by the secular elite, is fundamentally ethnolinguistic; that is, it is predicated on a confluence of ethno-national and linguistic-imagined community. This imagination first took place under the influence of various philosophies of modernity and progress imported by local intellectuals from, primarily, the Ottoman Empire and Tatarstan as early as the 1860s through 1949. Uyghur ethnolinguistic identity arose as such because consciously nationalistic educational reformers and activists articulated it in this way through the Xinjiang school system of the 1930s and 1940s, which was administered in large part by the Cultural Promotion Societies (CPS), institutions for the management of education, trade and other public services. This school system represented not only the first large-scale institutionalization of Uyghur and other ethnic identities, but also the first widespread system of popular education established in the region, one based upon division by linguistic group. Through the participation of hundreds of thousands of individuals, the system lent naturalness to the idea of the 'mother tongue' as the chief sign of culture and of ethno-national identity and difference. Furthermore, this school system did not appear simply by government decree, but arose out of both official and non-official educational programmes in the pre-Sheng Shicai period and spawned networks that persisted afterward. It is this memory of an age of native-language modernist education, I suggest, that leads a small sector of society, namely Uyghur intellectuals, to protest most vigorously against threats to mother-tongue education for non-Han ethnic groups in Xinjiang.

Education in Xinjiang before Sheng Shicai

Formal education in Xinjiang before the Qing reconquest of the 1870s was generally Islamic. Children in elementary schools (*mäktäp*) memorized passages from the Qur'an and learned how to be proper Muslims (Toxti 1986, pp. 5–14, Tahir 1998, pp. 330–339, Beller-Hann 2000, Beller-Hann 2008, pp. 326–333). Some boys went on to one of the many Islamic colleges (madrasas) to memorize the Qur'an and become a *qari* or to study extensively in Persian and Chaghatai literature and in Arabic grammar to pass an exam and attain the rank of *damolla*. They might venture to Central Asia or Arabia to study. In these schools, students studied together in large halls, undifferentiated by age or level.

More importantly, Islamic schooling had deep and close roots in local communities. A ratio of just under one *mäktäp* per neighbourhood (*mähällä*) was the norm. The Central Asian *mähällä*

is a unique social formation, and its residents form a very tight community, one often bound together by close genealogy. The Islamic school was one of many centres for the exchange of various kinds of economic, social and cultural capital within these communities (Beller-Hann 2008, pp. 326, 332–333). The teacher–student relationship in these schools was very similar to that between masters and apprentices in trades and guilds. Education was oriented first towards the immediate community and second towards the world of Islam.

Following the Qing conquest of Xinjiang in the late eighteenth century, Chinese schooling gained a presence in the region. A small number of schools were set up by Qing fiat to train Turkic Muslim elites in Confucian rituals and in the Manchu military arts, such as archery and horseback riding, but these had a fleeting existence (He-ying 1968 [1807], pp. 214–219, Millward and Newby 2006, p. 121).

Education was also a key component of the reconquest and administration of Xinjiang under Zuo Zongtang in the 1870s and his successors through the end of the Qing (Chou 1976). As Zuo's armies retook the region, Reconstruction Agencies set up 'public schools' (*yixue*), roughly based on the Neo-Confucian model of universal education, where the sons of the Turki (Uyghur) elite were required to learn Chinese and Confucian rituals (Han 1998, pp. 228–229, Millward and Tursun 2005, pp. 261–280, 265). Zuo's explicit purpose was to create a class of bilingual and culturally communicative intermediaries between the Qing state and the people of what was to become Xinjiang Province. The system of mandatory education taught Zhu Xi's core Neo-Confucian curriculum, as well as some specially selected works (Han 1998, p. 229, Millward and Tursun 2005, pp. 265–267).

This programme drew resistance from local Turki elites (Hamada 1990, pp. 29–31), possibly on account of the disruption Confucian education brought to Islamic education and its undermining of Turkic Muslim rulers' authority and power. The schools, of which 57 were initially founded, about 50 of them in the Tarim Basin (Han 1998, pp. 228–229), increased in number in the early twentieth century (Millward and Tursun 2005, p. 67). The Confucian schools were maintained as personal projects through the end of the Qing by a group of officials who had arrived with Zuo Zongtang's army, some of whom were absolutely dedicated to the cultural conversion of their charges. One aging censor stationed in Yarkand went so far as to dress Turki boys in Chinese clothing he had purchased himself (Mannerheim 2008, pp. 90–91). Interestingly, this school, like several others, was staffed with Turki teachers trained in the Chinese classics, though such figures seem to have been rare, and few available sources document their personal histories. The schools produced almost no exam graduates and closed shortly after the fall of the Qing (Hunter 1920, p. 169, Tahir 1998, p. 342).

During the final years of the Qing, beginning in 1904, a younger generation of administrators from the Chinese interior, many of whom were members of secret societies and became involved in the Xinhai Revolution (1911–12) in Xinjiang, began founding schools with modern curricula. These several hundred *xuetang*, many of which were converted from *yixue*, primarily served the Chinese population of cities and villages throughout Xinjiang (Li 1965, pp. 1392–1470). As was often observed, neither Confucian nor modern Chinese schools had much Turki enrolment. Rather, most students were Han, Manchu, Mongol or Kazakh (Xie 1924, p. 151).

Shortly thereafter, the most powerful influence on education during the period in question was undoubtedly the work of Turkic modernists, including *Jadids* and Jadidism-influenced education reformers, as well as Ottoman pan-Turkists. Jadidism, familiar to scholars of Central Asia but rarely mentioned in work on or produced in China, where it carries a negative connotation, is best characterized as a movement devoted to the preparation of a Muslim for full participation in modern life and the dominant state (Lazzerini 1997, pp. 177–184). The architect of the movement's educational ideas and strategies, Ismail Bey Gasprinskii or Gaspirali (1851–1914), was a Tatar born in Kazan and educated in Russian schools. Several years of travel in Europe and the

Ottoman Empire convinced him of the need to raise up the Turkic people in accordance with the quintessentially Western European vision of modernism. Through education, which he saw as the necessary condition of progress, the Turkic people could be brought to mobilize a maximum of the human and natural resources available to them. In this process, Islam would fade and diminish into a secondary, moral role, as he felt Christianity had done in the West, while Turkic Muslims would come to embrace the concept of national progress. This was not a separatist ideology, but one that emphasized education in aid of production and participation. This is a phrase written and uttered readily in some form by Xinjiang Uyghur and other intellectuals today: a people's destiny is tied to its education (cf. Tirik 1999, p. 252).

The 1881 Treaty of St Petersburg, which secured Qing control of the Ili region, also opened Xinjiang to a flood of traders from the Russian Empire, including Tatars, Uzbeks and others who held modernizing views (Hamada 1990, p. 34). The first modernist schools to open in today's Xinjiang were begun by local activists in Atush, Turpan and Ghulja.

The earliest example of just such a *pänniy* 'scientific' school, one divorced from religious education, is the school opened by the Musabayov brothers, Hüsäyin (1844–1926) and Bawudun (1851–1928) (Xushtar 2000, pp. 276–277), in the village of Ekisaq in Atush in 1883 (Xushtar 1996, pp. 135–136). This was a successor to religious schools funded by their grandfather, Abdurulsulbay. The brothers had earlier funded mixed scientific and religious schools in the 1870s in Kashgar's Xanliq Madrasa and in Ghulja's Bäytulla Madrasa, where teachers from Bukhara and Baghdad taught at their invitation (Abdulla 1990, pp. 191–193), and later an experimental modern school opened in the Xanliq Madrasa in 1882. The Musabayovs, as many education activists who followed them, had spent much of their youth trading and travelling through the Russian Empire and Europe with their merchant father, Musahajim (1809–95) (Xushtar 2000, pp. 269–270).

The school did not open immediately in 1883 (Seyit *et al.* 1997, pp. 13–15). Rather, the Musabayov brothers paid for one of the better students from their school at the Xanliq Madrasa, Kerim Axun (1860–88), to study pedagogy in Kazan. Upon his return in 1885, Kerim Axun and four other men and women began to educate a body of 105 students, 25 of them female, on the model used in Kazan. The curriculum included classes in mathematics, language (probably Turkic), spelling, literature, Arabic, Persian, geography, history, elocution (*täjwid*) and athletics. The schools provided scholarships to poorer students. Following Kerim's death in 1888, the Musabayovs, then still under the direction of their father, invited a group of teachers not from Kazan, but from the Ottoman Empire.

It is important to note that, from this point onward, the predominant modernizing influence in Southern Xinjiang and Ghulja and throughout the schools established by the Musabayovs was not Jadidism, but rather Ottoman pan-Turkism. The Chinese historiography of these movements obscures the point, as '*Jadid*' and *märipätpärwär* 'education-lover' have become, through a reappropriation of the Soviet historical discourse of Jadidism (Lazzerini 1982, pp. 61–67, Dudoignon 1996, p. 32), equivalent terms of opposite connotation: in this conception, *Jadids* are conservative and reactionary, while 'education-lovers' contribute to the progress of the Chinese nation. Through the early twentieth century, young men of Southern Xinjiang increasingly studied abroad in the Ottoman Empire, while a series of Ottoman teachers were employed by the Musabayov schools (Niyaz 1984, pp. 84–85, Seyit *et al.* 1997, pp. 23–30, 55–59.) This interaction culminated with the arrival in 1913 of Habibzâde Ahmet Kemal of Rhodes, a member of the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) and of the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa, the CUP's paramilitary arm (Kutay 1962, p. 62, Habibzâde 1996, pp. 13–15). Ahmet Kemal, at the invitation of the Musabayovs, established the Darilmu'ällimin-i Ittihad, literally the Teachers' College of (pan-Turkist) Union, as well as several other lower-level schools (Habibzâde 1996, pp. 63, 76–77). There, he taught through the medium of spoken and written Ottoman

Turkish and incorporated several Ottoman rituals into his pedagogy, including marching and pledging allegiance to the Sultan, until he was deported in 1920. The schools produced a large number of participants in the foundation of the Turkic Islamic Republic of East Turkestan (TIRET) (Shinmen 2001, pp. 146–149).

The families of both Musabayovs continued to be involved in both social and political interests, alongside the running of the factories, through the nationalizing of their facilities in 1955. The Musabayov Brothers Company's Ghulja branch provided material support to the mostly Hubeinese-led revolutionaries in Ili in 1911 (Wei 1981, pp. 22–23). Bawudun's eldest son, Isma'il Musabayov (d. 1979), who inherited the Ghulja side of the company's operations, was later part of the government of the East Turkestan Republic (ETR), then went on to official duties under the PRC. Hüsäyin's eldest son, Sabit (d. 1972), by contrast, died in Turkey (Abdulla 1990, pp. 195–200). Many of his brothers and sisters also lived out their lives in exile, having been targeted for persecution in the 1950s and later. Musabayovs are still involved in PRC politics, and the Musabayov Company itself was revived in 1994 by another Musabayov, explicitly in memory of Musahaji (Wulumuqi Musabayi shiye youxian gongsi 2008, Xinjiang jianshe hangye jishu chanpin xinyong xinxi ku 2009).

Jadidism itself took hold, instead, in Xinjiang's north. Mäxsut Muhiti (1885–1931), a trader from the village of Astanä near Turpan, journeyed through Russia and Russian Central Asia in 1910 and stayed for a time in Kazan, where he came under the influence of *Jadids* or *Jadid*-inspired intellectuals (Muhiti 1984, pp. 100–115, Xushtar 2000, pp. 190–191). Upon his return to Astanä, Muhiti determined to found a factory and to educate its workers in a technical school. This and some other early school experiments failed, partly because of the objections of local clerics. Finally, in 1913, Muhiti opened the Mähsudiyä School, employing as a teacher the Tatar Häydär Sayrani of Ufa (1886–1943) (Muhiti 1984, pp. 104–106). The school, known locally as 'the *Jadids*' school', attracted students from Turpan, Urumchi and Guchung to take classes according to the 'New Method' (*usul-i jadid*) developed by Gasprinskii, including arithmetic, spelling, geometry, science, poetry and 'mother tongue' (*ana til*), which I will discuss further below (Lazzerini 1973, pp. 186–188). Häydär Sayrani incorporated Tatar poetry into the classroom, including the work of Abdulla Toqay (1886–1913), who may have been Sayrani's associate in Ufa (Muhiti 1984, pp. 105–108, Aubin 1998, p. 13, Ötkür 2000, p. 33, Millward 2007, p. 176). The classrooms were also run using Tatar terminology, including commands and titles.

In 1917, following the October Revolution, Muhiti travelled to Moscow, whence he delivered to Astanä several young Tatar educators. These opened Mähsudiyä schools in several towns in northern Xinjiang, including Guchung, Tarbaghatai and Urumchi. These included schools for girls, such as those run by Güländäm *awistäy* (a Tatar word for a female teacher used commonly in Turpan to this day), which produced another generation of female educators. Güländäm herself, following the death of her husband, moved to Tarbaghatai, where she taught until 1955. Other Tatar educators were later involved in newspaper publishing and other intellectual activities in northern Xinjiang, as well. Most spent their lives in Xinjiang, while some returned to the Soviet Union in the 1950s (Muhiti 1984, pp. 107–109). Mäxsut Muhiti himself went on to spend several years in the Soviet Union, including a period from 1929–31, after which he returned to Xinjiang with the intention of acting as a political commissar for the recently-erupted Qumul and Turpan Farmers' Uprisings, hoping to convert the violence into a regional revolution (Muhiti 1984, pp. 111–114). Many of his schools' students supported his efforts and joined the uprising.

The Muhiti schools, as the schools that had preceded them in Central Asia and that followed it in Xinjiang, emphasized education in the 'mother tongue', but taught in Tatar, a variety of Turkic significantly different from that spoken in Eastern Turkestan. In the 1890s, the concept of 'mother

tongue' seems to have been diffuse in Xinjiang. At the school in Astanä, for example, sang a hymn to the 'mother tongue', in fact Abdulla Toqay's poem of the same name (Muhiti 1984, pp. 106-112, Aubin 1998, p. 13, Millward 2007, p. 176). Not only did these reformers' schools still use textbooks in Tatar, but their founders frequently invited Tatar, Uzbek, or Turkish intellectuals to come and teach. Many of these teachers' descendants in Xinjiang preserve the memory of their ancestors. Even where there were no foreign *Jadids*, their publications, such as the Turkic-Russian bilingual newspaper *Perevodchik/Terjüman* 'translator' graced the shelves of modernist intellectuals (Hamada 1990, p. 34–41). Over time, educational activists refined their conception of 'mother tongue' through publication and correspondence even as non-Chinese-language-medium teaching was repressed (Beller-Hann 2000, pp. 59–60).

One such activist was Mämtili Äpändi (1901–37) of Atush, also known as Täwpiq, an educator of the 1920s and 1930s who was imprisoned and executed for Jadidism by Sheng Shicai in 1937 (Seyit *et al.* 1997, pp. 1–21). Mämtili, however, was a student and admirer of Ahmet Kemal, the pan-Turkist activist who had taught in Ottoman. From today's perspective, Mämtili seemed to exemplify the mother-tongue educators of the period. His male lineage, first of all, was comprised mostly of intellectuals, including two Qarakhanid historians. His grandfather Toxtaji rebelled against the Qing Empire following Zuo Zongtang's reconquest, eventually being freed from a Qing prison in 1877, while another grandfather, also a literate, died as a soldier in Yaqub Beg's (1820–77) army.

Like so many education activists in this period, Mämtili inherited his philosophy and life's work from an older male relative, in this case his uncle Tashaxunum. Tashaxunum, a wealthy and famous trader, did business regularly in Russian Central Asia in the 1880s and 1890s, during which time he seems to have come under Jadidist influence (Äzizi 1990, pp. 142–148). In 1894, he opened the Tashaxunum Mäktipi in the village of Buyamät in Atush, the second 'scientific' (*pänniy*) school in Atush after 1885's Hüsäyniyä Mäktipi. Remarkably, he then met with the Russian Emperor in 1896, during which session he and the monarch discussed Xinjiang's development, particularly educational development.

Following Ahmet Kemal's departure in 1920, Mämtili took it upon himself to spread his teacher's educational ideas and methods to his family and close friends, instructing them in pedagogy. Mämtili began teaching lessons to children in his home village of Buyamät. He would tie a blackboard, one of the innovations introduced by the Musabayovs as early as 1883, to a pair of trees and act out the part of a modern Ottoman teacher (Seyit *et al.* 1997, pp. 60–62). He would even march his playmates about in a field, having learnt from Ahmet Kemal a special march. Mämtili, like many before him, was attracted by the idea of travelling to and studying in the Ottoman Empire. In 1924, his second cousin, Abdulqadir Äzizi (1863–1923), a frequent founder of schools from the nearby village of Tijän and the father of Säypidin Äzizi, was arrested and executed on the charge of Jadidism. For related reasons, he and his father went into exile in Northern Xinjiang. Eventually, Mämtili found his way into the Soviet Union, where it is unclear how he spent his time, before crossing the Black Sea to Anatolia, then to Istanbul, in 1928. He worked as a fisherman, then as a labourer at a teachers' college, before the school allowed him to enrol formally (Seyit *et al.* 1997, pp. 174–178).

Around this time, Mämtili joined the Turkistani Turk Youth Union (in Turkish: *Türkistan Türk Gençler Birliği*) (Äzizi 1990, pp. 397–399). This Union was founded in Istanbul in 1927 by a group of Turkists, including one Dr Mecdeddin Ahmet Delil Bey (d. 1942), who soon ascended to its chairmanship (Baysun 2006, pp. 204–206). The Union, of which Mämtili soon became an active member, was a place to articulate Turkic ideas and identities. Indeed, it is in a poem composed for a Union meeting in 1930, 'We are the Children of Uyghur' (*Biz Uyghurning baliliri*) that Mämtili first employs the term 'Uyghur', until then largely restricted in Xinjiang to northern intellectuals under Soviet influence, in his poetry (Alip Tekin 1998).

On 18 September 1933, Mämtili, having heard news of the coming revolution, hurried to Atush with Dr Mecdiddin, called Mäjiddin Äpändi in Uyghur sources, nine other Turks, and a member of the Musabayov family (Äzizi 1990, pp. 397–398, 401–408, Baysun 2006, p. 202). They divided into two teams: Mämtili returned to Atush, while Mecdeddin proceeded to Kashgar. Mämtili and Mecdeddin then proceeded to implement a six-month teacher training programme in order to train others to teach in middle schools run by small councils of prominent villagers. Säypidin Äzizi himself, as well as several other members of Mämtili's family, were trained as educators through this programme. Again, despite the already growing body of pedagogical talent, it seems that the family was still thought of as the natural social network upon which to found an educational institution. Supposedly, Mämtili's Number 24 Elementary School in Atush alone, founded in the summer of 1935, accepted over 10,000 students. His contributions to Uyghur language education in that area are thought to have led to Atush's comparative wealth, particularly to the economic success of Uyghurs. Thus, when Mämtili was executed by the police on 30 May 1937, he became a martyr for Uyghur native education.

Through this period of transition from private entrepreneurship to state control as the primary mode of mass organization in Xinjiang, one can see the development of two distinct communities: broadly, Northern, associated with Mäxsut Muhiti's school network, incorporating Turpan, Tarbaghatai, and Altay, and Southern, including the major nodes of Atush, Kashgar, and Ghulja. The former was overwhelmingly influenced, at least in these early stages, by Jadidism and an influx of Tatars, while the latter cleft to a pan-Turkist philosophy with Ottoman roots. This division is borne out, in part, by the Uyghur-language historiography of education in this period, which tends to emphasize one and ignore the existence of the other (Muhiti 1984, p. 102; Seyit *et al.* 1997, 1–54).

Educational networks in Sheng Shicai's Xinjiang

Modernist schools were one of the first places where cohorts of political and intellectual leaders began to form. Many of these educators, both native and foreign, played major roles in the various political movements active in Xinjiang in the twentieth century, including the establishment of the TIRET and ETR. Their students, similarly, retained their loyalties to their classmates and to their former teachers and administrators. Since these private schools were also local in orientation, providing education for progressives from a given city and its associated villages, they also contributed to the deeply ingrained networks of locality and shared ancestry that persist today, even in the pan-Uyghur melting pot of Urumchi. Intellectuals of Qumulluq descent, for example, continue to associate with others of the same extraction, and certain neighbourhoods tend to house Uyghurs from particular parts of Xinjiang. These patterns seem to be rooted in the common experience of their ancestors, who are also usually intellectuals and who studied together at the same schools sometime in the early twentieth century. The 1930s, however, would bring a new configuration of Xinjiang society as ethnolinguistic classifications gained political and social reality under the Cultural Promotion Societies.

The arrival of General Sheng Shicai (1897–1970, g. 1933–44) in Xinjiang began a new era in the history of education. In 1930, the government of the Republic of China sent Sheng, a Manchurian Han Chinese who had adopted a Marxist philosophy as a student in a Japanese military school, to put down Muslim 'rebellions', including the nascent TIRET in southern Xinjiang. With Urumchi under siege and most of the province under the control of Chinese Muslim armies, Sheng consulted with the Soviet Consul General for Xinjiang and, through a delegation sent to Moscow, independently invited the Soviet military into Xinjiang (Ziemann 1984, pp. 129–134, Garver 1988, p. 151). From 1933 through 1934, Soviet forces, including air and land forces and a thousands-strong cavalry of reorganized White Russians, assisted Sheng's

army in establishing relative control. In exchange, a new Soviet Consul General, Garegin A. Apresoff, an Armenian who had previously worked to foment Marxist revolution in Iran, returned with Sheng's delegation in December 1933 (Whiting and Sheng 1958, p. 25). Apresoff did not come alone, but brought 40 to 50 'civil officers' to work in the provincial government; by 1939, Soviet advisors would become 'omnipresent' in Xinjiang (Garver 1988, p. 161). The Soviet advisors spread pro-Soviet propaganda with an anti-Japanese slant among Sheng's Manchurian army, and later among Ma Zhongying's former army in Khotan, where its 'crude Marxist analysis' earned converts (Whiting and Sheng 1958, pp. 31–32). In the summer of 1934, at Sheng's victory parade in Urumchi, Soviet armaments and Russian-language banners were on display alongside Nationalist flags and emblems, as well as the newly-adopted flag of Xinjiang, a six-pointed red star on a yellow field.

Meanwhile, the TIRET had been established in Kashgar on 12 November 1933 (Millward 2007, pp. 201–206). The leaders of this state were largely those intellectuals who had participated in the Turkic nationalist movement in Xinjiang and included several graduates of Qing Confucian schools (Han 1998, p. 230). Indeed, teachers in both Turkist and *Jadid* schools mobilized their students on behalf of the new state (Ziemann 1984, p. 134, Ō Ka 1995, pp. 10–11, Shinmen 2001, pp. 146–149), taking advantage not only of a common philosophy, but also of the network that maintained that school of thought. Under this regime, these Russian-oriented intellectuals founded the first Cultural Promotion Society (in Chinese: *wenhua cujin hui*; in Ugyhur: *mädäniy aqartish uyushmisi*), the Kashgar Uyghur CPS, in December 1933 (Abliz 1996, p. 155).

The TIRET, however, collapsed in February 1934, and many of the regime's members gained positions in Sheng Shicai's emerging Xinjiang government. Some chose to retain positions in the Provincial Army in Kashgar, but many received the post of Vice-Civil Governor in Urumchi (Ziemann 1984, pp. 134–137). Sheng Shicai thus had to lead a coalition government, representing not only the interests of the Republic of China and of local Turkic elites, but also the interests of the Soviet Union (Lattimore 1950, pp. 40–42). Officials from the NKVD, the Soviet intelligence agency, and Comintern now staffed much of the Xinjiang government, including the Ministry of Education (Garver 1988, pp. 151–152). By 1935, members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union headed the Xinjiang College, the Kashgar government, and the *Xinjiang Daily* newspaper, among other governmental organs (Han 1998, p. 260). Besides Soviets and Chinese Communists and Nationalists, a 'progressive' faction received the support of local Turkic elites (Lattimore 1950, pp. 40–42). The progressive programme emphasized educational and linguistic independence of minority groups, as well as local self-government based on language communities. The cooperation and independent action of this last faction was crucial to the organization of Sheng's Xinjiang and to the penetration of political power into the Xinjiang populace.

Soviet advisors, whose own state had by the early 1930s abandoned policies of political nationalization, seem to have regarded the CPS established in Kashgar as an ideal system for expanding a Soviet agenda in national form. The Ministry of Education supported the creation of a larger network of CPSs, one for each of the fourteen ethno-national groups of Xinjiang as declared at an ethnological conference in Tashkent in 1921 and as accepted by Sheng Shicai at Apresoff's recommendation in 1934 (Šilde-Karklinš 1975, pp. 342–343, Aubin 1998, p. 13). The definition was based partly upon the degree of an individual or group's practical linguistic conformance to the standardized form of the Uyghur language adopted by the Soviet Union in 1920 (Sulayman 2007, p. 6).[2] This is not to say that the ethnic groups in Xinjiang were created from whole cloth by the Soviet or Xinjiang governments or that the ethnonyms or categories in question did not already have some popular currency, difficult though it would be to measure that currency. Rather, this represents the formalization of an already increasingly accepted scheme of ethno-national classification.

The CPSs were centralized, semi-governmental ethnolinguistically based networks set up to support both Han Chinese and non-Han languages and cultures in Xinjiang, primarily through their support of national schools (Norins 1942, p. 464).[3] Their other activities included the seizure and management of Islamic pious endowments (*waqf*), urban planning, establishing cinema and theatre groups and constructing housing for their represented ethnic groups (Abliz 1996, pp. 155–157). Intriguingly, the CPSs also acted as intermediaries for trade with the Soviet Union, which received over 80% of Xinjiang's exports during this period. Memoirs of the CPSs recall that their offices would purchase such raw materials as uncured leather, process them for export, and exchange them with the Soviet trade office for finished goods, particularly cloth, footwear, and machinery (Mäkit 1999). This was also the source for the first movie projector in Xinjiang, set up in a CPS-funded club inside Kashgar's Id Gah Mosque (Burhan 1999). Overall, we may characterize the CPS system as a parallel government or administrative system for Xinjiang, one that was explicitly national in form and that had the appearance of arising directly from local, non-Chinese society, but one that was more intimately connected with the Soviet Union.

Bahargül Abliz (1996) describes the organization of the Cultural Promotion Societies in detail. Each was led by a chair, vice-chair and head secretary. Every CPS was made up of a secretarial department, accounting department, property administration department (including *waqf* regulation), education department, culture department (responsible for producing films) and propaganda department (p. 159). Memoirs of the period make it clear that the CPSs engaged not only in administrative and educational work, but also in manufacturing (Mäkit 1999, p. 130). There is documentation of the trade carried out with the Soviet Union through subordinate 'companies'. The ethnic leadership of these companies was often mixed, with one example including individuals identified as Uyghur, Kazakh, Russian, Tatar, and Han (Muxtäbär 1999, p. 191).

Many of the leaders of the Cultural Promotion Societies' educational efforts had been involved in previous activities aimed at providing advanced education to Xinjiang Turkic Muslims. The founders of the Ili Uyghur CPS, for example, had long been involved in the Ili Education Section (*Ili ma'arip seksiyäsi*) (Muxtäbär 1999, p. 196). Furthermore, their backgrounds were highly varied across Xinjiang and included not only pro-Soviet intellectuals, but also religious leaders. One such individual who participated in both religious and secular life was Abdukerim Damolla Haji (1896-1972) of Qizilsu in Atush (Tirik 1999). Abdukerim received his early education in religious schools and went on to teach as a mullah in Kashgar from 1920 through 1924, when he was accused by Yang Zengxin's (1859–1928, g. 1911–28) government of Jadidism and sent to Korla, where he served as an imam. From 1933 onward, he founded mixed religious and secular schools, which he then organized into the Korla CPS in 1934. Around this time, he seems to have become an ardent Communist and supporter of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). He went on to be the head of the CPS from 1937 to 1939, when he was jailed. Unlike many other education activists, he was not involved in the establishment of either East Turkestan Republic, which may have helped him succeed later in the CCP party structure and PRC government.

The CPSs also began the nationalization of education and of 'national development' in Xinjiang (Beller-Hann 2000, pp. 61–64). The 1936 'Prospectus' of the Uyghur CPS, which stated the dual goals of 'making better citizens' out of common people through education and 'developing friendship with the Soviet Union', outlined its role in developing new schools (Han 1998, pp. 249–250). The CPS was to use donations, first of all, to support the government's educational programme, propagandizing Sheng's Six Great Policies. Also, funds would go to developing libraries and mother-tongue newspapers. Most importantly, though, the CPS was to be responsible for actually setting up schools, deciding the curriculum, and printing or purchasing mother-tongue textbooks.

Since the Chinese administration was unpopular, and previous Chinese governors had repressed non-Chinese education, the CPSs, capable of greater penetration into Xinjiang society because of their local roots and dependence on pre-established non-governmental networks, were a more effective organ for establishing a network of schools. Donations to the Uyghur CPS, like support for earlier Turkic nationalist projects, seem to have come primarily from wealthy, well-travelled merchants (Han 1998, pp. 250–253). Almost all of the success in promoting and spreading education in Xinjiang during this period can be attributed to the CPSs, which promoted education in students' mother languages, however conceived (Beller-Hann 2000, p. 64). They were aided by independent organizations with similar goals, such as the Association of Uyghur Cultural Enlightenment (Beller-Hann 2000, p. 61). Even as Xinjiang schools were unified under a single state-sponsored organization, then, certain practices of funding and management continued that bound educational projects to local elites acting in the public interest.

The nativization of Xinjiang schools provided significant educational opportunities and textbooks. Between 1935 and 1939, the CPSs trained, in total, 3457 new teachers in colleges like the one set up in Kashgar in 1934 (Beller-Hann 2000, p. 61). The Uyghur CPS's first Uyghur-medium schools appeared in 1935 (Han 1998, pp. 251–254). From this point on, every class at Xinjiang College had a Uyghur section, as did the other institutions of higher education established under Sheng. At the meeting of the Xinjiang Advisory Committee in 1936, Xinjiang Vice-Chairman Xojaniyaz put forth a plan for publishing textbooks, which was followed by the CPSs: bilingual Uyghur-Chinese elementary textbooks were to be published and used in beginning classes in the south, but would not be used in classrooms in the south until the fourth grade, so as not to threaten the more sensitive and anti-Chinese ethnolinguistic sentiments held by southerners. A unit in the Publishing Council was to be set up to print Uyghur-language textbooks, with content sensitive to religious customs, to be used through at least middle school. In middle school, students were to learn Chinese. Per the decree, until sufficient printing facilities could be set up in Xinjiang, textbooks were to be imported from Tashkent. However, the wait was not long, as a Uyghur businessman named Yunus opened a printing company in Ili later that year. The publishing house put out textbooks in Uyghur for the first through seventh grades, including *Uyghur Language Textbook*, *Geography Textbook*, *Health Textbook*, *Recreational Textbook*, *Health Textbook*, *History Textbook*, *Practicing Moral Culture Textbook*, and *Chinese Language Textbook* (Han 1998, pp. 251–254). Per the decision of the Ministry of Education, Kazakh-language textbooks were provided by the Ashan Kazakh Language Newspaper Society. Through 1937, the Ministry of Education purchased all of the needed textbooks from these private printers, including religious textbooks, in order to encourage the new schools.

The size and scope of the CPS networks, organized under the Xinjiang People's Anti-Imperialist Allied Society (in Chinese: *Xinjiang minzhong fandi lianhe hui*), depended on the official size and primary location of the ethno-national population. Each had a main office in Urumchi, as well as branch offices at the prefectural, county and village levels wherever the represented group concentrated (Han 1998, p. 248). The Uyghur CPS, representing an official 70% of the Xinjiang population, was thus the most widespread, while the Kazakh-Kyrgyz CPS was the second-most (Lattimore 1944, p. 79). Other CPSs included those set up for Han Chinese, Uzbeks, Dungans (*Hui*, or Chinese Muslims), Tatars, Mongols, White Russians (*guihua*) and the 'Manchu' peoples, organized into a single Manchu-Sibe-Solon CPS (Norins 1942, pp. 461–462, Han 1998, p. 249).[4] By 1943, CPS offices, along with parallel organs of the Ministry of Education, had spread to every county in Xinjiang. The last office of the Uyghur CPS was established in Khotan in 1938, delayed due to the continued independent military action of the Thirty-Sixth Division, comprised of the Chinese Muslim General Ma Zhongying's former army (Ziemann 1984, p. 136, Abliz 1996, p. 159).

Although the Provincial Government also maintained a public school system, the Society schools, known colloquially as *huyli mäktäp*, were vastly more popular, particularly the Uyghur CPS schools, which were by far the most widespread. Table 1 demonstrates the disparity in CPS and Provincial schools' growth and attendance. In any given area, about two-thirds of all elementary schools were CPS schools (Abliz 1996, p. 164). Clearly, even in their formative years, the CPSs were vastly more successful than the province itself in providing public education. These data show that an unprecedented number of children in cities and villages all across Xinjiang were attending schools with an explicitly nationalist agenda. Unfortunately, overall population data for this period are difficult to locate. However, Wiens (1966, p. 81, 1969, p. 768), on the basis of agricultural and herding statistics from Xinjiang in general and from Ili specifically, suggests that there was very little population growth in the 1930s and 1940s overall, probably due to the frequency of large-scale migration and of violence, as well as the lack of advancement in food production methods.

Initially, the CPS school system was made up of former private 'scientific' schools established by modernist educators. These schools were then stripped of their names and their autonomy and instead were assigned numbers, while their teachers received new postings in the expanding state-run school system (Muxtäbär 1999, p. 196). The degree to which teaching staff cooperated with these changes is as yet unclear, as is the agency behind this appropriation of private resources. This may represent action on the part of a centralized group of intellectual activists acting with government fiat. It is fairly clear, in any case, that the Sheng Shicai administration had little tolerance for unauthorized activism. Jadidism, as under Yang Zengxin and his successor Jin Shuren (1879–1941, g. 1928–33), was still a crime for which many educational activists were arrested and even executed. In 1938, as the Soviet Union purged certain intellectuals in Central Asia, the Sheng administration also acted against Turkic elites, particularly those who had studied in the Soviet Union.

Sheng's Xinjiang had in fact encouraged study abroad in the Soviet Union since 1934 (Chen 1977, pp. 196–197, Han 1998, pp. 258–259). Earlier Xinjiang governments, including Jin Shuren's, had pursued a similar policy, though never on such a scale. Students had varying requirements for Soviet study, depending on their nationality and educational programme. It is interesting to note that, while the division in Xinjiang schools themselves was linguistic, and there were even Han in Uyghur CPS schools, divisions and criteria for enrolment in the study abroad programme were primarily based on ethnic classifications. This indicates an assumed correlation between ethnicity and language that was institutionalized in the CPS system. Han and Manchu students had to have completed basic high school, while Uyghurs, Dungans, Sibe and Solon only had to possess a middle school education. Kazakhs, Mongols and other groups could study in Soviet Central Asia with only a basic elementary education. Medical students needed a middle school education and fluency in Russian. As a result, most

Table 1. Number of provincial and CPS public schools and students (Xu 1964, Ziemann 1984, pp. 304–305, Abliz 1996, p. 170).

Year	1931	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	1942
Provincial schools		124	135	155	215	357	393	
Provincial school enrolment		11,313	15,464	22,145	33,054	36,575	49,817	
CPS schools		1,000	1,045	1,055	1,300	1,400	1,800	
CPS school enrolment		19,991	39,966	59,949	79,932	99,915	119,898	
Total schools	150	1,124	1,180	1,210	1,515	1,757	2,193	2,413
Total students	2,413	31,304	55,430	82,094	112,986	136,490	169,715	271,100

study-abroad students attended high school in the Soviet Union. An 'absolute majority' (Abliz 1996, p. 198) of the study-abroad students were later involved in the East Turkestan Republic, including Säypidin Äzizi (1914–98), Änwär Xanbaba (b. 1918), and dozens of others in both leadership and minor administrative and military functions.

Thus, students could achieve the greatest degree of academic success first through native language-medium instruction in Xinjiang, then through study abroad in Central Asia, where they associated almost exclusively with Soviet citizens. Similarly, graduates of the College of Law and Political Science set up by Sheng in Urumchi, which employed instructors from the Soviet Union, were sent on to Tashkent and Almaty to complete their educations. This quickly became, it seems, the primary means by which a Xinjiang citizen of any ethnic group would pursue a higher education (Hayward 1935, p. 190). At this point in time, fewer would travel to Egypt or Turkey, while only a handful found their way to Beijing.

Study abroad brought hundreds of Xinjiang students to Soviet Central Asia. In 1934, 106 students, including 63 Uyghurs, 33 Han, two Kazakhs, four Mongols, and four Dungans were sent to the Soviet Union (Han 1998, p. 259). In 1935, 100 more were sent, 54 of them Uyghurs. Among this group, six Han out of 32 were specially dispatched for political training. Data for 1936 are somewhat different. Aside from 57 regular students of unclear destination, out of whom eight were classified as 'Kazakh-Kyrgyz', 18 more were sent to study agriculture, while 12 attended a teachers' college. A special programme begun in June 1937 brought 305 Xinjiang students in total to Soviet Central Asia (Han 1998, pp. 258–259). Two hundred and fifty-four studied in Tashkent at the University of Central Asia. Twelve went to medical school in Tashkent. Thirteen attended the Chimkent Animal Husbandry School. Fifteen studied at the Samarkand Agricultural School. Eleven more were assigned to various institutions. In total, 270 Xinjiang students graduated from their programmes and returned to Xinjiang.

Although the CPSs received government support and, as time went on, the Xinjiang administration became increasingly involved in their activities, they took on the outward form of a popular intellectual movement. The reality is that the CPSs were in part an instrumental organization of both the Soviet and Xinjiang governments meant to establish political penetration in the non-Chinese population and extend Soviet influence to the roots of Xinjiang society. As time went on, the Xinjiang government slowly incorporated CPS schools into the Provincial school system, decreasing educators' latitude in choice of curriculum and increasing government oversight. However, the state is not all-powerful, but relies on individuals with varied interests in order to operate. The schools and curricula were fundamentally ethno-national in form and modernist in content, while possessing Soviet characteristics, a combination that reflects the views of the state and non-state actors that produced them.

The continued influence of educational activism

Institutions persist over time; the memory of an institution sustains it across time. The memory of modernist (*Jadid* and Turkist) and CPS schools continues to influence attitudes towards education and the linguistic medium of instruction today. This memory also informs the intellectual and elite reaction to recent changes in educational and language policy in Xinjiang. As, over the course of the past few years, the government of the PRC has implemented a broad-reaching and rapid shift to Mandarin-only pedagogy in Xinjiang schools, intellectuals, whose ideas are informed by an understanding of education's role in their national history, also draw on forms of organization and activism from the years before 1949.

Following a series of meetings with regional education officials and educators in 2003, in July 2004, the Xinjiang Ministry of Education, in a major break with educational policy up to that point, declared the gradual adoption of 'type two bilingual education' (in Chinese: *di er*

lei shuangyu jiaoyu/jiaoxue; in Ugyhur: *ikkinchi tiptiki qosh tilliq ma'arip*) in seven regions: Urumchi-Changji, Qaramay, Chöchäk (Tarbaghatai or Tacheng), Ghulja, Korla, Khotan and Turpan. 'Type two bilingual education' is defined, in the Chinese context, as the total replacement of non-Chinese or minority languages with Mandarin Chinese as the medium of classroom instruction, with an exception made for classes concerning a minority language itself, such as a course in Uyghur or Kazakh grammar (Schluessel 2007, pp. 257–258). This has been the case in Xinjiang higher education since 2002 (Wingfield-Hayes 2002). According to the Xinjiang plan, by July 2012, all areas of these regions, including those 'mountainous areas' with no Han Chinese population, are to adopt 'type two bilingual education'.

The ultimate goal of this plan, as put forth in various scholarly articles and policy statements, is to raise the 'cultural quality' of Xinjiang people. Learning Mandarin, argue the proponents of this policy, provides greater opportunities for education and economic mobility (Schluessel 2007, pp. 264–265). The technological training thus accessible to Xinjiang minority people is meant to aid them in developing an economy in Xinjiang based on industry and high technology in accordance with the goals of the Develop the West programme, a broader project begun in 1999 to improve the economy of China's western ten provinces and the autonomous areas of Xinjiang, Tibet, and Ningxia (Lai 2002, pp. 432–433). In this formulation, Mandarin leads to education, which leads to development.

Realistically, this plan is almost unworkable. Its implementation depends on educational resources that are not available in such a poor school system (Abdurehim 2007, Schluessel 2007, p. 264). There are simply not enough teachers to instruct Xinjiang's students in Mandarin, even though, since 2007, Xinjiang universities have begun sending their Mandarin language education students on teaching practica to the countryside to make up the difference. Otherwise qualified minority teachers have lost their jobs due to the requirement that they speak Mandarin, while others, having learned *yaba* 'mute' Mandarin, have found themselves unable to teach through it. Only in 2006 did the Xinjiang and PRC governments begin offering serious incentives and subsidies for learning Mandarin. Regional ministers of education began enrolling teachers in eighteen-month language training programmes at central universities in 2007. These support programmes seem to have largely mollified educators, whose primary concern is the success of their students.

The immediate reaction to this announcement, however, on the part of many minority educators was one of shock, surprise, and discontent as most, it seems, had no idea that this policy was even under consideration. More importantly, this policy has led to a breakdown of the well-established system of school choice and segregation already in place in Xinjiang. Ethnically separate education is a part of the Chinese system of ethno-national autonomy, which also guarantees the right of groups to promote and develop their own languages and writing systems.[5] In Xinjiang, the availability of mother-tongue education seems to be an issue of great importance to various groups, influencing and reinforcing ethnically homogenous patterns of settlement and social interaction. Thus, there has long existed, at least in areas with a sufficiently large and diverse population, a range of school choice for parents: Mandarin-only schools, minority-language-only schools, and mixed schools of various kinds have coexisted. It has been common for minority parents, who are allowed at least two children according to preferential family planning policies, to send one child, usually a son, to the Mandarin-medium school in order to gain the economic advantages brought by Mandarin and another, usually a daughter, to the mother-tongue school, that he or she may act as a carrier of culture. Under 'type two bilingual education', however, Mandarin and non-Mandarin classes have been unified without any preparatory period. This has led to unfair competition in the Mandarin-medium classroom, and has also disturbed the deeply seated sense that every people should learn through its own language. This attitude has its roots not as much in the post-1949 educational

system, which has experienced tremendous instability, as in the pre-1949 world of institutionalized non-Chinese ethnic and linguistic dominance.

Some recent developments in Xinjiang *minban* 'private' education reflect this attitude, as well. Since the opening up of the Chinese economy and educational system under Deng Xiaoping, private education has grown in Xinjiang for the first time since 1949, especially in the past decade and since 2004. New private educational institutions include charitable schools, technical schools, and educational funds. Such schools are now ubiquitous in China, though, in Xinjiang, many take special measures to provide education to a specific ethnic group. Strategies include advertising only in Uyghur, teaching in Uyghur, positioning campuses in majority-Uyghur areas, and providing special forms of financial support.

Indeed, as Jing Lin (1999, p. 79) observes, the memory or tradition of private education in a locality, even after decades of suppression, inspires people today to revive such institutions. It should come as no surprise, then, that modern education activism efforts by private citizens are centred around the cities of Atush and Ghulja. In the tradition of and clearly emulating pre-1949 Xinjiang education activists, wealthy businesspeople have begun opening schools that are to some degree charitable in nature and intended to promote the economic and cultural welfare of a particular ethnic group. One famous example is the Nurtay Haji Yetimlar Mäktipi (Nurtay Haji Orphan School) opened in Ghulja in August 1996 by Nurtay Haji Iskändär, the wealthy CEO of the China Xinjiang Western Nur Group, a transportation and manufacturing conglomerate (Ghärbiy Nur Guruhi 2008). The school now provides a complete education through the high school level to over 300 students. The curriculum more resembles that of the early Turkic schools than a modern public Chinese education: for example, children learn English and Chinese as second languages from a young age, in contrast to the public system where minorities' foreign language instruction is delayed until students achieve a high level of Mandarin language skill (Yan and Lin 2000). Furthermore, unlike any educational institution in Xinjiang since before 1949, the school is named, like those of the earliest Xinjiang Turkic educators, after its founder, Nurtay Haji. This school is also exclusively for the benefit of non-Han children from the Ghulja area and, thus, that of the development of the 'native' society, economy and culture. The early Turkic educators in Xinjiang were, like Nurtay Haji, wealthy traders who desired to strengthen the manufacturing and productive base of their region and community through education. Nurtay Haji Iskändär has become famous and admired among Uyghurs in Xinjiang for his efforts and has been recognized with an official award from the PRC government declaring him the first '*Zhonghua* Charity Star' (Tianshan Net 2006).

Several other institutions have been founded explicitly in the memory of Mämtili Äpändi, the education activist whom I discussed above. A Uyghur language and culture school for Australia's Uyghur community, to take one example, is named for Mämtili. In China, the Xinjiang Täwpiq (Tavpik) Education and Technology School (in Ugyhur: *Shinjang Täwpiq Ma'arip Pän-Texnika Mäktipi*), founded in memory of Mämtili Äpändi and bearing his image, provides technological and foreign language instruction to Uyghurs (*Tevpik marip fundi* 2008). Computer courses are focused on design and entrepreneurship, while the schools also offer classes in Mandarin, English, Russian and Turkish, all for a fee. The school, located in the majority Uyghur section of Urumchi, seems very popular with ambitious young Uyghurs, who feel that its courses can provide them with opportunities unavailable through the state system. Several other schools in the area and in other cities provide a similar curriculum.

The Täwpiq Educational Fund Society (in Uyghur: *Täwpiq Ma'arip Fondi Jämi'iti*) was established in Atush in 2002, also in memory of Mämtili Äpändi, whose portrait is the Society's logo, in order to provide university scholarships to young Uyghurs of lesser means. Scholarship recipients study at all universities in Xinjiang, but the Society seems to favour those studying

medicine. The Society also arranges for free English-language lessons for university students. Although the courses use the Chinese-medium *New Concept English* series and are, technically, open to all students, the classes are advertised and conducted in Uyghur, effectively limiting attendance to Uyghur speakers (*Toghra yol* 2008). This is to say nothing of the activities of individual university teachers, who are known to provide extra lessons in foreign languages free of charge to their minority students, especially first-year students who are otherwise unable to begin studying until later on.

The PRC's own Green Paper on Non-Governmental Education (Ministry of Education Development and Regulation Office [MoEDRO] Shanghai City Education Sciences Research Institute 2002) records no private schools in Xinjiang until 2001, at which point only a single vocational middle school is listed, though dozens of other institutions have suddenly appeared. Meanwhile, a simple walk through the centre of any medium-sized city in Xinjiang will reveal several such schools. I believe it to be likely that the 'bilingual' education programme, as well as increasing market competition since 2001, have inspired a boom in these schools. In the meantime, statistics are unreliable. Even in China proper, many private vocational schools run without state recognition. Furthermore, publicly available educational statistics for Xinjiang rarely show differences between ethnic groups, preferring to blur ethnic lines within province-level regions. This may be why the Green Paper provides no statistics on vocational private schools, while recording details of ordinary private schools.

Minority-language private schools, which, like the majority of private schools in the PRC today, are overwhelmingly vocational secondary or adult education schools (Lin 1999, pp. 6–7), utilize particular strategies to attract specific kinds of students. They use specific linguistic varieties, forms of media and other cultural boundaries to bring in average Uyghur or Uyghur-speaking labourers and train them for economic and cultural advancement. This further suggests that an activist philosophy motivates these schools' establishment and activities.

Uyghur is the lingua franca of non-Chinese Xinjiang society. It is spoken by the Uyghur population, officially around eight million and comprising 48% of the population, as well as most Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Tajiks and Sibe as well as many Mongols and other minorities (National Language Council 2008). Fewer than 5% of Han Chinese in Xinjiang speak Uyghur, while only about 50% of Uyghurs are functionally fluent in Mandarin. As such, Uyghur defines a distinct linguistic community and, by implication, ethnonational group. This group comprises the intended consumers of the vocational education here under consideration.

Minority private vocational schools advertise through two channels: handbills and radio commercials. Both are entirely in Uyghur, thus precluding most Chinese from enrolling in the schools. When schools distribute handbills, they do so in primarily minority-inhabited areas of cities during especially busy times of day, particularly lunchtime and the evening rush hour. Firstly, this increases the chances of the advertisements reaching a broader audience. Specifically, however, the schools seem to be reaching out to labourers, both blue-collar and white-collar, out to lunch and on their commutes. These schools are oriented not towards elites, who are meant to attend public universities, but are established to provide an education to busy workers.

Uyghur-language radio is an institution in Uyghur communities all over Xinjiang and an important tool in the construction of a broadly local imagined community (Dautcher 2009, pp. 42–47). Advertisements for minority vocational schools do not appear on Chinese-language radio, although those for mainstream vocational schools are transmitted on minority-language radio. The latter are not translated. One 'ethnic' clothing design and tailoring training centre, called Särb-i Qanut, which advertised on one of Urumchi's Uyghur-language radio stations in March 2008, emphasized not only its connections to Uyghur ethnicity and culture, but also the charitable nature of its course design and mission. Typically for a PRC private vocational

school, the Särb-i Qanut centre offers a short-term programme of training in a marketable middle-class craft with a limited curriculum. Interestingly, textbooks and other materials are provided for free. This stands in contrast to private schools in China proper, which tend to charge a series of increasingly higher fees for even the most minor of services (Lin 1999, pp. 76–79). Thus, it suggests that the motives of the school administrators are altruistic, and that the school is intended not as a for-profit enterprise, but as a low-cost job-training programme. It is of course entirely possible that the advertising copy produced by the school presents a superficially charitable image intended to deceive its audience. The choice of that image, however, implies the existence of actual philanthropic institutions.

It is clear that the new private schools founded by various entrepreneurs are founded in memory of and on the model of those of pre-1949 Xinjiang. They are institutionally similar to the old schools and sometimes bear the names and faces of famous Uyghur educators.

Xinjiang's past institutions and present social configurations

The history I have described here raises several questions and concerns regarding the study of Xinjiang's modern history and society. Historical knowledge and historical consciousness is an important factor in modern language attitudes and educational activism. Ethnic and educational institutions begun in the late nineteenth century are still present today, both as an institutional model and as a memory. The Cultural Promotion Societies and their mythologized predecessors have set a standard for mother-tongue education in Xinjiang in the minds, at least, of a certain class of intellectuals who look to the pre-1949 period as a golden age of Uyghur independent development.

The literary production of Uyghur intellectuals largely seems to support this assertion. The vast majority of articles in *Shinjang tarix materiyalliri* concern Xinjiang's history between 1870 and 1949, though the parallel Chinese series has many more articles regarding the post-Revolutionary era, while several of the books most often cited as classics of modern Uyghur literature, including *Iz, Oyghanghan Zemin*, and *Ana Yurt* are historical novels about the pre-1949 period (Ötkür 1985, 1994, 2000, Sabir 2000). Certainly, other works regarding the 'character' of the Uyghur people are regarded as more intellectually elevated.[6] The majority of urban Uyghurs, however, seem to hold these novels in high regard and consider them, particularly in their first printings, to be accurate accounts of history.

This popular history relates in a similar way to the narrative propagated by ethnic minority elites, often consciously advanced in an effort to counter the official story (Uyghur American Association 2008). It is normal for ethnic minorities to advance a national counter-narrative similar to that of the official story it is meant to oppose (Duara 1995, p. 10), and, as such, narratives of Uyghur history bear a striking similarity to those put forth by organs of the Chinese government, often including the uncritical adoption of a teleological model of development invoking the nation as a historical category. Indeed, the received definition of Uyghur ethnicity also has great popular currency in Xinjiang, even though many who utter it simultaneously object to it. From the literary and other media production and consumption of literate Xinjiang people, as well as from other sources such as oral history, it may be possible to uncover a truly popular sense of history.

As work on the Sheng Shicai era makes abundantly clear, the classification of Xinjiang ethnic groups in the Soviet mode began in earnest well before 1949. Nor was it solely a state project, but also one directed, in part, by Turkic Muslim modernists with a fundamentally nationalist agenda. The Cultural Promotion Societies, as educational institutions with a distant reach and broad scope, were the site of intervention in the reproduction of social structure on the part of several actors. Their schools not only inculcated ethnic values and viewpoints in

their students, but also, through their division along ethnic lines, lent naturalness to those classifications. The Cultural Promotion Societies may be responsible not only for institutionalizing ethnicity, but for making it an everyday category in the minds of literate Xinjiang people.

The definition of ethnicity promoted by the CPSs was primarily ethnolinguistic. The Society schools brought together students from disparate local but similar linguistic backgrounds and gave their language a name and a space in which to gain form. In providing literacy, the schools had to provide a medium for that literacy. More importantly, perhaps, the CPS school system imparted a sense that, through one's 'mother tongue', a student could achieve academic, personal, political, and economic success. The idea of the importance of 'mother tongue' and the use of that linguistic variety as a medium of education descends, then, not just from its articulations under the PRC, but also under previous regimes.

One fruitful strategy for depoliticizing the history of Xinjiang, then, may be to focus not on the individuals who are dominant in a given historical narrative, but to investigate the ways in which these individuals and their less-famous contemporaries associated with each other, the institutions in which they built their communities and produced common ideas. In Xinjiang, this means, in part, working from the locally rooted institutions of Islamic and trade education (Beller-Hann 2008, pp. 326–333), through the Confucian schools of the late Qing, through the early Turkist and *Jadid* schools, through the explosion of literacy and education under Sheng Shicai, and beyond to the present day.

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Notes

1. This article is based upon a paper, 'Mother-tongue education in Xinjiang, past and present', presented at the Ninth Annual Central Eurasian Studies Society Conference held at Georgetown University, 18–21 September 2008, and another, 'Networks of reform and activism in Chinese Turkestan', presented at the Sixteenth Annual Central Eurasian Studies Conference held at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana, 18 February 2009. It follows one year of life and study in Urumchi, Xinjiang.
2. This variety of Uyghur was based on the Ili and Kashgar dialects.
3. The accounts in Abliz (1996) and other histories and memoirs strongly support his and my assertions.
4. The Solon were later reclassified, under the PRC, as the Daur, a Mongolic people.
5. See Articles 121 and 134 of the 1982 Constitution of the People's Republic of China.
6. This includes, for example, the work of Äsät Sulayman (2000, 2006).

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