Introduction. What Is Terror Capitalism?

The man was sitting three tables away from us. Dressed in a black jacket and a striped polo shirt, he looked like an average middle-aged Uyghur man. He seemed to be talking intently on his smartphone. Over small glasses of Turkish tea, I was reading and discussing a Uyghur novel, called *The Backstreets*, with a friend named Ablikim. We had been meeting this way each morning for several weeks. The problem was that the same man had been sitting three tables away from us the day before. Two days in a row seemed like too much.

I whispered to Ablikim, who had his back to the man, "I think that guy might be following us." I nodded at the man with a tilt of my head. "He was in the same spot yesterday. I might just be paranoid, but I think he might be taking pictures while he pretends to talk on his phone."

Ablikim's face went white. He lurched to his feet.

We took off, walking in different directions, trying to see if anyone was following us. Back in 2014, facial recognition cameras and checkpoints had not yet been installed across the city so tracking people in space required human intelligence. We deleted WeChat from our phones in case we were detained and forced to show the Ministry of State Security (MSS) agents our contacts and chat histories, but there was not much we could do to delete the text messaging on our smartphones. We knew that Tencent and China Mobile could always share our information with the MSS.

Several hours later, I texted Ablikim to see if he had spotted anything unusual. Nothing. After waiting a day, we started meeting again, relieved that it must have been a coincidence. We smoked our cheap Hong He cigarettes, laughed at our paranoia, and went back to our tea and novel. Ablikim said:

> You never know who is working for the police. And if you talk about politics, it will inevitably turn into a discussion about oppression within two or three minutes. A few minutes later, the police will arrive and people will be arrested. When I was a kid, no one ever disappeared without a trace only to resurface several months later. Now this is common. It happens all the time.

In 2014 the reeducation system of internment camps was just beginning, and it primarily targeted young Uyghur men in rural areas. Ablikim never imagined that, just three years later, he and 1.5 million others would be deemed untrustworthy and sent to camps.

We were usually the first people in the tea shop right as it opened at 9 a.m. Sometimes, if I was a few minutes late, I would see Ablikim across the street muttering under his breath, cursing me for wasting his time. But still, when I got to our table, I would see that he had already bought me a two-yuan tea and the tahini pastry that he knew I liked. As an underemployed young man, he really did not have much to do other than apply for jobs and meet his closest friend, Batur, or me, and talk about literature and politics. We became close. If I did not meet him for a day or two, he would call me asking where I had been. He protected our friendship. He did not want me spending too much time with other Uyghur men who were outside his friendship network.

At noon, Batur and another friend would often join us and we would eat hand-pulled noodles or a rice pilaf called *polu* together. In the evening, we often made elaborate plans regarding what and where we would eat. We would argue about whether we would eat sunflower seeds in the park or play pool. We stayed out late, talking about philosophy, romantic love, suicide, and music.

We talked about the disappearances of people in the countryside, about protests and revenge killings, about police shooting indiscriminately into crowds, surveillance systems, political education camps, and the way state policies allowed Han settlers to get wealthy while preventing most Uyghurs from owning businesses, finding jobs, or even having a secure right to the city. We talked about the way police contractors had started scanning the phones and passbooks of young Uyghurs at spot checks, how they inspected Uyghur apartments on a regular basis, scanning QR codes that were pasted to the front door, checking the inhabitants off a digital list. In the dark, in the park, with a plastic bag of Kashgar-style white sunflower seeds and surrounded by close friends, it felt as though we were outside the People's War on Terror and it was safe to talk about these things.

In February 2015, this began to change. Back in his home village in Southern Xinjiang, Ablikim's brother was detained after a religious text showed up in a scan of his smartphone. Ablikim started having trouble sleeping at night. He cried while his mother described how his younger brother was taken. He argued with his father about why he did not want to return to the countryside to support his family. He said that now his heart began to pound whenever someone called from an unknown number. For several weeks, he stopped meeting me and instead paced around his minimally decorated concrete apartment, thinking, worrying about the future. The campaign to reeducate Uyghurs ate into the basic fabric of his social life. In order for Ablikim's brother to avoid a five-year prison term for "religious extremism," Ablikim and his family paid the police 10,000 yuan. His brother was sent to a reeducation camp instead. In a very short amount of time, the surveillance system moved from phantom police informants to smartphone scans that targeted immediate family members to reeducation camps and facial recognition cameras.

Yet, despite all of this, Batur and other friends forced Ablikim to leave his apartment. We made him join us for dinner again. Despite the surveillance systems and the disappearance of loved ones, anticolonial friendships made them try and fail and try again to keep on living autonomously as young men alone in the city. This book is about continuing to live despite systems of enclosure, devaluation, and, ultimately, dispossession.

Although this tightening system of social control may appear to be unique to Northwest China, the confluence of forces that closed in on Ablikim is shaped in part by recent global developments in capitalist frontier making. As theorists of contemporary capitalism (Berardi 2015; R. Benjamin 2019; Wark 2019;

Zuboff 2019) have shown, between 2010 and 2020 smartphones have become tracking devices that claim life experience and behavior as surplus data that can be turned into prediction products which shape social life. *Terror Capitalism* places that body of theory, what Shoshana Zuboff (2019) calls "surveillance capitalism," in conversation with recent feminist and decolonial examinations of the global co-construction of contemporary capitalism and colonialism (Coulthard 2014; Bear et al. 2015; Byrd et al. 2018; Rofel and Yanagisako 2018). In doing so, it explores how a state-funded, privately built surveillance system produced Ablikim and millions of other Muslims in Northwest China as objects of terror capitalism.

Drawing on more than twenty-four months of ethnographic research in the Uyghur region in Northwest China between 2011 and 2018, I examine government documents and reports from tech workers in China as well as internal Chinese police reports since that time. Based on this body of evidence, *Terror Capitalism* shows that the social life of Muslims, particularly young Uyghur men, has been radically transformed by systems designed and implemented by tech workers and police contractors in China. It considers the rise of state-directed private technology development in China to make a broader argument about a global turn toward techno-political systems of capitalist accumulation more generally. Specifically, it considers the roles that digital media surveillance play in political control and economic growth. This system resonates with processes of political regime change, as in other counterterrorism campaigns, but in this case it is attempting to produce an epistemic transformation through surveillance and unfree labor. Knowledge production, and the social life it supports, is the ultimate object of this contemporary capitalist and colonial project.

At the center of this is an examination of what happens when a techno-political system—thought of here as state-funded technical programming mapped onto Uyghur social reproduction—is used to generate capital by asking three interconnected questions. What happens to the value of Uyghur lives as lucrative state contracts are given to settler corporations to build and deploy technologies that surveil and manage Uyghur men and other populations? How can the implementation of this system be thought of as a broader process of dispossession? Finally, how does terror capitalism use systems of material and digital enclosure to hold targeted groups in place and produce new forms of self-discipline and labor for private manufacturers? In exploring these questions, I argue that terror capitalism is manifested through digital enclosure, ethno-racialized devaluation, and material dispossession. I show the way the technological life of the city pulled Uyghurs into the market economy and

the task of making one's self legible in urban society, while, on the other hand, the same technological life pulled them toward new forms of Islamic orthopraxis and identification. These forces of dispossession and reorientation produced competing forms of self-fashioning, ways of making the self sensible, which pulled them in competing directions.

I also argue that it is important to think beyond economistic framings to understand capitalism as an ever-expanding institutionalized global social system. By extending my analysis beyond normative discussions of economy that are disengaged from feminist and decolonial analytics, I show that Uyghur social reproduction itself—all the uncompensated forms of work and care that support market activities—is a primary domain of this system. Uyghur family and homosocial relations, Native modes of instruction, religious and cultural activities, and land-based relations are the targets of digital enclosure and devaluation, resulting in new forms of technological possession and capital accumulation for those who benefit from the system.

Utilizing a biopolitical reading of contemporary security systems, I demonstrate that what is being built in this space is more complex than internment camps, which have been the focus of most scholarly and media attention. In fact, the entire population of Muslims in the region, including many Kazakhs and Hui Muslims in addition to the much larger population of Uyghurs, are subject to general technologies of social transformation. Focusing primarily on the lived experience of systems that made the camps possible, I show how Uyghur social life was subjected to general forms of dispossession in the years leading up to Muslim mass detention.

This introduction first situates the book in broader discussions of racialized capitalism and settler colonialism. It begins by arguing that the term *terrorism* initiates new sequences of ethno-racialization and how this promotes processes of colonial dispossession. By situating the formation of the state in China in colonial discourses, it sketches out the way Maoist multiculturalism has given way to techno-capitalist frontier making, and then places the techno-politics of this system in recent scholarship on surveillance capitalism and decolonial feminist analysis of economy. Finally, it introduces the book's proposal that examining these systems from the standpoint and practices of Uyghur young men sheds light on the role of gender in new forms of racialization and anticolonial survival. It suggests that active interethnic witnessing can be a method that produces a minor politics of refusal.

Situating Terror Capitalism in Racial Capitalism and Settler Colonialism Scholarship

In order to understand the workings of terror capitalism, it is important to first understand the significance of the term *terror* as a conjunctive term operationalized to produce ethno-racial categorization and state capital deployment. As I describe in chapter 1, in 2014 the Xi Jinping administration declared the People's War on Terror in response to a series of violent incidents involving Uyghurs and rising forms of Islamic piety among the Uyghur population. Since September 11, 2001, authorities of states at the core of global capitalism have used the terms *terrorist* and *extremist* to denote an ethno-racialized "bad Muslim" other that must be either eliminated or transformed (Mamdani 2002; Asad 2007; M. Anderson 2017; Brophy 2019; Byler 2019). In China, the introduction of global terrorism discourses and digital surveillance catalyzed a new sequence in the racialization of ethnicity, making the bodies and possessions of non-Sino Muslims susceptible to intensified forms of expropriation that range from land occupation and displacement, to mass detention and data harvesting, to reconfigured social reproduction under conditions of automated surveillance.

For Cedric Robinson (1983) and numerous other scholars of decolonization and antiracism,[1] ethno-racial capitalism in Europe and North America is an ongoing process through which capital accumulation naturalizes the production of difference, threat, and danger. They argue that, throughout the history of capitalism, ethno-racial differences have been used to justify the dispossession, domination, and elimination of minorities through a variety of racialized forms of enclosure and control ranging from property laws and education systems to criminal justice and war. That is to say, racial capitalism and settler colonialism have been co-created through state-enabled forms of dispossession (Coulthard 2014; Pasternak 2015; Day 2016). Racial capitalism and settler colonialism are distinctive frontiers of expropriative capital accumulation; the former focuses on enslaved or dependent labor of ethno-racialized others, while the latter centers on enclosure, and the dispossession of land and institutions of ethno-racialized others. Yet, central to both forms is an ethno-racial hierarchy that remains a cofoundational element of both historical and contemporary forms of economy. As Alyosha Goldstein argues, "Racial, colonial, gendered, and generational making of property and the capacity for possession are both a consequence of particular historical conditions of dispossession and continue to be reproduced in new ways in the present" (2017, 42).

In this book, I argue that the co-construction of capitalist and colonial relations should not be limited to European and North American contexts. Here, I

am building on arguments from Christopher Chen (2013) and others who posit that ethno-racial hierarchies are continuously generated in the ongoing process of capital accumulation.[2] "'Race' is not extrinsic to capitalism or simply the product of specific historical formations to projects of industrialization. Instead they are reproduced through the creation of caste-like formations such as South African Apartheid or Jim Crow America. Likewise, capitalism does not simply incorporate racial domination as an incidental part of its operations, but from its origins systematically begins producing and reproducing 'race' as global surplus humanity" (Chen 2013, 214).

The "global surplus humanity" of disposable workers that is produced through the creation of "caste-like formations" allows a capitalist social order to continue to create value even as markets reach their saturation point.[3] This also means that racialization is not limited to settler–Native and White–Black binaries, rather capitalist-colonial development continually produces nested forms of antagonism centered on ethno-racial difference.[4] As social institutions and market forces build structures of power over life, what might otherwise be characterized as ethnic difference in non-Euro-American contexts comes to take on the symbolic and material violence of racialization.

Under the sign of terrorism, the process of racializing Muslim populations has been given new and increasing vitality. As Chen argues:

> The continuation of open-ended security operations across the Muslim world, reveal how "race" remains not only a probabilistic assignment of relative economic value but also an index of differential vulnerability to state violence. . . . At play here are not only unwaged, coerced or dependent forms of labour, but also, crucially, the management of those populations which have become redundant in relation to capital. Such populations are expendable but nonetheless trapped within the capital relation, because their existence is defined by a generalised commodity economy which does not recognise their capacity to labour. (Chen 2013, 210, 212)

That is to say, in numerous contexts the bodies of Muslims marked as "terrorist" or "extremist" are simply read as disposable, or worthless, with regard to their ability to produce economic value, and are thus not deserving of human and civil rights protections. Importantly, in Northwest China, Uyghur male bodies are often read simultaneously as potentially disposable "bad Muslims" *and* productive "good Muslims." If the "disease" of their "bad Muslim" identification can be eliminated (Roberts 2018; Grose 2019), they can be made economically productive as dependent laborers who, under conditions of digital enclosure,

can be put to work. In any case, a state-authorized and state-enforced demonization in media and everyday discourse of "backward" (Ch: *luohou*) Muslims allows the theft of their lands, the erosion of their social institutions, and, ultimately, the exposure of their bodies to violence from state proxies (see Dawson 2016). In Northwest China, state capital incentivizes and obligates private companies to develop new security products and forms of labor while at the same time clearing space for new forms of investment and, to some extent, profit. The state terror that terror capitalism justifies in the Uyghur homeland is part of the process of establishing dominance and exploiting that dominance through an accumulation of wealth.

The "terror" aspect of terror capitalism allows Chinese authorities to justify both the funding of this new development and the means with which state proxies are carrying it out. Terrorism, in the context of the post-9/11 United States and China, signifies a universal, yet invisible, global threat of Muslim insurgency. In Northwest China, it rationalizes investment in policing and security infrastructure and justifies the mass subtraction of hundreds of thousands of Uyghur young men and others. Simultaneously, the state and private corporations based in particular localities in Eastern China are able to consistently frame the geographies inhabited by Uyghurs as crucial sites for investment of surplus capacity.

Thinking about the process of exploitation and dispossession in the Uyghur homeland as terror capitalism shows how new sequences in racialization take on valences that are different from older, ongoing forms of racialized capitalism in other places.[5] In locations around the world, the Global War on Terror has allowed governments from China to India, the Palestinian Territories, and the United States to mark domestic populations of religious minority citizens as terrorists and systematically subject them to experiments in policing, watch lists, mass internment, and indoctrination processes, often without recourse to legal protections (Kaul 2020). Importantly, unlike in other cases, where targeted populations are simply banished to sites of human warehousing such as prisons or ghettos, state capital here is invested in an imagined future of Chinese cultural homogeneity and economic individuation. By eating into Uyghur social reproduction through comprehensive surveillance systems, mass detention, and family separation, Uyghur women and men are pushed toward a lumpen form of proletarianization that centers on a reified form of Han cultural values defined as "Chinese."

There are significant parallels between Uyghur mass detention and the mass detention of Black Americans in that both systems of mass incarceration create profits and jobs while at the same time deeply damaging both Uyghur and

Black American social reproduction.[6] These processes, in turn, place a much greater strain on Uyghur and Black American women—pushing them into subservient roles in the broader society and producing greater forms of fracture in minoritized families. A major difference in the Black American and Uyghur experiences of mass incarceration is that Uyghurs are being made the target of economistic transformation as unfree workers behind checkpoints, under cameras and satellites while simultaneously being targeted with epistemic retraining. In the United States, the enormous numbers of Black Americans incarcerated since the civil rights movement is a way for lawmakers and invested citizens to maintain racial hierarchy and racial dispossession (Gilmore 2007). This was the motivating interest that led to the current profit-making American prison industry. In China there is a derivation of this process. There, the detention system is a means rather than an end in itself of transforming an ethnic other into an unfree but economically productive workforce. It is also important to note that, in the American context, systems of deeply flawed due process, representative democracy, a free press, and civil protest allow for the formal contestation of institutionalized racism. In the context of Northwest China, authoritarian governance prevents formal decolonial and antiracist movements. As a result, Uyghurs are overtly produced by state authorities and in everyday settler discourse as subhuman under the sign of terror. They must be saved from themselves, much like Native "savage" populations in European and North American settler colonialism.

Situating Terror Capitalism in a Chinese Colonial Legacy

The lexicon and practices of colonization around the world have been shaped by the way French colonists looked to the Russian Empire as a model of conquest and, in turn, the way Russian imperialists looked to the American conquest of Native American lands as a model for their own colonial efforts in the steppes and deserts of Siberia and Central Asia (Stoler and McGranahan 2007). The reason why it is important to turn to this genealogy of Russian colonial thinking is to question the dominance of Western Europe as the sole progenitor of colonial empire and capitalist expansion. Instead, I argue that it is important to look more carefully at routes through which colonial thinking and practices are generated.[7] Understanding these relations problematizes the idea that colonial empires are an exclusively European domain.[8]

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, China's past semicolonization has functioned as a foundational myth of colonial wounding (Anand 2019). This moral wound shapes the aspirations of the nation. By promising a

return to precolonial civilizational purity, as in other former colonies, it pushes state authorities and their proxies to reach for "a future where the healing of the colonial wound can only be complete by achieving a level of consumption and lifestyle 'like the West'" (Kaul 2019, 11). At the same time, the wounding attempts to mask Chinese colonization of Uyghurs and others, and obscure the way the rhetoric of terrorism allows ethnic difference to be racialized, by offering a patina of anti-imperialist purity. Because China was partially colonized in the past, this rhetoric suggests, it is impossible for China to colonize others in the future. Instead, in a manner similar to Japanese justifications for their colonization of parts of China and Taiwan, the colonization of Uyghurs is presented as an act of rescue.[9]

These foundational myths continue to be crucial to understanding the way structural violence has been couched as domestic or internal national policies by China in Tibet and Xinjiang, Russia in Chechnya, Israel in Palestine, and elsewhere.[10] *Terror Capitalism* suggests that a framing of colonial processes as domestic disputes or ethnic conflicts—as they are often framed in broader China Studies literature and popular media—that are disengaged with the standpoint of the colonized obfuscates the structures of power that are at work in these locations across Asia.[11] What such accounts often ignore is the possibility of new sequences of capitalist ethno-racialization that are not generated directly by Western powers in places like Kashmir and Xinjiang, yet are comparable to the institution of Apartheid in South Africa or the violent segregation of Palestine (Chen 2013; Kaul 2020). Since Han citizens themselves have been the subject of European and American racism, many scholars are reluctant to describe the process of Uyghur dispossession as a product of ethno-racialization. Yet the Chinese discourse of colonial humiliation directed at China by the West has also become a technology of self-valorization and a way of masking state capital–directed social violence toward a minority other (Coulthard 2014; S. Shih 2016; Kaul 2020).

In building on this argument, *Terror Capitalism* resonates with Patrick Wolfe's (2006) and Tuck and Yang's (2012) reframing of settler colonialism not as an event-based process of exploitation, assimilation, or acculturation, but rather as a structural relationship of political domination, occupation, and dispossession. It suggests that settler colonialism as manifested in the Uyghur homeland follows a logic of cultural and social elimination centered on ethno-racial difference. Unlike in former franchise colonies such as India, in settler colonial contexts where the colonizer never leaves, postcolonialism is never fully possible.[12] Instead, in settler colonial societies, Native populations are subjected to

ongoing processes of elimination either through programs of physical extermination or processes of removal and reeducation. These processes of elimination and replacement are never complete or total, instead they are an epistemic boundary struggle where Native social reproduction strives to continue even as colonial and capitalist systems attempt to steal as much capital as possible from Native lands and people.

In much the same way, the settlement projects of the People's Republic of China in Central Asia were characterized by relationships of domination and projects of human engineering and elimination directed toward the peoples of those lands (see Bovingdon 2010; Finley 2013; and McGranahan 2019). Beginning in the 1950s, the state used Han patron–Uyghur client relations, the capture of social institutions, and settler occupation to establish sociocultural reengineering processes under the guise of eliminating counterrevolutionary threats. Of course, accusations of counterrevolutionary "local nationalism" were in many cases simply a euphemism for attachment to ethnic or Native difference (Bulag 2012; Brophy 2017). The overall goal of a settler nation is access to land and resources and the elimination of all obstacles that stand in its way. In Northwest China, the fact of Uyghur existence was thus one of the primary obstacles to this project. This challenge produced multiple outcomes. On the one hand, the state strove to capture the religious and cultural institutions of Uyghur society while, on the other, it sought to create a new market-oriented society on yerlik lands.

In order to accomplish these objectives, settler colonial projects—the Chinese ethnic minority paradigm included—often produce forms of "permitted difference" in ethnic minority or Native societies (Schein 2000; McCarthy 2009). As other scholars have argued regarding the Chinese case, this form of minority recognition serves the purpose of asking minority and Native groups to participate in the reproduction of Maoist multiculturalism (see Litzinger 2000; Schein 2000; and Makley 2007). It allows them some latitude to develop their own institutions but also asks them to fit into a slot that promotes a narrative of Chinese liberation, and, in an era of marketization, to sell their own culture for the gaze of tourists who accompany the arrival of settler society. In some cases, ethnic practices supported by the state through funding and policy became a source of yerlik pride and valorization. For instance, in the past some Uyghur artists defended performances of culture in the tourism industry as preferable to factory or service labor in Han spaces. The overlap between top-down control over state-supported "permitted difference" *and* minority-supported autonomous land-based work resulted in forms of commodified

cultural practices that some Uyghurs found empowering at times, particularly in the 1990s and 2000s, and disempowering at other times, particularly in the 2010s ("You Shall Sing and Dance" 2021).

More importantly, however, for most Uyghurs, Maoist multiculturalism defined improper forms of difference, opening the colonized to further state control.[13] Between 2010 and 2020, this last facet of the discourse, the ability to define who is a "bad minority," has become the dominant form of Chinese multiculturalism for Uyghurs (M. Anderson 2017; Brophy 2019). As noted in the epigraph to this book, for young Uyghur men, the overall impulse in this relation of control and elimination is one of "breaking the spirit" (Uy: *rohi sulghun*) of a minority person while saving the individual as a productive, submissive Chinese subject. This spirit is rooted in land-based forms of knowledge that prefigure a Uyghur person's experience with the modern state in China. In the logic of the reeducation system, once this spirit of epistemic difference is broken, the docile subject will be forced to accept subjectification. Through this process, the effect of state power (T. Mitchell 1999) and the techno-security industry it fosters, emerges as a Leviathan—able to crush an individual, a family, or a whole community with impunity.

This state power became particularly apparent after the beginning of the US Global War on Terror in 2001, when, for the first time, nearly all forms of resistance by Uyghurs began to be described as terrorism by state media, permitted popular culture, and surveillance systems. As Gardner Bovingdon (2010) has documented, even the smallest offense carried out by Uyghurs toward Han citizens or state authorities could be classified as terrorism. Emily Yeh (2012) notes that, in the Chinese application of a capacious post-9/11 counterterrorism, "any perceived threat to state territorial sovereignty, regardless of its actual methods or effects vis-à-vis harm to others," can be deemed terrorism. Importantly, this threat can only be produced by minoritized bodies, particularly Muslim male bodies, since mass murder carried out by Han civilians is not seen as a threat to Chinese self-determination. Since 2000 the "dark" (Ch: *hei*) bodies of Uyghur men infected with the ideological virus of Islam became synonymous with "wild" (Ch: *yexing*) virility and, at times, dehumanized danger (M. Anderson 2017). Many officials and Chinese terrorism experts I interviewed described Uyghur young men explicitly in these terms.

State authorities placed posters throughout the Uyghur districts of Ürümchi in 2014 that depicted and labeled the appearance of rural-origin Uyghur young men and women who had begun practicing new forms of Islamic piety as evidence of terrorism (see figure I.1). The system prescribed gender performance, pathologizing the appearance of young Uyghur men and making the

FIGURE I.1. Posters that depict the appearance of "good Muslims," upper right, and "bad Muslims," lower right, that were posted throughout the Uyghur districts of Ürümchi in September 2014. On the left side of the posters, rewards were offered to those who informed on Uyghurs who practiced illegalized forms of Islam. Those who appeared or were reported to be "bad Muslims" were subject to immediate arrest. Image by Nicola Zolin, used with permission.

appearance of Uyghur women the grounds of competing forms of state patriarchy and yerlik Islamic patriarchy. In both cases, Uyghur women often became an abstract object "to be saved." Perhaps more significantly, the institutionalization of power over the bodies of Uyghurs defined Uyghur masculinity and femininity through an expansive process of racialization. In the minds of state authorities and Han settlers who were moving into Uyghur-majority areas, the perceived wild virulence of Uyghur masculinity was imagined as a constant, if often abstract, threat to state and settler claims to land possession (Tynen 2020; see also Moreton-Robinson 2015).

Yet, despite these fears of Native retaliation, the "lucrative chaos" (Cliff 2016a; see also Schumpeter 1942) of rapid development and dispossession produced tremendous opportunities that outweighed settler fears. Real estate speculation, natural resources, and international trade associated with the development project permitted many Han settlers to find better standards of living for themselves. They also saw state institutions aligning with and protecting their interests even as development increased indebtedness among

Uyghurs, who were systematically blocked from low-interest lines of credit by nationalized banks that placed restrictions on loans to Uyghurs due to their assumed disposition toward terrorism. Uyghur migrants told me that Han landlords or bankers increasingly found ways of evicting Uyghur business owners or homeowners and replacing them with Han settler tenants (see also Tynen 2019b). Many Uyghur migrants I interviewed said they encountered prejudice when seeking loans or authorizations of sales and purchases—a form of exclusion common in other iterations of racialized capitalism (Dawson 2016). Banks and landlords were often quite eager, on the other hand, to provide Han settlers with loans for purchases of real estate or discounts on business investments (Cliff 2016a).

Uyghurs, unlike Han settlers, were often seen by Han lenders as not possessing the discipline necessary for wage labor. As the Xinjiang state economic advisor Tang Lijiu put it, "Because of their lifestyle, asking (Uyghurs) to go into big industrial production, onto the production line: they're probably not suited to that."[14] That is to say, in Tang's view, Uyghurs were seen as not yet disciplined enough, and thus not deserving to even be included in the wage labor market where their work could be exploited for its surplus value. Instead, the majority of them were only worth using in devalued forms of social reproductive work such as food service and waste management or as people whose work or data could simply be expropriated without any pay.[15]

For many Han businessmen, dealing with Uyghurs was just too much "trouble" (Ch: *mafan*). It was for the same reason that Uyghurs were told they need not apply for high-skilled jobs in natural resource development, which was universally controlled by Han settlers. Because of the supposed threat that Uyghurs posed as potential terrorists the state also refused to issue legal documents to the vast majority of Uyghurs who applied to travel and trade domestically and internationally. As a result, minoritized peoples frequently found themselves caught in a downward spiral of poverty even as the Han society that was growing around them was increasingly affluent. In another iteration of the "disempowered development" that Andrew Fischer has found in Tibet (2013), they were simultaneously excluded from entering the capitalist system as members of the proletariat, or civil rights–bearing classes, exploited as disposable service workers, and blamed for not finding their way in the new economy.

The ethno-racism that is being produced in the Uyghur homeland through contemporary processes of racialization is unique to this particular moment and this particular place. It is nonetheless important to name such processes as ethno-racial rather than *simply* ethnic or cultural because it enables us to see how state capital and private industries sediment differences among groups (Reddy 2011). Naming this a process of ethno-racialization centers the way

capitalist frontiers and colonial domination are embodied by accentuating difference. Individual workers' inner characteristics are framed by legal, economic, and educational institutions "through their skin color, dress, language, smell, accent, hairstyle, way of walking, facial expressions, and behavior" (Amrute 2016, 14). While Amrute is writing about a culturalist form of new racism directed toward Indian tech workers in Germany, her argument for why difference should be read as racial rather than simply or only ethnic, holds for Uyghurs as well. The bodies of Uyghurs—the way they dress, their intimate relations, personal hygiene, their accent, their diet, facial expressions, physical and virtual behavior, and language use—are the primary object of human face-to-face ethnic profiling *and* the pseudoscientific presentation of techno-political surveillance. In the context of the Chinese frontier, their ethnic and Native difference has come to act as a kind of racialized difference: an institutionalized system of domination and exclusion. In fact, as in other contemporary colonial contexts (TallBear 2013), the techno-political aspects of this system are an attempt to produce a postgenomic race science. In algorithmic assessments of the terrorist body at face scan checkpoints and in social media analytics, Uyghur skin color, eye shape, nose structure, and hairstyles become primary markers of precriminality.[16] As such, Uyghurs are subject to a particular form of racialization, driven by state capital, the "black box" of algorithmic assessment tools, and the Han settlers who are protected by the colonial relation. The racialization provides an a priori justification for expansive techno-political systems of control, even while these systems are constantly producing and reinforcing the process of racialization in the form of direct ethno-racial domination of the Uyghur population. This dynamic has produced an enclosure process through which Uyghurs are forced to work on their selves, to transform themselves into acceptable objects of surveillance.

The Role of Technology in Capitalist-Colonial Frontier Making in China

Specific technologies have been central to the modern history of systems of enclosure, ranging from the barbed wire and automatic weapons of North American internment camps to the passbooks and checkpoints of Apartheid South Africa and Palestine. As Ann Stoler (2010) has shown, in contemporary colonial contexts, techniques for classifying the intimate details and behaviors of a targeted population are politically charged not because they reveal the inner truths of people's lives but because they attempt to weaponize sociocultural knowledge in order to subordinate those who carry that knowledge. As this

form of intimacy moves toward the techno-political, it is made even more potent because of its scalability. The technology used in Chinese projects to contain and transform Uyghur populations takes these systems of control to new levels of intensity. The web of surveillance has moved from cameras on the wall to the chips inside their pockets, to their very physiognomy. Terror capitalism uses the exceptional space of the People's War on Terror to partition their space and produce a new sequence in capitalist expropriation, freely extracting data from bodies marked as different and thus suspicious. These techno-political processes began by harvesting Muslim social life—ranging from the objects they possessed to their social relations—and converting it into data.

In a 2015 feminist manifesto, Laura Bear, Karen Ho, Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, and Sylvia Yanagisako argue for a study of capitalism that centers on the social relations it generates in daily life. Rather than accepting abstract economic logics and formal models as normative, they strive to understand how biopolitical and financial conversion devices mediate, but do not fully determine, social life. This approach helps feminist and decolonial economics scholars understand how capitalist frontiers are made and what effects they have on social futures (Bhattacharya 2017). Analysis of capitalism as an institutionalized global social system must take into account the way the work of women and minoritized people—often framed as "unproductive" labor in dominant discourses—are essential to capital accumulation and the way the division of labor itself shapes gender and ethno-racial roles (Weeks 2011; Chen 2013; Dawson 2016; Fraser and Jaeggi 2018). It means examining the way the care of children and the elderly is off-loaded and considering the role of social networks and intersubjective friendships in maintaining and transforming social class, ethno-racial hierarchies, and personal well-being (Scott 1999; Federici 2004; Stoler 2010). This approach shows how the violence and possibilities of capitalist power relations spread throughout a society and the way state institutions, legal regimes, and techno-political systems structure this violence and potential as a process.

In a recent examination of the European and American technology industries, the theorist Shoshana Zuboff (2019) uses the term *surveillance capitalism* to describe the digital economy of social media, smartphones, the Internet of Things, information harvesting, and data analytics. This matrix of AI-enabled communication tools have come to claim life experience and behavior as surplus data that can be turned into prediction products through machine learning. These prediction products are in turn sold to advertisers or, in some cases, policing agencies in order to predict and shape the behavior of targeted populations (Jefferson 2020). This new frontier in capitalist accumulation, or what Wark

(2019) refers to as a new information-centered mode of production, is fostering a new form of power over human experience. Around the world, there are emergent divisions or "digital enclosures" (Andrejevic 2007) of social learning that empower technocratic elites, smoothing out their ability to profit from and control this system while binding those who serve the system through both tacit consumerist consent from protected populations and the involuntary surveillance of those who are denied civil rights.

The system Zuboff and others describe can be thought of as centering on a new range of digital "conversion devices" that utilize digital enclosures to produce new value regimes and data and labor theft (Bear et al. 2015). In financial capitalism, such devices are economic models or systems of accreditation that derive their power through their ability to "erase and sever objects, people, and resources from their contexts" (Bear et al. 2015). This book starts from the assumption that smartphones, search engines, and algorithmic data assessments must also be identified as conversion devices. In contrast to devices in other domains of capitalism, they derive their power from recording the particularity and social contexts of users in order to quantify and exploit them. It is only then that life experience is harvested as data, analyzed, and sent to users as attention-grabbing nudges and to a range of state and corporate buyers in the form of prediction products. That is to say, smartphones and search engines are powerful not only because of their precise knowledge of the particular but also because of their predictive capacities regarding the aggregate. On the one hand, these conversion devices draw users' attention because they know what users want—this is what drives consumers to consent to having them operate in the most intimate spaces of their lives. On the other hand, however, these conversion devices turn human behavior into digital code, parse it with algorithms, and allow it to be weaponized by tech workers, employers, and the state police and their contractors.[17]

It is the dual-edged conversion from the particular to the aggregate that makes algorithmic surveillance systems especially powerful in eating into and reshaping social life. No other conversion device transcends scale in such a rapid and intimate way from the personal to the level of the economy and the state.[18] The surveillance capacities of cell phones and search engines produce new levels of theft from minoritized, ethno-racialized others deemed undeserving of civil protections. This latter class of unfree others—who are not even privileged enough to be exploited as "free" workers or consumers within an autonomously chosen labor contract—is what Wark (2017) refers to as the contemporary subaltern. The enclosure of such minoritized people in Northwest China is at the heart of what this book aims to examine.

With the exception of a handful of scholars, theorists of surveillance capitalism have largely centered their studies in European and North American contexts and the way they confront unmarked subjects that, in effect, often appear to be middle-class, heteronormative, and white.[19] What would it mean to study the role of surveillance in Chinese society among minoritized Muslim populations? This book explores what a feminist anthropological approach might offer in developing an analytic of capitalist surveillance that foregrounds gendered, Native social relations and discrete histories in China. In entering the discussion from this angle, it builds on Lisa Rofel and Sylvia Yanagisako's (2018) ethnography of the Chinese and Italian garment industry, by transposing their approach to a different industry, location, and population. Rofel and Yanagisako identify a number of key sociohistorical processes at work in the contemporary economy in China, ranging from labor value negotiations to inequality outsourcing (2018, 8).

While similar processes—particularly processes of revaluation and social rearrangement—are central to the dynamics at work in the surveillant society in Northwest China, for the purposes of this introduction, I will focus here on the privatization of public industries and services. In the development of global capitalism, economic systems frequently eat into political institutions and begin to shape their function. Increasingly, in both liberal and illiberal systems of government, political power is used to protect the accumulation of capital. As Fraser notes, this is another site of the "boundary struggle" of capitalism as a social system (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018). China, as a paradigmatic example of contemporary global capitalism, is no exception to this (Friedman 2020). As Chinese authorities began a process of transition away from Maoism to the current capitalist orientation, it has been difficult to distinguish between state managed institutions and private enterprise. In fact, even if an enterprise meets the legal definition of either a state or a private institution, it is often impossible to disentangle which aspect of the corporation is "public" and which aspect is "private" (Rofel and Yanagisako 2018, 9, 133). Often this is a result not of deliberate obfuscation by the state or the enterprise but because what private-public means is contingent on the positioning of individuals within these industries and state institutions. However, Rofel argues, what unites individuals on either side of the private-public dialectic is a commitment to "profitizing practices" whether on behalf of individuals, local communities, or the state more generally (Rofel and Yanagisako 2018, 134). Often these commitments are multiple—building state power, national pride, personal wealth, and family protections. The difference between public and private commitments is often a matter of stress rather than of kind.

The sociologist Ching Kwan Lee (2018) also examines private and public obligations in her study of Chinese investment in mining and construction in Zambia by theorizing the role of state capital itself. Chinese state capital, she shows, is often deployed to meet particular strategic ends. She argues that private capital differs from Chinese state capital in that the former is largely driven by shareholder demands, while the latter—acting in more of a Fordist model of economic development—moves at a longer temporal scale and is less dependent on immediate profits, thus affording those who are employed by it more stability. This state-capital driven usage of infrastructure development as a way of off-loading and building further capacities in particular regional localities across China is central to what some scholars refer to as a Chinese "Model of Development" (Oakes 2019). Lee (2018) shows that, in the context of global China, state capital deployment is driven less by profitization than by Chinese domestic market saturation, or overcapacity, and long-term strategic interests in resources and standards setting (which, perhaps, are less operative in the transnational textile industry). Lee's argument, concerning the private and state segmentation of capital in the mining sectors of the Chinese transnational economy, stands in contrast to Rofel and Yanagisako's argument that there is no clear distinction between private and public Chinese corporations in the textile industry and that both are united by profitization.

This book suggests that the Chinese technology industry stands in distinction to both mining and textile sectors of the Chinese economy examined in those two studies. Not only are private Chinese technology companies driven by state capital and forms of speculative venture capital—a form not examined by Lee, Rofel, or Yanagisako—but they are also not often driven by immediate profitization. Instead, like other technology companies that are part of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in Europe and North America, Chinese tech firms strive to expand quickly by reinvesting earnings in the rapid prototyping of product development, accruing intellectual property, and market expansion. Yet, despite these differences, the integration of state interests in private industry provides a central similarity across these three domains of the Chinese economy. The leading fifteen private Chinese technology firms, most of which have deep investments in Xinjiang counterterrorism, have been granted "national champion" (Ch: *guojiadui*) status by the Ministry of Science and Technology. This means that they qualify for lucrative state contracts but they are also obligated to achieve certain objectives on behalf of the nation.

In the 2010s state authorities began to shift the Chinese model of development to achieving what Xi Jinping described as the "China Dream" of a prosperous urban life and a greater presence along a reimagined "Silk Road"

in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Central Asia, and Africa. To accomplish these new goals, the state accelerated the process of subcontracting public works projects to private companies. These Private Public Partnerships (PPP), which were thought to be more nimble and responsive to economic and political challenges than Maoist-legacy State Owned Enterprises (SOE), were funded by the Chinese central and regional governments using state capital in much the same manner as described by Lee (2018) in Zambia. By 2017 the Chinese state had invested over $2.6 trillion in PPPs across the country (Tan and Zhao 2019). While much of this investment centered on the construction of roads, dams, electric grids, pipelines, airports, and urban housing between 2010 and 2020, it was extended further into social life through the construction of digital infrastructures, surveillance and media systems, transportation platforms, and logistics systems. This shift toward privatization of development coincided with the growing venture capital orientation of the technology industry. As I explain in detail in chapter 1, it also coincided with an opening up of a space of exceptional investment in relation to China's Muslim minorities.

To summarize how and why these privately built surveillance technologies work as a type of conversion device—transcribing social life as digital code, which can then be analyzed by algorithms and monetized by companies—it is instructive to think with Michel Foucault regarding the general technology of biopolitical security (Foucault 2007). Such a technology, for Foucault, is simultaneously *productive* in the way it produces new kinds of dependent subjects, *symbolic* in the way it produces new regimes of truth or evaluation, and *powerful* in the way it is dispersed to mediate and enclose, but not fully determine, the conduct and discipline of individuals within populations (Samimian-Darash 2016). Thinking of these terms in an anthropological framework shows the way distinctive technological activities shape social reproduction itself. Such sociotechnical or techno-political systems produce particular scripts of action for those in different racial, class, gender, and sexual orientation categories (F. Bray 2007; R. Benjamin 2019; Wark 2019). In the context of surveillance systems, these scripts shape social life by modeling, simulating, and calculating behavior, producing a regime of actionable truth while at the same time attempting to turn individuals into a standing reserve of data and workers in service to the system. As Timothy Mitchell puts it, techno-politics always produces a "technical body," by which he means "a particular form of manufacturing, a certain way of organizing the amalgam of human and nonhuman, things and ideas" (T. Mitchell 2002, 34). Techno-political systems promise a feeling of control to those who own and operate them against the threat of what are deemed to be the sources of social ills or economic hindrances (Joyce 2003).

FIGURE 1.2. In August 2017, a four-year-old Uyghur child kisses an image of her father six months after he was taken to a reeducation camp for praying at a local mosque in rural Southern Xinjiang. Image used with permission from the photographer.

They strive to make social life predictable by maintaining relations of power at a technical remove. Importantly though, at the level of social reproduction, the parameters of micropolitical devices become more than simply a conduit for power over life; they can become a space for political contestation and reversal (Von Schnitzler 2016). Here, power—defined in its fullest sense in the Foucauldian tradition as the ability to affect and be affected—can be opened up through the mediating effect of technological conversion (Foucault 2007).

Native Masculinity and Minor Politics as Method

In his work, Cedric Robinson (1983) presents a groundbreaking account of the way economic growth is linked to racialization. Equally important to this is the way he rejects Marxist accounts that center exclusively on white male industrial workers as unmarked subjects with revolutionary potential—erasing the work of women and minoritized others. In fact, drawing on Robinson, Robin D. G. Kelley (2017, quoted in Goldstein 2017) notes: "Race and gender

are not incidental or accidental features of the global capitalist order, they are constitutive. Capitalism emerged as a racial and gendered regime. . . . The secret to capitalism's survival is racism, and the racial and patriarchal state. Capitalism developed and operates within a racial system or racial regime. Racism is fundamental for the production and reproduction of capitalism, and that violence is necessary for creating and maintaining capitalism."

The key to the survival of capitalist systems is social reproduction, the care work necessary to support monetarily valued forms of production, and the violent expansion of capitalism and colonialism into the domain of the home and intersubjective care. Forms of care that exist even partially outside the purview of the colonial state and capitalist gaze are sources of friction in the expansion of this system.

Over the period of this study, I focused my attention on everyday forms of care that both provided the grounding of terror capitalism and resisted it. I developed close friendships with dozens of Uyghur and Han rural-to-urban male migrants while living near Uyghur informal settlements in Ürümchi. We met frequently, sharing meals, going to mosques and prayer room spaces, art studios, teahouses, and coffee shops while I learned about the stories of their lives and they learned about mine. I observed how they cared for each other despite underemployment and racialized policing. In addition, I gathered Uyghur- and Chinese-language cultural artifacts such as films and novels concerning the contemporary development of the city, the implementation of systems of control, and the economies that motivated forced relocation of Uyghur migrants in and out of the city. Many of these texts became objects that centered conversations I had with differently positioned Han and Uyghur friends. Bringing the same publicly staged representations into conversation with different people allowed me to structure this book around personal storytelling. It also allowed me to recognize the valence and power of mediation and the way these cultural objects were shaped by gendered, ethno-racial state discourses, modes of capital production, and technologies of the colonial relation.

This methodological approach pushed me to consider the way young Uyghur men construct and embody their masculinity through their social relations and sensory performance. Building on the work of numerous anthropologists who have examined gender construction in Muslim societies and Uyghur society in particular, I strove to view Uyghur male voices and experiences not as nongendered and normative expressions of Uyghur identity, but as sites of emotional care.[20] Throughout the text, I have attempted to make explicit the stakes in focusing on male voices. Their voices are not representative of the whole of social experiences in Chinese Central Asia, but they play

a central role in the sequence of dispossession and ethno-racialization that is analyzed in this book. Uyghur young men were made the primary target of the People's War on Terror and Han men were the primary population sent to build the global city and support terror-capitalist expansion. In Ürümchi, the co-constructed valorization of Han masculinity and state authority—and the resulting disposability of Uyghur masculinity—is a central part of the emergent process of racialization. Because of this, and because of my positionality as a male researcher invested in decolonial struggles, male voices emerged as a dominant source of narration. As young Uyghur men were disappeared by the techno-political surveillance system and sent into indefinite detention, the weight of life making, of social reproduction, was carried by those who remained: Uyghur male friends and relatives but also, to a greater extent, Uyghur mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters.[21] Likewise, as Han male migrants found new lives in the global city, they pulled their wives and daughters into a project of dispossessing Native peoples by occupying their land and turning Uyghur life into an object of expropriation. The story of Uyghur and Han men was not theirs alone; it implicated the whole of society in Northwest China.

Uyghur masculine gender identifications are historically contingent, shaped by the social forces that give them meaning and force. As Lisa Rofel (2007) notes in her discussion of the social formation of gender elsewhere in China, the pioneering work of feminist anthropologists such as Esther Newton (1979) and others have led to a widespread understanding of gender identifications as performed.[22] Gender identities are not simply a product of biology nor do they naturally appear in a given habitus. Rather, they are shaped by historically determined norms and structures of power. As Judith Butler (1997) has shown, gender identifications are built discursively through juridical and religious traditions and in daily practices that "cite" these norms. The reference of gender practice to idealized models of gender norms, combined with entrenched forms of power and subordination in gender relations, builds a coercive, disciplinary mechanism into gender practice that results in limits to the spectrum of what counts as proper gender behavior (E. Y. Zhang 2015). These iterative norming practices are what naturalize binary gender separation. As in many Muslim societies, sociohistorial-derived gender norms in Uyghur society have resulted in forms of gender segregation. As other scholars have noted (Dautcher 2009; Smith Finley 2015), these forms of segregation result in divisions of labor and experiences of ritual and religious practice. Women are largely excluded from public religious spaces, and are pressured to do the unpaid labor of caring for children and doing housework, while men provide for the family through farming and, more recently, wage labor (Huang 2012).

As forms of dispossession push land-based Uyghurs into the market economy and urban environments, these divisions in labor have begun to shift, often resulting in women taking on the added burden of wage labor while also maintaining a household.

At the same time, the reeducation campaign has begun to mediate the Uyghur experience of gender. As in other colonial contexts, Uyghur men have experienced forms of emasculation from state authorities and their proxies (see Swarr 2012). The state, along with its surveillance systems, often deemed Uyghur men to be pathologically dangerous, as always potentially terrorists, and saw its work in removing children from their homes or forcing their wives and mothers to remove their veils as an act of liberation from Uyghur Islamic patriarchy. As in wars on terror elsewhere (Abu-Lughod 2013), this impulse was demonstrated by the way the state mobilized an imperialist and fundamentally false form of feminism to reeducate Uyghur men in the saving of their wives from Islam and Uyghur gender relations (Yi 2019). For example, on March 8, 2018, in a celebration of International Women's Day, Uyghur men in towns across the Uyghur homeland were asked to wash the feet of their wives as a way of demonstrating their submission to the state's definition of feminist gender relationships in their domestic life. This sign of gender equality was of course heavily freighted with Han cultural symbolism and in fact antithetical to Uyghur practices of Islamic purity. In Uyghur cultural performance, it is considered deeply unclean to wash one's feet, or the feet of another, in a bowl rather than pouring water from a vessel. It is also a violation of the purity of Islamic ablutions in which the hands and feet are washed prior to prayer, something that state authorities were explicitly attempting to violate. Uyghurs, both men and women, experienced this activity as deeply degrading and shameful.[23]

As a result of the assault on their masculinity, Uyghur men often felt it was their duty to protect Uyghur women and children from the violence of enclosure and devaluation, but in this process they also often further dispossessed Uyghur women by failing to recognize their agency (Huang 2012). They understood the violence associated with Uyghur women first as an attack on male agency as protectors of Uyghur dignity—a paternalist impulse that was often framed as the work of a model "young male leader" (Uy: *yigit beshi*). At times, Uyghur men claimed to use such traditions as a way to justify lashing out at Uyghur women who they saw as violating Uyghur gender norms. For instance, one young migrant I spent time with spat at the feet of Uyghur women who he felt were dressed immodestly. This young man said that, as long as he had his freedom, it was his duty to teach others. While others felt differently about this form of misogyny, they often felt that such admonishment was appropriate

for husbands and fathers to guide their wives and daughters, but not when it came to relations between strangers.[24] In both the public and private spheres, such actions spoke to the way Uyghur masculinity came to be situated in a particular nexus of pious forms of Islam and the increasing vulnerability of Uyghur male authority. As a result, a hypervigilance on issues of modesty and Islamic appearance emerged among pious Uyghurs. Many of my informants noted that, prior to processes of material and digital enclosure, it was highly unusual for Uyghur men to act in this way toward Uyghur women they met on the street.

Yet, at the same time that some young Uyghur men were using claims to land-based traditions to extend forms of patriarchy, other young Uyghur men were developing forms of masculinity that were more directly anticolonial and liberatory. This book suggests that Uyghur young men in the city have come to define masculinity less in terms of domination of women, or even in competition with each other, than as a way of protecting each other from police violence and broader discrimination. As I show in chapter 4, the resulting anticolonial homosocial friendships they established are similar to the tactics of Indigenous men in other contexts. As urban migrants, Uyghur young men were isolated from their rural families and forced to delay marriage; they were often compelled to rely on each other for support. By drawing on the capaciousness of Uyghur yerlik traditions, they turned to each other to share their pain and develop palliative forms of protection. As I developed anticolonial friendships with Ablikim and many other young men, the relations of care demonstrated by these young men began to inform my own ethnographic practice. This leads me to make the claim, as I explain in detail in chapter 4, that, in some contexts, the work of anthropology itself should be framed as anticolonial friendship.

As this book developed further, it became clear to me that one of the central methods of life making and self-protection for young men, both Han and Uyghur, was storytelling, self-representation, and media representations of their lives. Not only did they use media forms as modes of expression and ways of understanding and staging larger experiences of social life but many of our conversations also focused on their own stories in relation to media objects. In order to stay faithful to this ethnographic grounding and evoke the affective labor of my friends and informants, the mode of analysis used in this book centers on the storytelling form as well. In many of the chapters, I show that the stories of single figures and their relationship to cultural objects—photo projects, novels, digital media—enable an analytic that holds in tension the contradictions between the politics of the capitalist-colonial economy, the violence of ethno-racialization, and the minor decolonial politics it demands. Telling

these stories from the vantage point of representational figures and representative cultural objects enables a demonstration of the ways in which larger social forces and identities are lived, mediated, and refused by individuals.

By developing this theory, what I call a "minor politics of refusal," the book suggests that constructing narrative portraits of representational figures in tension with cultural objects allows the book to reach a new level of nuance in a sociohistorical process that was difficult to narrate. For example, the main figure of chapter 4, Chen Ye, is exceptional not only because he deviates from the norms of Xinjiang life but also because he has consciously expanded his sense of self to include a multiplicity of narratives. As a Han migrant artist in the social fabric of Xinjiang, Chen Ye functioned as a point of convergence between the ideals of state capital, private-public techno-politics, digital cultural production, and the material realities of settler colonial violence. In this sense, the figure of Chen Ye becomes the location from which to examine these broader systems of social life at play in articulation. Thinking about him in this way, as opposed to a unique individual person exclusively, addresses the tension between claims of the individual and the collectivity that is raised by the ethnographic method. More importantly, thinking about an individual self in this way, particularly an unusual figure such as Chen Ye, helps explore the possibilities of decolonial interethnic politics in action.

In many cases, the individual figures represented in this book—Mahmud, Ablikim, Chen Ye, Emir, Hasan, and Yusup—were people I was drawn to because of their social positions in processes of dispossession and racialization in the city and the ways they were attempting to represent these experiences. Often, if our relationship turned into a deep and lasting friendship, it was because I was drawn to their political and ethical stance. For example, in the context of Ürümchi, it was extremely rare to encounter Han settlers such as Chen Ye who had committed to sacrificing aspects of their lives to living with and learning from ethno-racial minorities. As with most other figures featured in this book, it was his life practice that I was drawn to rather than the cultural products of his work. Instead, his photography—like the novels, short stories, and documentary films I describe in other chapters—was more useful, in relation to the analytic of the book, as an indication of how dispossession was happening and how differently positioned migrant men were trying to support each other and live in spite of it. In this sense, the work of social reproduction itself became the source of new forms of politics and ethics rather than aesthetic objects. I found that making art or performing their selves gave migrants a vital way of making sense of their situation as persons, even while it offered little hope as a means of impacting or solving the deeper structural problems. Friendships,

both between Uyghur men and across ethnic barriers, held out a promise of a more expansive form of social reproduction in which the work of sharing grief and rage through acts of storytelling and active witnessing was valued as a practice in and of itself. Regardless of whether these minor forms of refusal of the colonial-capitalist relation resulted in lasting change, they offered alternative ways of being together in Northwest China.

As Bhrigupati Singh has noted, "Once upon a time in anthropology, it would have been an unlikely research quest to write about just a life" (B. Singh 2015, 222). He goes on to write that Durkheim and Levi-Strauss taught anthropologists to search for "elementary forms" of life, while Geertz pushed anthropologists to examine "local cultures" rather than ontological conditions. In more recent decades, anthropologists have focused on individual subjectivity and its interplay with sovereignty and control, value making, and disposability (Crapanzano 1985; Behar 1993; Desjarlais 2003; Biehl 2005). Since social life in Xinjiang is filled with feelings of dispossession and racialization, friends like Mahmud, Ablikim, Chen Ye, Emir, Hasan, and Yusup offered me ways of plotting how processes of enclosure, devaluation, and dispossession were exerted on individual lives and how they could be refused. Spending time with my friends and sharing their pain drew me to them further. As in Singh's case with political figures in Rajasthan (2015, 223), this was not a question of logic or social facts but rather one of ethics: What kind of life am I attracted to? As Neferti Tadiar (2016) notes, drawing on her research into state-sanctioned mass killings in the Philippines, at our current historical moment in the spread of global capitalism it is important to think about "life-sustaining forms and practices of personhood and sociality that . . . persist" (151). As a friend and accomplice in the Uyghur struggle to survive it is imperative to note that, despite practices of urban cleansing, disappearances into prison systems, and death, disenfranchised social groups find practices of living and life making. These ethical questions, the friendships and the ethnographic portraits they inspired, opened up further questions of antiracist, decolonial politics as method. I found that Ablikim, Chen Ye, Emir, and Hasan, in particular, were calling me to a minor politics, a mode of decolonial engagement that results in, and arises out of, an ethics of friendship and being-with the other.

Book Contents

The first three chapters of this book analyze the way terror capitalism is expressed through a colonial relation of domination. This precedes through processes of enclosure, devalorization and, ultimately, dispossession. Chapter 1

analyzes the way a techno-political system produced a digital enclosure that resulted in a new form of original accumulation. In doing so, it presents an overview of the current setting of the system and a brief history of its evolution. It shows how the new forms of digital media seemed to promise forms of Chinese and Islamic contemporaneity to young Uyghurs, but how these same tools of self-fashioning were also used to enclose their bodies and behaviors. The chapter demonstrates that, in a colonial context, digital enclosure converts the sociality of targeted populations into data while at the same time expropriating their labor—producing a permanent underclass of dependent laborers.

Chapter 2 uses an analytic of devaluation to examine how Uyghur and Han forms of quality or cultural capital were evaluated differently by state authorities, technology systems, and across class and ethno-racial divides. It demonstrates how Uyghur social reproduction was often rejected in the Chinese city, and thus resulted in a failure to achieve the success the city appeared to promise. The chapter shows that the techno-political surveillance system which was put in place in the city came to be structured around particular cultural values deemed to be Chinese, state capital, and settler colonialism. This resulted in the broadscale suspension of Uyghur migrant life-narratives as self-fashioning subjects as they were banished from the city and detained.

Chapter 3 fits the digital enclosure and devaluation analytics of the previous two chapters into a broader and older process of dispossession. It shows how the emergence of industrial farming and resource extraction industries in the Uyghur homeland, coupled with the structural oppression of the People's War on Terror and the cosmopolitan Islamic and Western desires incited by new forms of media—television advertising and social media networks—created conditions of tremendous pressure on young Uyghur men and their families. This chapter demonstrates that media infrastructure simultaneously provided a means of escape from forms of material and social dispossession *and* incited new forms of dispossession by forcing Uyghurs to use new media infrastructures that recorded their political subjectivity.

The second part of the book focuses on anticolonial responses to the processes described in the first part of the book. Chapter 4 examines the rise in anticolonial friendships among Uyghur young men. I look at the experiences of a single migrant named Ablikim and how his dreams were rerouted by imposed vulnerability. Rather than focusing solely on the trauma of his experience of ethno-racial policing, I demonstrate how his story is symptomatic of an emerging ethics of friendship among young Uyghur migrant men. By sharing the story of his dispossession with his closest friend, a *jan-jiger dost* or "life and liver friend," Ablikim found a way to keep living on the margins of the city. Drawing

on these stories in tension with an emerging body of Uyghur fiction on alienation in the city, I argue that tight-knit friendship networks among young men fostered an emerging mode of social reproduction that responded to processes of enclosure, devaluation, and dispossession.

Chapter 5 explores how this anticolonial impulse is manifested across ethnic lines by considering the life practice of one of Xinjiang's most influential photographers, a Han settler-migrant named Chen Ye. The chapter shows that Chen Ye's life work involved producing an anticolonial "minor politics" (Lionnet and Shih, 2005) that Uyghur migrants viewed as "almost good enough." In his role as a "blind wanderer," a "long-term Xinjiang resident" (Ch: *mangliu*; *lao Xinjiang*), and a Uyghur "accomplice" or "kin" relation (Uy: *egeshküchi*; *qarandash*), Chen Ye demonstrates that active interethnic witnessing can foster decolonial politics that refuse the colonial relation.

The final chapter, "Subtraction," turns to the failure of Uyghur migrants to achieve protection from the colonial project of terror capitalism. By focusing on a tumultuous year in the life of a Uyghur family that inhabited a "nail house" (Ch: *dingzihu*) and a young man who is "disappeared" (Uy: *yok*) in an Uyghur informal settlement, I show that migrant life was often comingled with Reformist Islamic practice. I examine how they prepared themselves for the inevitable demolition of their homes or their disappearance into the reeducation camp system by drawing on the *musapir* or "traveler" Uyghur tradition. In doing so, I argue that they were forced to choose legal and representational invisibility as a way of maintaining existential stability. By examining the changing role of the *musapir* in Uyghur social life, I consider how traditional itinerancy and Sufi religious practice became a source of Reformist Islamic social organization and fragile, temporary forms of survival even as friendships and refusal fail to protect them from subtraction.

This book revolves around the interpenetration of the simultaneous rise of new forms of techno-political dispossession and new media forms. These forms are worldwide and contemporary: global Islam, global new media, global computer vision. They were also quite specific in the ways they were experienced in local contexts. For Uyghurs, these global forms were entwined with "Native" (Uy: *yerlik*) knowledge and practice, but also Chinese, Western, and Islamic systems. They were also locally expressed through new sequences of racialization and policing that were more than simply relational and psychic burdens; they were built out in space and materially experienced. The chapters that follow show that Uyghurs now live in an emergent colonial frontier of global capitalism.

This page intentionally left blank