Edited by Jarmila Ptáčková and Ondřej Klimeš

Cultural Security in Contemporary China and Mongolia

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To Andreas

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Foreword

Nation states, as a general rule, are composed of heterogeneous populations where, almost always, a ruling elite from the majority population governs. The treatment of minorities is a crucial issue for these states in their efforts to preserve social stability and harmony. While referring only to his own country, former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, speaking only three years before the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, could have been talking about most states when he noted that ethnic nationalism was the "most fundamental vital issue of our society."[1]

Minority groups share a common identity and a self-identified set of cultural traits which could include race, ethnicity, religion, language, food, cultural practices, music, literature, art, and more. For minority groups, cultural identity is intrinsically linked to their sense of belonging. When cultural practices are threatened, individuals may experience alienation and loss of identity. This emotional impact can lead to broader societal issues, both personal and political. In its most extreme form, it can result in violence and separatism.

Whether a state views its minorities as a threat, a problem which can be managed, or insignificant depends on a number of factors such as their size, politics, geographic location, history, and how secure the ruling elites feel. Almost every state has structural inequalities that create discrimination and socio-economic disparities. How ruling elites deal with these inequalities is the underlying theme of the essays in this volume. The strategies they employ vary significantly from incorporating minority cultures into the mainstream through a peaceful process that could even include true autonomy or significant home rule for minority regions on the one hand to China's attempts to depoliticize ethnic issues and force cultural assimilation on the other.

Some scholars have long argued that to achieve stability and allow minorities to feel they are loyal citizens of a state, policies need to take account of cultural differences. If minorities are going to feel they are stakeholders, they must: 1) be assured that their unique characteristics will not be diminished or eliminated; and 2) feel politically and economically equal to the majority as a result of equal access to education, the labor

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1   Thomas A. Sancton. 1988. "Soviet Union: The Armenian Challenge. Gorbachev Tries to Defuse Ethnic Clashes." *Time Magazine* 32.

market, and/or other shared facilities. Systematic discrimination, such as restricted access to education, employment discrimination, and/or a lack of political representation, can only alienate those who are discriminated against from the state and threaten instability. When not managed properly, in a worst-case scenario, ethnic hostilities can flare into open conflict as they have in Rwanda, Iraq, Turkey, Indonesia, Yugoslavia, and Sri Lanka, to name but a few. These conflicts sometimes resolve themselves through the breakup of a larger state into smaller ethnic-based states, as in the cases of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, and sometimes through the birth of proto-nations such as Kurdistan and Palestine.

The essays in this volume explore the relationships between the state and minorities in China and Mongolia. In China, certain minorities (Mongolians, Uyghurs, and Tibetans) are struggling to maintain their languages, customs, and religions in the face of a concerted effort to sinicize them since, in Beijing's eyes, they pose a separatist threat that could lead to something akin to the breakup of the Soviet Union. Since the very beginning of the People's Republic of China in 1949, government officials have debated how to manage minority populations and how to make them loyal citizens of the state. One of the major points of contention was whether to treat them differently from the Chinese (Han) according to their individual circumstances or to ignore their differences and force them to abide by the same policies that governed the majority culture. Over the decades Chinese policies have gone back and forth in this way, but since the ascension of Xi Jinping to the leadership of China, the policy has been to ignore the characteristics of minority cultures and force some measure of cultural assimilation.

In China the government has stopped elementary schools in Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet from teaching in the minority languages. Education plays a crucial role in cultural preservation. It promotes language retention and fosters cultural pride. The loss of a language precludes access to their ethnic cultures and even older members of their own families. Beyond language, China is trying to radically alter Islam by curtailing religious practices, remodeling mosques to look more Chinese, forbidding religious customs such as fasting during Ramadan, and restricting culturally specific clothing. China has also introduced draconian security measures including the saturation of minority areas with security officials, extensive camera surveillance, mobile phone monitoring, DNA collection, and face recognition. The day-to-day reality in these areas, where Han Chinese are treated dramatically differently from their minority counterparts, only creates more alienation and a greater threat of social unrest.

China has also engaged in remaking minority cultures in a way that makes Han Chinese more comfortable – by sinicization of minority cultures. As a Tibet and China scholar discovered during a very recent trip to China: "in the new China of Xi Jinping, the cultures of China's fifty-five ethnic minorities have been turned into a simulated commodity for domestic tourists under the guise of economic development and cultural preservation. Meanwhile, actual expressions of ethnic identity are suppressed."[2]

These excessive measures speak to the insecurity that the ruling elites in Beijing feel about some of their minority citizens. They also speak to their inability or unwillingness to understand that these measures will only alienate the minorities further rather than bring them into the fold of the great motherland.

Culture, writ large, is not merely an aspect of life but a core component of individual and collective identity. For minorities, cultural security is vital for several reasons: it fosters social cohesion, empowers community members, and ensures the continuation of unique cultural practices that have been passed down through generations. Only when minority groups can feel assured their cultures are safe and thriving will they feel accepted by the majority populations among whom they live.

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2   Natasha L. Mikles. 2024. "China's Commodification of Minorities." *The Diplomat,* November 14. https://thediplomat.com/2024/11/chinas-commodification-ofminorities/.

1.   The Cultural Security of Ethnic Groups in Contemporary China and Mongolia

Jarmila Ptáčková and Ondřej Klimeš

Abstract: The introductory chapter situates the collective monograph's findings within the existing discussion on cultural security. It introduces its general principles, accentuating common dynamics between a dominant and a minor group, and points out direct connection between the perceived degree of cultural security and the need to emphasize, restore, or invent cultural identifiers. In the context of the People's Republic of China, this chapter discusses how cultural security is perceived by minority nationalities and by the state. It refers to various state stability and institutional dimensions of cultural securitization, as well as horizontal and/or bottom-up mechanisms of cultural security building, and identifies a firm connection between the effectiveness of ethnic and cultural policies and the degree of cultural security perceived by targeted minorities and by the state. In contrast, the case of Mongolia shows how collective identification and participation in national cultural security building can enhance citizens' cultural self-confidence.

Keywords: Xi Jinping, ethnic policy, cultural identity, nation-building, cultural securitization

This book continues the discussion of cultural security initiated by the German sinologist and Tibet specialist Andreas Gruschke and others in 2015. The contributions to this volume explore various dimensions of the cultural security of ethnic groups in China and Mongolia and how these dynamics interrelate with alternative modes of cultural security and broader sociopolitical developments. Cultural security is understood below as the need to emphasize, restore, invent, or maintain the cultural markers of a group. It is thus an indicator of a cultural self-confidence and the freedom

of a group, or of an individual within the group, to act out their identity. Drawing on examples from various contexts in China and Mongolia, this book analyses the relation of perceived cultural security to the strengthening of the cultural identity of different parties in a minority-majority relation, in an inter-ethnic relation, or in the relation of a state to its people. Culture, in this context, is anything through which a certain number of people identify themselves as a group. It is shared history and common experience demonstrated through a set of markers, including behavioral patterns, such as religion, language, literature, oral traditions, clothing, or diet (Kolås and Thowsen 2005), which are the core of the group's cultural identity and help to establish a sense of common affiliation and boundaries with the cultural "Other" (Klieger 2002). From an international perspective, culture can be defined as a globally prevalent pattern of values, beliefs, norms, and symbolic structures (Lynch 2013, 629).

While the identity of an individual is based on self-perception and does not necessarily need visual markers, cultural identity is something that binds an individual with a certain group. Cultures as well as cultural identifiers are under constant external influence from various (political, historical, economic, social, cultural, or environmental) factors (Harrell 2001) and are also continually being adjusted and created as a reaction to these factors, rendering them prone to constant transformation (Barth 1969). Consequently, considering the "purity" of any culture is at least questionable; in their day-to-day form, cultures are better described as constructs that are "ultimately hybrid" (Flüchter and Schöttli 2015, 2)—a term we find suitable to represent the contemporary construct of "Chinese culture" (*Zhonghua wenhua*; Clark 2018). Perceived cultural security is then typically predicated upon a group's or a group member's ability to live out, maintain and develop, or even abolish shared cultural markers without calling their cultural identity into question. Cultural security is not necessarily predicated upon groups that are defined by ethnicity (for this argument see also Anttonen 2005, 86), but can be recognized in any type of group that shares a common identity or set of self-identified cultural traits. It is a subjective notion shifting according to circumstances (Yeh 2002), and it is the circumstances and the confrontation with the "Others" that generate the need to define an identity (Mullaney 2012). The subsequent choice of emphasized cultural markers or "identity repertoires" (Goode and Stroup 2015, 722) reflects the nature of the confrontation. The importance of cultural identifiers changes with the perspective of an observer and those within the contested group might see it differently from external actors. The internal and external dimension of cultural security (Gruschke 2021) can be driven by similar mechanisms,

such as commodification, policy arrangements, or political circumstances, but for each one, different cultural identifiers might appear essential to demonstrate cultural identity in a given situation.

In global as well as local contexts, (minority) groups are prone to assimilation into the mainstream (or majority) by the dilution of their distinctive features. Consequently, in a globalized world we face increasing "transculturality," i.e., dissolution of cultural boundaries and evolution of a collective identity. This can, however, encourage "reverse processes of re-affirmation and of the assertion of some kind of difference" (Flüchter and Schöttli 2015, 2) when groups conceive of this transculturality as a danger to their self-perceived cultural identity. Cultural security can thus serve as a "moral good" (Carbonneau, Gruschke, Jacobs, and Keller 2021, 52) ensuring the cultural diversity of heterogeneous societies. This positive connotation of cultural security is possible only in societies where the autonomous development of cultural diversity is not obstructed or prevented. Some aspects of cultural security in the positive sense, as discussed in this book, resemble the concept of ontological security seen by Michael Skey (2010, 720) as a state when individuals can "rely on things—people, objects, places, meanings—remaining tomorrow, by and large, as they were today and the day before." The below chapters address situations when continuities in individual or communal cultural lives are changing—for instance, through a bottom-up invention of collective identities or through a top-down state intervention. Such developments can lead to perceived "cultural insecurity" and a community's growing desire for clear cultural boundaries and awakening of cultural consciousness demonstrated through the increased display of sometimes re-invented "traditional" cultural identifiers (see Ptáčková 2019).

Cultural identity, like ethnic identity as described by Vatikiotis (2017, 277), is "transactional in nature" and "a product of opportunity." In the context of creating a national identity or national cohesion, cultural identity can be equally well understood as "political identity," defining "cultural" self-perception through loyalty towards a chosen authority (see Anttonen 2005, 103). Depending on whether the chosen authority is from within or outside a group, cultural identity building is then called either separatism or integration. The decisive factor is often whether under these applied circumstances a group is able to effectively control its own cultural development, define the identification markers of its "cultural identity," and choose to whom it will be loyal, or whether its "cultural identity" becomes the object of a top-down nation-building process, when groups with lower "national cultural capital" (Hage 1998, 53), i.e., cultural markers less compatible with

those required by the dominant party, will face either discrimination and marginalization or assimilation.

A minority group in a multiethnic state constructs its identity based on its own "tradition," which can, but does not necessarily have to, accentuate contrast with that of the majority. Identity can, however, also be applied as a top-down construct of an "invented national identity," and a sense of collective belonging can be created by mass symbolism "expected to yield legitimacy to the state institution and its power over a territory." Especially in the case of ethnically and religiously heterogeneous polities, it is important to choose symbols that everyone can identify with to create a national cultural identity that not only appears "real and unquestionable" (Anttonen 2005, 83–86) but is also stable. Shared national cultural identity does not necessarily mean a denial of the local cultural identities of different ethno-cultural groups. On the contrary, under a functioning and self-confident state apparatus it is possible to allow for cultural diversity, and members of an ethnic minority can simultaneously feel culturally secure in their "ethnic identity" and in their "national identity." The cultural identities of minorities within a state should thus not be seen as "simply a convenience" (Vatikiotis 2017, 216). Instead, they should be perceived as an important component of a healthy society (see also Schein 2000).

However, the presence of alternative (ethnic or religious) cultural identities can also be understood as an absence of national identity (see Tobin 2015; 2020, 319), i.e., a lack of identification with the present sociopolitical order or state project. Subsequently, the identity or cultural identity of ethnic, religious, or otherwise socially defined groups can be disregarded, challenged, or explicitly rejected by the state or the dominant ethnic group. The only valid identity is the imposed "fundamentally homogenous" mass identity of the people—the nation (Greenfeld 1992, 3). Modern nation-states have generally been viewed as conducive to replacing cultural heterogeneity with homogeneity (Gellner 1983; Anderson 1983). The homogenization of ethnic and other identities can be seen as the most effective method for the state to impose a national identity on its citizens. Proactive assimilatory pressures or policies towards minorities can result in "cohesion against either a rival population or the state power" and jeopardize the state nationalism construct (Kang and Sutton 2016, 8). The state's cultural identity and the cultural identities of minorities are closely intertwined and influence each other. For a state to maintain its integrity, it is necessary to achieve a balance in nurturing both. Cultural identities are thus directly connected to "political processes, legislation, minority and majority policies, local, regional and national politics" (Anttonen 2005, 108), and there is a "close relation between

cultural security for national minorities and state stability" (Carbonneau, Gruschke, Jacobs and Keller 2021, 46).

Securing Culture in the People's Republic of China

Parallel to ethnic minorities' efforts to articulate their cultural identity in relation to a majority, a state can direct its cultural affairs to enhance internal security by limiting the cultural attributes and activities of its constituent communities. In such case, the state's cultural securitization reduces the cultural security of ethnic minorities. The interplay of cultural security and state stability has been seen as an interesting phenomenon in the People's Republic of China (PRC; Gruschke 2021; Grunfeld 2021).

Previous research has shown that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has regarded shaping cultural and other ideational values as a principal means of legitimation and power projection which needs to be safeguarded against perceived domestic and foreign challenges. Historically, the CCP's cultural governance draws both on imperial and republican elites' ideologies and efforts to make cultural transformation the essence of statehood and on the Marxist-Leninist cultural model implemented in the Soviet Union (Levenson 1968; Townsend 1992; Brady 2008). The party made "cultural work" (*wenhua gongzuo*) and "cultural construction" (*wenhua jianshe*) a focus of its politics already in the Jiangxi (1931–34) and Yan'an (1936–48) control zones, where Mao Zedong's conceptualizations of culture and the disciplining of the intelligentsia termed the "rectification campaign" (*zhengfeng yundong*) established a pattern of cultural governance for the PRC (Mao 2005, 357–69; Hung 1994, 221–69; Teiwes 1993). The cultural realm was often an initial or proxy battlefield of devastating upheavals of the Maoist era, such as the Anti-Rightist Movement (1956–59) or the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966–76; Fokkema 1991).

The rejuvenation of domestic cultural life and the influx of foreign trends in the post-Mao era from 1978 led the CCP to construct China as a "spiritual civilization" (*jingshen wenming*) with regard to political objectives, for instance through the ideological campaigns "against bourgeois liberaliza-tion" (*fandui zichan jieji ziyouhua*) and to "eliminate spiritual pollution" (*qingchu jingshen wuran*; Carrico 2017). The domestic protest movement in the late 1980s, along with the collapse of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, underlined the importance of ideological work and prompted the CCP to "re-Orient" its cultural governance from overtly ideological work

to cultural nationalism referencing Chinese culture, tradition, history, and patriotism (Perry 2013).

The party-state's deployment of culture-imbued propaganda, education, and other thought-work as defensive strategies against Western cultural influences and ideological subversion during the Cold War era continued as a response to globalization and Westernization (Alsudairi 2019; Johnson 2021). The ideology of Jiang Zemin (in power 1989–2002), known as the Three Represents (*sange daibiao*), argues that the CCP represents the "vanguard orientation of China's advanced culture" (*Zhongguo xianjin wenhuade qianjin fangxiang*). Under the Jiang leadership, the concept of national cultural security (*guojia wenhua anquan*) became influential in policy-making circles and became central to the party-state's conceptions of national and regime security (Johnson 2017). The Hu Jintao (2002–12) leadership grasped cultural securitization as crucial for the CCP's political legitimacy, national cohesion-building, and international politics (Edney 2015; Lynch 2013; Alsudairi 2019). The party also explicitly sought to shape Chinese people's ethics and morality using the "socialist core value system" (*shehuizhuyi hexin jiazhi tixi*) and the "socialist core values outlook" (*shehuizhuyi hexin jiazhiguan*).

In the Xi Jinping era, since 2012, the CCP has perceived the ideological challenges to its power as particularly complex and intense, and resolved to strengthen its ideational governance, for instance by improving the management of propaganda on the "cultural front," where the dissemination of ideology is seen as "the most important political task" (*ChinaFile* 2013). The consolidation of power also involves securitization of culture and other ideational spheres, for example through the State Security Commission formed in 2014 (*Guojia anquan weiyuanhui*; Johnson 2020). Newly promulgated laws, such as the 2015 State Security Law and the 2018 amendment of the Counter-Terrorism Law, have established cultural and ideational affairs as a vital field of state security and defined principles of cultural securitization (Central government of the PRC 2015; National People's Congress 2018; Mohammed Alsudairi's chapter in this volume).

Cultural discourse also increasingly features in the Xi-era ideology. The party has called on Chinese people to strengthen their "four confidences" (*sige zixin*), i.e., "cultural confidence" (*wenhua zixin*) along with the "confidence in the path, theory, and system of socialism with Chinese characteristics" (*Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi daolu zixin, lilun zixin, zhidu zixin*). The contemporary Chinese party-state's alleged "specifics" (*tese*) evolved from ancient and imperial China's "unique" (*dute*) culture, tradition, history, and overall "national conditions" (*guoqing*; *People's Daily* 2013). The CCP also hopes to raise China's "cultural soft power" (*wenhua ruanshili*)

and "discursive power" (*huayuquan*) and build a "socialist cultural power" (*shehuizhuyi wenhua qiangguo*; Xi 2014; Klimeš 2017).

Cultural Securitization in Ethnic Governance

The CCP's shaping of the culture and values of the PRC's citizens also affects the non-Han "minority nationalities" (*shaoshu minzu*).[1] A common and distinctive culture, understood as a specific spiritual and psychological frame developed from generation to generation and a manifestation of national character, remains recognized in the PRC's ethnicity theory as one of the defining features of a nation according to the definition of Joseph Stalin (Stalin 1953, 306–7; Klimeš 2020a, 39). Drawing on the Soviet model of "national-territorial delimitation" (*национально-территориальное размежевание*) and "indigenization" (*коренизация*; e.g., Martin 2001), the PRC's "identification of nationalities" (*minzu shibie*; also rendered in English as recognition of nationalities or ethnic classification; Mullaney 2010) acknowledged selected ethnic communities' existence and accommodated their cultural markers to some extent, allowing for "permissible forms of difference" (Schein 2000, 73). The PRC has also regulated or restricted minority nationalities' cultural and intellectual life (Leung 2005; Bulag 2004; Bovingdon 2010; Zenz 2013).

A specific and desired "culture" remains the concept that defines the sociopolitical boundaries between the "civilized" people, i.e., the "Chinese" part of society, and the groups "in need of civilization," i.e., the ethnic minorities on the periphery, such as the Tibetans and the Uyghurs. Between these two poles are situated other groups whom the central authorities view as less incompatible with their political priorities, such as the Yi or the Qiang. Possessing or not possessing "culture" (*wenhua*) defines whether a person or a group stands inside or outside the inner "Chinese" circle. The understanding of the term "culture" has changed with the development of national consciousness and the changing definition of national values and virtues during the successive political regimes in China. But whether described as a grade of literacy, sedentary life, a common religion or language, or socialist culture with Chinese characteristics, the core function remains to separate people into those loyal to the regime and the Others, variously labeled as "barbarians," "backward ones," "counterrevolutionaries," "rightists,"

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1   This publication prefers translating the term *minzu* as "nation," "national," and "nationality" as opposed to "ethnic."

"separatists," "terrorists" or "extremists." The nationality identification ascribed to each PRC citizen and stated clearly on personal documents provides for sharp and unbridgeable social demarcation and nurtures what has been called the "nationality paradigm" (Bulag 2019) of the PRC's ethnic governance.

The CCP's cultural securitization involves strengthening the citizenry's identification with the "Chinese nation" (*Zhonghua minzu*; Johnson 2021, 249, 252–54, 256). In the "autonomous" regions of Xinjiang, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia, the party-state seeks to strengthen local nationalities' identification with the "great motherland, Chinese nation, Chinese culture, the CCP, and socialism with Chinese characteristics" (*dui weida zuguo, Zhonghua minzu, Zhonghua wenhua, Zhongguo gongchandang, Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyide rentong*), as well as their "correct views of state, history, nation, culture, and religion" (*zhengquede guojiaguan, lishiguan, minzuguan, wenhuaguan, zongjiaoguan*; Klimeš 2018; Baioud and Khuanuud 2023). The party-state under Xi has accented the "fusion" (*jiaorong*) of nationalities as a top policy objective and represented non-Han populations not as minority nationalities, i.e., groups that are "racially and culturally distinct" (Gillete 2008, 1013, 1015), but as segments of a homogeneous Chinese nation to which they are "linked by blood" (*xuemai xiangliande*; Central government of the PRC 2021). The "correct handling of the relationship between Chinese culture and local nationality culture" (*zhengque chuli Zhonghua wenhua he benminzu wenhuade guanxi*) is one of the preconditions for forging the "Chinese national community consciousness" (*Zhonghua minzu gongtongti yishi*; Xinhua 2021; Central government of the PRC 2021; Tibet Autonomous Region Government 2021; Xinhua 2022).

The official discourse has intensified previous Chinese elites' efforts to imbue the concept of Chinese nation with the implied meaning of "Han people," which started when the term appeared in China's political debates in the late Qing dynasty (Schneider 2017, 46). Similarly, advancing "Chinese culture" can mean coercive promotion of Han cultural features, such as language and script, with an intensity prompting concerns of assimilation of non-Han nationalities by the obliteration of their distinct identities along the lines of so-called second-generation ethnic policies (Leibold 2013; Elliott 2015; Anonymous 2020; Salimjan 2020; Harris 2020; Atwood 2020; Tobin 2021; Ptáčková 2021; Smith Finley 2020). The authorities have also sought to replace the notion of the "good Han," which was previously applied to the PRC's majority nationality—itself hardly a homogeneous category (Mullaney et al. 2012, 10; Joniak-Lüthi 2017)—with the image of a "good Chinese."

The Xi era has also brought forth an intensified correlation between domestic ethnic affairs and international politics. One dynamic is the international community's critical attention to the PRC's repression of non-Han nationalities and their cultural practices, notably in Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, or the Hui regions. In this context, an important role can be played by transnational ethnic groups, as evidenced by the Mongolian president Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj's September 2020 letter to Xi Jinping asking him to uphold PRC Mongols' rights to use their native language and script (Elbegdorj 2020). Another facet of the internationalization of the PRC's ethnic issues is the party-state's increased management or repression of ethnic diasporas, also known as transnational repression. By thematizing culture and identity of the PRC's non-Han transnational populations, the CCP tries to impose its values and norms on other countries and thereby reduces their national cultural security (see, for example, Reuters 2016; Martin 2018; Safeguard Defenders 2023). At the same time, minority nationality diasporas can be used by the CCP as conduits for ethnic propaganda and united front work, advancing the party-state's broader political objectives (Klimeš 2020a; 2020b). The party-state's domestic ethnic policies affecting the cultural security of minorities can also win the international support of the CCP's allies.

Continuing the Discussion

This collective monograph builds on the debate by Andreas Gruschke and other experts at the *International Symposia on Cultural Inclusion* held in 2015 in Freiburg im Breisgau, and in 2016 in Bautzen (Carbonneau et al. 2021). Our collection was inspired by the third symposium entitled *Minorities in Their Own Lands: Cultural Security among Ethnic and Cultural Minorities across Asia* held in December 2017 in Prague, where the contributions to this book by Jarmila Ptáčková, Michal Zelcer-Lavid, Yang Minghong, Jan Karlach, Gabriel Thorne, and Mei-hua Lan were first presented.[2] Several case studies of cultural security in contexts outside the PRC presented in Prague could not (for various reasons) be included in the final version of this collection, which therefore only partially reflects the geographical variety

of the cultural security issues discussed at the event. The book took shape during Jarmila Ptáčková and Ondřej Klimeš's work on the project *Balancing the Interests: Correlations of Ethnic and Foreign Policy in Contemporary China* throughout 2019–23, in which they were joined by Giulia Cabras and Jan Karlach. Contributions by the rest of the authors were included at this stage.

In their summary of previous discussions of cultural security, Carbonneau, Gruschke, Jacobs, and Keller (2021) define five dimensions of compensatory mechanisms as necessary for the maintenance of minorities' cultural security. The institutional dimension comprises the degree to which a state and its majority society provide a minority with community institutions or acknowledge them, as well as the degree of the minority's representation in the institutions of the majority society and the resulting degree of its political self-determination. The territorial dimension entails the extent to which a state recognizes an ethno-linguistic minority's bond (often historically established) to a specific territory and grants a degree of territorial autonomy. The state stability dimension comprises the extent to which a state sees the cultural security of its minority population as a factor strengthening or weakening its own stability. Besides these top-down factors, cultural security is also conditioned by bottom-up dynamics. The dimension of collective identification comprises the patterns of individuals' bonding with and belonging to the minority group. Finally, cultural security is also informed by the participatory dimension, which comprises individuals' political and cultural activism and their preservation of collective practices inherent in belonging to an ethnic and linguistic minority.

In reference to these findings, the contributions to our volume bring forth a wealth of data on the various dimensions of the cultural security of ethnic groups in the PRC and Mongolia. Mohammed Alsudairi's chapter explores the state stability dimension and unravels the party-state's embrace and conceptualization of cultural security. Cultural security for the CCP means mostly political and ideological security, and its main function is to maintain power. The party-state's ideology thus collapses the notions of Chinese culture, the Chinese nation, the PRC, and the CCP into the single category of culture, which is seen as being in need of defense against ideological currents propelled by globalization and Western hegemonism. The chapter also shows how the CCP's maintenance of state stability by culture relies on both tangible (state organs, periodicals, think tanks) and intangible institutions (historical narratives, political ideologies, political events).

Hacer Gonul and Julius Rogenhofer's exploration of the CCP's securitization of Uyghur and Hui religious practices also contributes to the understanding of the state stability dimension of cultural security. The

chapter traces the differences in the party-state's treatment of Uyghurs and Hui in the Jiang and Hu eras and the convergence of restrictive policies in the Xi era. The chapter's illustration of the political narratives featuring in the CCP's securitization of Islam attests to the crucial role representational politics (Bovingdon 2010, 7–10) play in the PRC's ethnic affairs. The inter-relation of the state stability and the institutional dimensions of cultural securitization is shown through an explanation of how the party-state uses the China Islamic Association and religious interpretation (*jiejing*) to disseminate an official version of Islam tailored to the CCP's political objectives.

On the case of the Hui Muslims and the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Jarmila Ptáčková's chapter illustrates the party-state's requisition of the right to construct or deconstruct the "cultural identity" of its ethnic groups and instrumentalize it purposefully to sustain state-defined goals such as economic growth or state stability. Mechanisms of collective identification and the participatory dimension are thematized through an investigation of how the top-down introduction or denial of identificatory cultural mark-ers enhances or endangers the perceived cultural security of a particular nationality, in this case the Hui.

Michal Zelcer-Lavid explores Uyghur masculinity and male authority as articulated in literary works partially in response to party-state policies in Xinjiang. Male authority is central to Uyghur and other Islamicate societies and constitutes an important intangible institution of an ethnic group's cultural security. Uyghur literary works and the symbols of masculinity articulated therein thus illuminate patterns of collective identification affecting the cultural security of Uyghurs. As the status of Uyghur men in contemporary Xinjiang declines due to the privileged position of the Han, the constructed Uyghur masculinity articulates "imagined hegemony" and enables Uyghur males to experience superiority over Han males. The literary depiction of the Uyghur struggle to preserve male status is simultaneously an effort to preserve Uyghur identity and culture, which is reflective of the collective insecurity of Uyghurs in contemporary Xinjiang.

Giulia Cabras explores the status of language and its implications for Uyghurs' cultural security. Uyghur intellectuals' and artists' discourses on Uyghur language maintenance and their efforts at language protection prior to 2017 in response to increased language contact and the siniciza-tion of spoken Uyghur showcase the participatory dimension of cultural securitization. Specifically, the explored ideas of authenticity and purism, the role of intellectuals and artists, the question of bilingualism, and the reality of language practices illustrate how the Uyghur language works as

a means of building modern Uyghur identities in Xinjiang and as a catalyst for the present and future well-being of the group. The chapter's treatment of the language and script policy organs and state media's translation and editorial departments elucidates the institutional aspects of Uyghurs' cultural security.

Yang Minghong and Zeng Benxiang contribute a case study of a state-initiated partnership-assistance scheme involving the support of Guangdong Province for the local tourist economy in Lunang Township in Nyingchi Prefecture in the Tibet Autonomous Region, which started in 2010. The chapter demonstrates the variation in the perception of local ethnic culture by residents, who experience culture as an integral part of their daily lives, and by external stakeholders, who tend to perceive culture from the perspective of touristic marketability. Their chapter elucidates the maintenance of cultural security by the commodification of culture and the "sale of ethnicity" (Goode and Stroup 2015, 730) encouraged by the Chinese authorities. The research also shows a degree of collective identification and participation of local actors in defining and articulating their identity and culture as "Tibetan."

Compared to the Uyghurs or Tibetans, the Yi and the Qiang could be perceived as groups with higher "national cultural capital." Jan Karlach's chapter examines everyday actions by which the *bimo*—ritual practitioners—and other actors belonging to various sub-groups included within the Yi nationality compete with other stakeholders using the resources of the Han majority-dominated state in an effort to become a hegemonic voice within the Yi cultural debate. It thus illustrates how the party-state's stability concerns can be conditioned by the need to allow for some extent of collective identification and participation in the maintenance of the cultural security of communities identified as Yi. The conclusions expose the limits of the PRC's official representation of the Yi nationality as a homogeneous community bound by shared culture.

Bian Simei's contribution illuminates the collective identification and participatory aspects of cultural security by describing the revival and adaptation of traditional ritual practices by the Rrmi people, a sub-group of the Qiang nationality living in Yunshang Administrative Village in northwest Mao County in Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture in northwest Sichuan Province. The Rrmi's reinterpretation of cultural practices to conform to state-administered intangible cultural heritage procedures shows how institutional dynamics can affect a community's cultural security. The chapter also shows the interplay of simultaneous identities and modes of cultural security, in this case that of local Rrmi

people with those of the Qiang and Tibetan nationalities and with that of the Chinese nation advanced by the party-state.

Gabriel Thorne studies the protests against the extradition bill in Hong Kong in 2019 as a case of the communal defense of language, popular culture, the economy, the legal system, and territory. The party-state's reduction of Hong Kong's autonomy exhibits state stability maintenance by dismantling the territorial and institutional features of Hong Kong's autonomy, an essential component of identity and cultural security. At the same time, the communal nature of the protest shows how Hongkongers collectively identify and participate in the maintenance of cultural security. The chapter also underlines that Hongkongers' animosity toward the CCP and occasionally also toward mainland Chinese are cultural effects not only of Beijing's policies but also of unfettered capitalism, housing oligopoly, and globalization. The chapter also theorizes the concept of scalable cultural security by demonstrating the micro, meso, and macro levels of Hongkongers' cultural security.

Mei-hua Lan's contribution describes Mongolia's search for identity by reviving national culture after decades of authoritarian policies imposed by the country's membership of the Soviet bloc. The examples of legislation on national culture, efforts to revive Mongolian script, the rehabilitation of Chinggis Khan, new historiographies, the transformation of Ulaanbaatar, and religious revival demonstrate the collective identification and participation mechanisms by which various Mongolian actors have established institutions of national cultural security. The chapter also posits that voluntarily accepted external influences stemming from globalization can strengthen Mongolia's cultural independence from Russia and China. In contrast to the case of the PRC, the Mongolian case shows how national cultural security can enhance both state stability and the cultural self-confidence of citizens by the inclusion of bottom-up cultural initiatives. Compared to the PRC, however, as an ethnically relatively homogeneous state Mongolia does not face complex ethnopolitical issues.

The chapters also provide explicit or implicit insights into the interrelations of the explored contexts with alternative cultural security modes and into the importance of cultural security issues within broader sociopolitical developments. Several chapters illustrate the bottom-up or horizontal interaction of cultural security issues (Yang Minghong and Zeng Benxiang, Jan Karlach, Bian Simei, Mei-hua Lan) and the "creative resilience strategies" (Kolboom 2021) ethnic communities can develop to adapt and maintain their identities and cultural security even when faced with concerted state efforts to advance a particular mode of cultural identity or impose it upon them.

The book also shows examples of a nonconsensual, vertical imposition of culture (as defined by the CCP's ideological apparatus) on various target groups, which often results in the endangerment of their cultural security and the exacerbation of existing social problems. The presented research shows that parallel cultural securities can generate multiple ways in which an entity's cultural security can be shaped, challenged, disputed, or suppressed. State cultural security and the cultural security of PRC nationals may not only be inconsistent with one another but even exist in inverse proportion. The illustrated state stability dimension of Xi-era cultural securitization is a departure from the concept of the "diverse unity" (*duoyuan yiti*) model toward the idea of a homogenized Chinese nation consisting of acculturated, assimilated subjects. The fact that the CCP's monopoly on power is dependent on the suppression of autonomous expressions of the cultural identity of various nationalities and other groups shows that the negative impact of the CCP's cultural securitization on the cultural security of the PRC's constituent nationalities and other communities is a lasting characteristic of modern Chinese politics. The recent developments at the dawn of Xi Jinping's third functional period, such as the impending promulgation of the Law on Patriotic Education mandating state institutions to disseminate the CCP's version of culture (China Law Translate 2023) or Xi's August 2023 vow to continue the ongoing acculturation of minority nationalities and "cultural embellishment" (*wenhua runjiang*) in at least some non-Han regions (Central government of the PRC 2023), indicate the possible direction the CCP intends to take in handling the nationality question. Moreover, the Global Civilization Initiative announced in 2023 indicates the CCP's intent to shape global cultural values (*Global Times* 2023).

The book also addresses the impact of international developments on cultural securitization by the state and the cultural security of China's ethnic communities. The contributions by Hacer Gonul and Julius Rogenhofer and by Gabriel Thorne, for example, highlight the negative impact of state cultural security on the PRC's foreign relations due to criticisms of the deteriorating status of Uyghurs, Hui, and Hongkongers. Jarmila Ptáčková's chapter illustrates the loss of reputation, resources, and diplomatic assets incurred by the policy shift toward de-Saudization and de-Arabization in Ningxia. Additionally, Hacer Gonul and Julius Rogenhofer show how the Global War on Terrorism contributed to the CCP's policy towards Uyghurs and Hui. Chapters by Mei-hua Lan, Gabriel Thorne, and Bian Simei reference globalization and commercialization as trends substantially impacting the cultural security of the populations of the PRC and Mongolia. The interaction

of politics and global commercialized sports in forming cultural security is illustrated by Gabriel Thorne.

A culturally and ethnically heterogeneous society can be bound together as a nation by a voluntary loyalty to state authority. Such loyalty, however, can only develop when cultural identity on a personal level is secured. In contrast to the 1980s and 1990s, when the party-state allowed for a degree of cultural inclusion of minority nationalities through economic development, the Xi leadership has disregarded the cultural security of minority nationalities and other constituencies as an important or even essential factor for a stable social development of the entire state. Recurring ethnocultural issues in China show that a lack of effective cultural policy supporting the cultural specifics of China's population on the local level, or rather the frequent efforts of the PRC authorities to eliminate these distinctive features, are a major obstacle for contemporary China to become culturally secure. This book thus highlights that cultural security is conditioned by a consensus among all involved actors and communities.

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2. Cultural Security in the People's Republic of China: Between Party-State Invocation and Academic Theorization[1]

Mohammed Alsudairi

Abstract: This chapter traces the embrace of cultural security—expressed in terms of discursive invocations and formalizations—by the party-state, a process that began with the Jiang administration in the late 1990s and remains ongoing under the current Xi administration. The chapter provides an in-depth overview of how the concept was theorized by party-state elites, drawing heavily from a representative sample of works associated with a cultural security literature published in the PRC in the period 1999–2018. In the absence of an officially endorsed party-state definition of cultural security, these sources, produced by academics embedded within or in close proximity to party-state institutions and largely conditioned by the CCP's domination over knowledge-production processes, offer approximating insights into how the concept is understood and operationalized by party-state elites.

Keywords: national security, ideological struggle, Chinese party-state, theory and practice

This chapter examines the conceptualization of "cultural security" (*wenhua anquan*) in the PRC during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. More specifically, it tracks its emergence as a major "watchword" (*tifa*) among the elites of the CCP in relation to the management of the cultural sphere, a

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development reflected in its growing discursive invocation and formalization at the level of dedicated institutions and laws (Qian 2018), as observed in the introduction to this book.[2] In addition, the chapter is concerned with how cultural security is theorized so as to make intelligible the party-state's embrace of the concept. Due to the dearth of officially endorsed definitions and explanations at the level of the party-state, however, the chapter turns to the theoretical frameworks and elaborations originating from a cultural security literature largely produced by academics embedded within, or in close proximity to, party-state institutions. Such academics have generated a sizable body of work on cultural security, situated under the umbrella of "national security" (*guojia anquan*), that best approximates the views of party-state elites on the concept.

This approximation arises from CCP domination over formal knowledge-production processes—a domination that has directed and filtered research output on cultural security through the writings (or speeches) of senior CCP leaders, the theoretical classics of the party-state, and the broader Marxist tradition. As a result, academics have theorized about the concept, elucidating its definition and framework, threat typologies, and practices in ways that cohere with a longstanding CCP paradigm on culture, and which the party-state has, despite its embrace, left largely unexplained. Based on a close analysis of the literature in question, the chapter finds that cultural security is imagined by academics—and by extension, the party-state—to correspond to political and ideological security, and entails counteracting external and internal threats to the cultural sphere through inoculative and remolding efforts. Failure to safeguard the cultural sphere is understood to endanger social stability, national sovereignty, and regime legitimacy—a linkage suggestive of the critical importance assigned to it as a constituent element of national security. This reading accords with a growing body of scholarship that sees cultural security as a state-led strategy concerned with the preservation of CCP power and ideological hegemony over Chinese society under conditions of globalization and an intensification, in the eyes of party-state leaders, of an "ideological struggle" (*yishixingtai douzheng*) pitting the PRC against the West in the post-Cold War era (Renwick and Cao 2008; Lynch 2013; Aukia 2014; Edney 2015; Callahan 2015; Johnson 2017; 2020).

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2   *Tifa* are formulations or phrases that recurrently appear in the CCP's political lexicon—including terms like "revolution" (*geming*) or "black swans" (*heitian'e*). They act as signposts since their invocation or absence within major documents can tell us much about the Party's priorities and threat assessments, as well as the direction of its policies and campaigns.

This strategy's implementation, embodied in the party-state's two decades-long discursive invocation and formalization of cultural security, is not unique to the Chinese context, but can be observed in authoritarian polities such as Russia and Saudi Arabia, among others, contending with the ideational dislocations that have arisen from the collapse of the global bipolar order (Wilson 2016; Yan and Alsudairi 2021). It is unclear whether these multiple cases can be unequivocally treated as instances of cross-national authoritarian learning or diffusion (Heydemann and Leenders 2011; Hall and Ambrosio 2017).[3] What *is* undoubtedly clear, however, is that cultural security, whether in the PRC or elsewhere, is part of a near-universal reaction by non-democratic regimes to Western-led globalization and ideological hegemony. Its global adoption is an isomorphism that results from the (self-perceived) weak ideational positionality occupied by non-democratic regimes within the current international order. In the PRC, as this chapter will show, this reaction is expressed in the language and idioms of its own CCP-dominated specificity, wherein cultural security is utilized as a glocalized strategy aimed at safeguarding regime security and strengthening its resilience against an array of ideational threats (Robertson 1995).

The Party-State's Evolving Discourse on Cultural Security

The earliest mention of the term cultural security can be traced back to an address given by Jiang Zemin for an overseas-directed propaganda work meeting that was held in 1999 (ZGX n.d.a). On that occasion, Jiang presented cultural security, almost in passing, as a strategy concerned with striking the right balance between guarding the cultural sphere from destabilizing influences on the one hand and allowing the national economy to benefit from globalization on the other. This early invocation of cultural security by Jiang can be understood in relation to two developments that had informed the thinking of party-state elites throughout the 1990s: the deepening perception of a growing assault on the cultural sphere waged by "hostile international forces" (*guoji didui shili*) in the post-Cold War era, and the acceptance of a more expansive definition of security that transcended the military-centric understandings conventionally associated with the concept.

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3   The Chinese and Saudi cases of cultural securitization—at the state and academic-levels—show little evidence of positive learning from foreign partners, let alone of outright policy transfer. Rather, officials and experts in those countries conceive of cultural security as a wholly local innovation and approach to governance (Al-Sudairi 2019).

The first development was partially shaped by the party-state's self-perceived ideological vulnerability in the wake of the "cultural fever" (*wenhuare*) of the 1980s and, more significantly, the events of Tiananmen in 1989, all of which took place against the backdrop of the slow dissolution of global socialism in 1989–92 (Wang 1996; Chen 2002; Carrico 2017). The CCP leadership viewed these interlinked domestic-international challenges as being mainly instigated by the subversive efforts of Western capitalist states which sought, through the diffusion of values incompatible with the PRC's prevailing national political and ideological norms, to engineer "peaceful evolution" (*heping yanbian*) within the political system (ZGX 1989; ZGX 1989a; ZGX 2001). Deng Xiaoping famously described this subversion as a "smoke-less world war" (*wuxiaoyande shijie dazhan*) against the CCP, one of the last surviving major socialist parties in the world.[4] The heightened threat perception of the immediate post-Cold War era contributed to the production of a discourse that associated the safeguarding of the cultural sphere with that of social stability, national sovereignty, and regime legitimacy. Throughout the mid-1990s, for example, and tapping unto rising nationalist sentiment at that time, Jiang repeatedly warned against the infiltration of a (Western) "colonial culture" (*zhimin wenhua*) within the PRC, the spread of which would alter the country's political-ideological makeup and result in its subjugation as a vassal of the West (ZGX 1996; ZGX 1996a).

The entanglement of culture with social stability, national sovereignty, and regime legitimacy mirrored a broader post-Cold War cultural trend which had transformed culture (including civilization and other identity markers) into the primary prism through which politics was interpreted and experienced at the local and global scales (Lawson 2006, 1–18). This cultural turn also benefited from the post-ideological moment created by the triumph of Euro-American liberalism in the aftermath of the Cold War, allowing culture to displace ideology—conceptually speaking—as the primary faultline of human conflict (Eagleton 2007, xviii). Anxieties over globalization, ranging from its homogenizing effects to the impact of transnational phenomena like terrorism and organized crime, likewise facilitated the privileging of culture as a locus of politics (Knight 2006). The end-result of these complex and interconnected processes was that culture increasingly came to signify and correspond to politics and ideology, or at the very least to heavily overlap with them. This may explain why socialist (and post-socialist) regimes like the PRC, facing a sustained ideological

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4   The phrase was first used by Deng during an exchange with the Chinese-American physicist Dr. Li Zhengdao a few months after the suppression of the Tiananmen demonstrations (ZGX 1989).

crisis in the post-Cold War era, increasingly sought to emphasize their culturalist and nationalist character in various legitimacy-building projects (Shambaugh 2008, 41–86; Perry 2013, 12–19).

The second development—the recognition of security's broadened and elastic scope among party-state elites—was enabled by shifts in the international academic debates on security in the post-Cold War era that came to influence the PRC in the closing years of the 1990s (Fierke 2015, 2–3). The reports of the CCP's 15th National Congress in 1997 and 16th National Congress in 2002 both contained references to a more nuanced understanding of security that now included multiple conventional and non-conventional dimensions (*Zhongguowang* 2009; Liu 2014, 125). In global fora, PRC representatives such as Foreign Minister Qian Qichen began to promote a so-called "new security perspective" (*xin anquanguan*) as the basis for international cooperation (Liu 2014, 128; Ma 2011, 96–97; Dittmer and Yu 2015, 66–68). In July 2002, the PRC delegation attending the Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit released a document that clarified the meaning of this new security perspective, arguing that the formulation of the concept was necessitated by "new historical conditions" that called for a new definition of security that "comprehensively encompassed not only military affairs and politics, but also economics, technology, environment, culture, and many other realms" (Waijiaobu 2002). Under this new interpretation of security, culture was clearly identified as a sphere of securitization.

The confluence of these two developments paved the way not only for the invocation of cultural security by Jiang but also for the concept's subsequent and stabilized incorporation into party-state discourses on national security starting from the Hu Jintao administration. In August 2003, during a leadership-level collective study session, Hu emphasized the necessity of "ensuring the state's cultural security" (*quebao guojiade wenhua anquan*) as a guarantee for national security (ZGX 2003). The September 2004 resolution of the fourth plenum of the CCP's Sixteenth Central Committee formally recognized cultural security (among four other types of security, including political, military, and economic) as a constituent element of national security (Liu 2014, 124–25; *Renmin ribao* 2004; Zhao 2011, 69–70). Hu justified this new recognition by arguing that the cultural sphere was ridden with ideological conflict which, if not properly contained, "could lead to societal turmoil and even a loss of political authority [for the party-state]" (*Zhongguowang* 2004). Such warnings were uttered by the Hu administration up to the very end: during the 17th Central Committee's sixth plenary session in October 2011, Hu cautioned that hostile international forces were increasing

their ideological and cultural subversion efforts in the cultural sphere in order to Westernize and fragment the PRC (*Renminwang lilun* 2011).

Inherent in Hu's comments is the notion that there exists a relationship between cultural, political, and ideological security—a connection explicitly asserted by other party-state leaders such as Li Changchun, a senior CCP official entrusted with the management of propaganda and ideological affairs in 2002–12. In various speeches, Li claimed that hostile international forces were carrying out illegal activities of a political nature within the PRC that were intended to reshape the ideological orientation of susceptible groups (*Renminwang lilun* 2006; ZGX 2008). These activities, ranging from assisting rights protection lawyers to funding non-government organizations, were considered by Li to fall under the purview of cultural security (ZRZ 2009). The linkage between these three types of security speaks to the party-state elites' growing concerns about Western-led non-military regime change, the fear of which was likely amplified by the eruption of color revolutions in post-socialist states such as those in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, or in authoritarian contexts such as the Middle East (Shambaugh 2008, 87–92; Wilson 2009; Dimitrov 2013, 23–24, 29). The CCP, in a classic example of authoritarian learning, sought to study why such regimes had failed to pre-empt and manage these threats to their survival.

The elevation of cultural security as a major watchword in party-state discourses on national security has been coupled with a systematic attempt to connect the successful securitization of the cultural sphere with the realization of the CCP-led projects of "cultural construction" (*wenhua jianshe*) and "cultural development" (*wenhua fazhan*). This can be evidenced from the content of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2006–10), passed by the National People's Congress (NPC) in March 2006, which stated that the "safeguarding of national cultural security" (*weihu guojia wenhua anquan*) was contingent upon reforming the backward and decadent aspects of culture as well as impeding the infiltration of negative external influences (ZRZ 2006). According to (then) NPC Vice-Chairman Xu Jialu, the cultural development goals of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan reflected the party-state's commitment to protecting the cultural sphere through its active reconstruction along "healthier" lines (*Renmin ribao* 2006). Key documents, such as the resolution on constructing a harmonious socialist society that was endorsed by the sixth plenary session of the CCP's Sixteenth Central Committee in October 2006, reiterated these themes, declaring that party-state intervention and rectification of culture, in conjunction with the cultivation of "cultural soft power" (*wenhua ruan shili*), can increase "societal cohesion" (*shehui ningju*) and strengthen collective ideological resistance

to the cultural subversion efforts carried out by hostile international forces (ZGX 2006).

While the Hu administration accorded attention to culture and its securitization, the Xi administration initiated a new phase of party-state engagement with the cultural sphere. According to publicly available information, Xi gave a total of 195 speeches in 2012–18, of which fifty-two (26 percent) were on culture-related themes (ZGX n.d.b; *Gongchandangyuanwang* n.d). Of the fifty-four leadership-level study sessions conducted between November 2017 and December 2018, eleven (20 percent) were likewise concerned with cultural issues. This heightened focus can be discerned from the remarks made by Xi Jinping throughout his tenure. During the all-national art and literature work meeting held in October 2014, itself tellingly modeled on the 1942 Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art, Xi proclaimed culture to be an "important force in the survival and development of a people" (*Xinhua* 2015a). Similarly, in an address given at the opening ceremony of the CCP's Nineteenth National Congress in October 2017, he described culture as "the soul of a nation" (*Xinhua* 2017). In a recent *Qiushi* (2019) article, Xi claimed that having confidence in culture—implying a rejection of foreign alternatives and standards—can determine the "fate of a nation" and the "spiritual independence of a people." The underlying logic tying these comments together is that culture is the fount of all things, ranging from the political to the economic. Its protection is therefore integral not only for the defense of China and its independent path to development but also for the very notion of Chineseness itself.[5]

Unsurprisingly, then, the Xi administration, possessed of such an essentialist vision of culture, is even more assertive than its predecessors in depicting the cultural sphere as a site of ongoing ideological struggle between the PRC and the West, the outcome of which would have real implications for national identity and security (*Xinhua* 2013). The leaked internal communiqué on the current state of the ideological sphere issued and circulated by the CCP Central General Office in April 2013 confirms this reading (*ChinaFile* 2013). This communiqué, also known as Document No. 9, identifies seven viewpoints—Western constitutional democracy, universal values, civil society, neo-liberalism, the Western conception of journalism, historical nihilism, and the questioning of the socialist character of the PRC—as threats to the cultural sphere. The unchecked spread of these

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5   Tobin (2015, 83) discusses this tendency towards differentiating the culture of the PRC from the cultures of other regions (primarily the West) in the internal debates surrounding the management of ethnic minorities in China.

viewpoints along the "cultural front" (*wenhua zhanxian*) is portrayed in this communique as having the capacity to inflict serious damage on the authority and legitimacy of the party-state. The safeguarding of national cultural security, as outlined by the resolution issued by the third plenum of the CCP's Eighteenth Central Committee in November 2013, is treated as a top priority for the party-state under the Xi administration (ZRZ 2013).

The Party-State's Formalization of Cultural Security

The discursive embrace of cultural security by party-state elites has been accompanied, under the Xi administration, by attempts to formalize the concept at the level of dedicated institutions and laws. Furthermore, this has been coupled with efforts at implementation through "cultural security work" (*wenhua anquan gongzuo*) carried out within specific domains such as cyberspace, religion, and education (*Xinhua* 2016; 2016a). The 2010s thus signal the consolidation of cultural security into an operative "strategic paradigm and policy framework" that can be observed across various levels and organs of the party-state (Johnson 2017, 67). The above-mentioned November 2013 decision of the third plenum of the CCP's Central Committee announced the establishment of the National Security Commission, an entity designed to enhance coordination across different security-oriented party-state institutions (ZRZ 2013). During the committee's first meeting in April 2014, Xi remarked that it would embody a "comprehensive national security perspective" (*zongti guojia anquanguan*) encompassing eleven types of security, including cultural security (ZRZ 2014). The National Security Law, passed on July 2015, continued this trend even further, affirming cultural security, along with military and societal security, as the guarantee of national security (*Zhongguo rendawang* 2015).

The realization of cultural security within specifically targeted domains has also been an aspect of this formalization process. The national education system (at all levels), given its role as one of the primary conduits for the transmission of party-state ideology, has been subject to an especially intense cultural securitization effort intended to fortify it against potential foreign subversion (ZGX 2013; ZRZ 2015; *Renmin ribao* 2016; *Xinhua* 2016b). Yuan Guiren, the former Minister of Education (2009–16), called upon educators not only to resist all attempts at cultural subversion but also to defend the "political bottom-line, the legal bottom-line, and the moral bottom-line" of the party-state in their teaching (*Xinhua* 2015b). The succeeding Minister of Education, Chen Baosheng, likewise stressed that educators were responsible

for exhibiting more "cultural confidence" (*wenhua zixin*) and for vigorously promoting a correct political-ideological orientation among the students under their care (*Zhongguowang* 2017; *Renmin ribao* 2017; *Jiaoyubu* 2018).

In conjunction with these exhortations from the highest levels of the bureaucracy, the Ministry of Education unveiled a number of cultural security-related policies, including strengthening in-class ideological monitoring of faculty and students, and curtailing the use of Western textbooks deemed to be instruments of cultural subversion (*Xinhua* 2015b). Moreover, universities and colleges were tasked with expanding the number of ideological courses made available to students, establishing Marxism studies institutes and increasing funding for grants and professorships related to research on ideology (SCMP 2013; SCMP 2015; Fish 2017; Cheek and Ownby 2018). In addition, the Ministry of Education encouraged these same institutions to enter into partnerships with dedicated government-affiliated research centers working on cultural security, most notably the National Cultural Security and Ideological Construction Center (*Guojia wenhua anquan yu yishixingtai jianshe zhongxin*, NCSICC).[6]

Established in 2013 as a sub-division of the Academy of Marxism under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (*Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan*, CASS),[7] the NCSICC conducts specialized research on cultural security and acts as a platform for the propagation of "cultural security consciousness" (*wenhua anquan yishi*) throughout Chinese society.[8] Researchers affiliated with the NCSICC have repeatedly expressed support for the cultural security policies enacted by the Ministry of Education, viewing them as necessary measures to help clear out the cultural and ideological rot within the national education system (Zhu 2015; 2015a). Attempting to back these policies and garner further public support for them, in recent years the NCSICC has initiated a program to dispatch its researchers to universities and colleges across the country on lecture tours. The lectures

6   The NCSICC's webpage can be accessed here: http://myy.cass.cn/myy/aqyysxt/.

7   Growing interest in the concept within the CASS can be evidenced from a survey on national cultural security carried out in 2013. The survey, composed of 120 questions, gauges respondents' views on multiple issues, ranging from their belief as to whether or not a plot by hostile international forces to Westernize and fragment China exists to their expectations about the country's long-term political and ideological trajectory. The survey is accessible here: http://www.diaochaquan.cn/s/29GER.

8   Commemorating the 120th anniversary of the birth of Mao Zedong, the NCSICC launched public accounts on Weibo and WeChat with the name "Torch of Thought" (*sixiang huoju*). Both accounts seek to spread "positive energy" (*zhengnengliang*) about the party-state and a heightened awareness of Western cultural subversion among Chinese social media users (*Zhongguowang* 2013).

seek to highlight the importance of cultural security work in light of the
serious ideological challenges and threats facing the present-day PRC and
its cultural sphere (*Anhui ligong daxue* 2016; *Hefei gongye daxue* 2016;
Zhongnan minzu daxue 2016; *Liaoning gongcheng jishu daxue* 2017; *Nanhu
xinwenwang* 2017; *Wuhan keji daxue* 2017).

Party-State Knowledge-Production and Cultural Security Theorization

As the above-mentioned discussion shows, party-state elite discourses and
formalizations of cultural security have been extensive. Yet in all these
instances, we find that there are no official definitions or systematic
explanations of what cultural security is, and what its implementation
would entail. For these, we can turn to PRC academia, which has produced a
sizable literature on the concept since the late 1990s paralleling the earliest
party-state invocations on cultural security (Jie 2009; Liu 2011, 20). Over the
succeeding decades, this literature, falling under the rubric of "national
security studies" (*guojia anquanxue*), experienced exponential growth
fueled by mounting party-state interest in the concept, a phenomenon also
remarked upon by observers of Chinese media and academic discussions on
cultural security (Edney 2015, 264; Bandurski 2009; 2012). A cursory search for
the term on the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database
reveals the existence of nearly 4,185 items published in 1999–2018, with a
considerable spike in annual publications registered from 2007 onwards.

This literature, notwithstanding its temporal and thematic variation,
displays a high degree of uniformity with respect to the theorization of
cultural security. This suggests that the literature, in the absence of an
officially endorsed exegesis, and given its growth-trajectory in response to
signals from stakeholders, likely offers the closest approximation to party-
state elites' conception of cultural security. This claim carries credibility
when considering CCP domination over academic knowledge-production
processes in the PRC. Many of the scholars engaged in theorizing about
cultural security are employed by central and provincial-level party-state
institutions such as the CASS, the Chinese National Academy of Arts,
Peking University, Shanghai Jiaotong University, and Fudan University. In
some instances, they self-identify as members of the CCP.[9] A portion have

9   The CASS, among other major party-state think tanks, is an important incubator for policies
including those concerning the cultural sphere (Keane and Zhao 2014, 157).

utilized grants provided by the National Social Science Fund (NSSF) for their research.[10] In addition, a considerable number of the works on cultural security—particularly those examined in this chapter—were published on high-profile CCP-linked platforms such as *Qiushi* and *Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao xuebao*, and on more publicly accessible media outlets controlled by the party-state like *Xinhua*, *Renmin ribao*, *Guangming ribao*, and *Zhongguo guofangbao*.

Reinforcing this tendency towards uniformity in PRC knowledge-production on cultural security is the fact that Chinese academia also takes it cues from CCP theorists who, while not directly discussing cultural security per se, have contributed widely on the question of culture. An illustrative example of this is Wang Huning, the academic-turned-senior official. Since his appointment as the head of the political research team at the Central Policy Research Office (*Zhongyang zhengce yanjiushi*, CPRO) in 1995, Wang has succeeded in cultivating considerable influence for himself among party-state elites through the instrumental role he has played in refining the theoretical contributions made by a succession of Chinese leaders (Cheng et al. 2017). Under the Xi administration, and after nearly two decades at the CPRO, where he assumed the directorship in 2002, Wang was elevated to the CCP's Politburo Standing Committee in 2012 and was given responsibility over propaganda and ideological affairs.

The prestige and influence enjoyed by this so-called chief advisor of Zhongnanhai has prompted academic interest in his writings on culture, an area in which he has been recognized as an authority since the early 1990s (Wang 1991; 1993). In addition to translating and popularizing Joseph Nye's work on soft power, Wang is known for coining the term "cultural sovereignty" (*wenhua zhuquan*) in 1994. The latter refers to the state's supreme prerogative—akin to that of political sovereignty—in managing the cultural sphere and warding off unwanted influences that might threaten the political, social, and cultural domains. Only by exercising such sovereignty, Wang (1994, 13) has argued, can the state harness culture as a resource for the development of "comprehensive national power" (*zonghe guoli*). These ideas on the relationship between culture and state power, perhaps amplified in importance due to Wang's embeddedness within the party-state, have been widely cited in the literature.

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10   15.4 percent (271) of the 4,185 items in the CNKI database results were funded by the NSSF. According to the NSSF website, forty-seven research projects on cultural security were offered grants in the period 2000–17. http://fz.people.com.cn/skygb/sk/index.php/Index/seach?xmna me=%E6%96%87%E5%8C%96%E5%AE%89%E5%85%A8&p=1.

The structural dependencies exemplified by Wang's trajectory—affiliations, funding sources, publication platforms, and even sources of citation—condition the output of this research, generating a strong tendency among the producers of the literature to filter their conceptualization of cultural security through a prevailing CCP paradigm of culture found in the writings (or speeches) of senior leaders, the theoretical classics of the party-state, and the broader Marxist tradition. This paradigm, which crystallized as early as the 1940s, treats the cultural sphere as a contested space divided between different classes, each representing distinct (revolutionary and counter-revolutionary) cultural forces within Chinese society (*Marxists Internet Archive* n.d.a; n.d.b). Compounding this cultural class struggle, and mirroring the semi-colonial character of pre-1949 China, is the presence of foreign powers that have actively involved themselves in this conflict through "cultural aggression" (*wenhua qinlüe*) so as to perpetuate the subjugation of the country (Tao 2003). Within this overall paradigm, CCP-led cultural construction, "thought rectification" (*sixiang gaizao*), and Cultural Revolution (*wenhua geming*) are viewed as necessary interventionist instruments critical to bringing about the triumph and consolidation of the revolution.

The CCP paradigm of culture, partially shaped by the cultural iconoclasm of May Fourth intellectuals and the Soviet Leninist-Bogdanovite debates on culture, has informed party-state intervention and securitization of the cultural sphere for much of the Maoist and even post-Maoist eras (Goldman 1971, 8–16; Meisner 1986, 313; Qiang 1995/1996; Denton 2003, 464; Perry 2012, 283–96; Brown 2018, 165–70). The continued relevance of this paradigm can be seen in the way various works on cultural security treat the concept as originating from, and consistent with, the historical legacies that underpin it (Zhao 2011a; Leng and Zhang 2013; Zhang 2014; Wang and He 2016; Dong and Zhang 2018). In that respect, the contemporary cultural security literature could be understood as a new and updated language that builds upon a pre-existing and still-operative CCP paradigm on culture. While Chinese academics in the 1990s and 2000s have been influenced, like party-state elites, by new international trends and research agendas such as the cultural turn in the social sciences and critical security studies, they have nevertheless, due to the above-mentioned structural dependencies, tailored their knowledge-production output on cultural security to suit an inherited CCP canon addressing the cultural sphere and its management. This further explains the uniformity observed in the scholarship on the concept.

A representative sample of the cultural security literature, numbering nearly a hundred sources in total, and comprised of books, journal articles,

analytical articles, and editorial pieces, is examined in the subsections below. These sources were obtained through the CNKI database, and their selection was informed by their thematic focus (i.e., cultural security and associated concepts like cultural aggression and cultural imperialism), the diversity of their publication platforms (i.e., media and academic outlets), the affiliations of their authors (i.e., employees of party-state academic institutions and universities), and their temporal coverage (1999–2018). While by no means exhaustive, this sample offers, by virtue of the above-mentioned structural and theoretical influences exercised by the party-state on PRC knowledge production, an entry point into how party-state elites understand cultural security—a concept they have come to embrace and formalize over the past two decades. What follows is a detailed overview of the definition and framework, threat typologies, and practices of cultural security, as drawn from this sample of the literature.

Key Definitions and Frameworks of Cultural Security

Discussions in the literature on the definition of cultural security often begin with an analysis of culture, the object of securitization. Culture is treated as a reified and all-encompassing concept that is varyingly described as the "soul of a nation and people" (*guojia he minzude linghun*), the "spiritual artery" (*jingshen xuemai*), the "spiritual garden" (*jingshen jiayuan*), and even a "gene" (*jiyin*; Liu 1999a, 45–47; Lin 1999, 31; Wang 2001, 37; Li 2008; Wang 2009, 9; Lu 2010; Zhang and Lao 2011; Chen 2012, 49–50). It is imagined to expansively envelop both the tangible-material and intangible-spiritual components that make up a nation, subsuming their language, customs, lifestyles, and value-norms (Liu 2004; Ma 2004, 88). Accordingly, culture is viewed as an important source of group cohesion and solidarity, as it unifies the collective through the common identity and way of life it provides (Xie 2003, 28; Wu 2003, 112–13; Liu 2011, 14–21). Its significance in the literature is emphasized further in how culture's content and conditions are thought to have a corresponding effect on a nation's overall situation (Wu 2018).

The literature focuses on the content-related components of culture, such as value systems, political culture, and ideologies, which have the capacity to influence regime legitimacy and societal stability (Zhao and Sheng 2014; Wang 2016). The narrow focus on the political and ideological components of culture can be understood in light of how "cultural security is at its core about ideological security" (*wenhua anquande hexin shi yishixingtai anquan*; Liu 1999, 147; Ma 2001, 37–40; Pan 2005, 13–14; Luo 2006, 98; Han 2008, 90–94;

Shi 2012, 33–38; Guo 2013, 919). The connection between these different components is spelt out in a *Qiushi* article written by the Vice-Director of the Marxist Institute at CASS, Fan Jianxin (2017). According to Fan, culture contains a "thought and spiritual/psychological dimension" (*sixiang he jingshen cengmian*) which determines the beliefs, values, and behaviors of individuals and groups. This dimension shapes in turn the ideological and political choices made by these actors, influencing "which banner they [choose to] carry" (*kang shenme qi*) and "which road they [choose to] take" (*zou shenme lu*). If this dimension is altered in any way, there could be serious consequences for ideological security and, by extension, national security. It follows, then, that cultural security is substantively about ideological security, with the latter subsuming political security (development-related), "path security" (*daolu anquan*), "regime security" (*zhengquan anquan*), and "system security" (*zhidu anquan*).

Because of these relationships, cultural security is treated in the literature as an integral part of comprehensive national security. It is seen as a type of "non-traditional security" (*feichuantong anquan*) of equal status to other forms of "traditional security" (*chuantong anquan*; Sun 2000; Shi 2000, 11; Liu 2002, 104; Xie 2008; Li 2009; Yan 2014). In various writings, cultural security is identified as the "deepest level" (*shenceng*) of national security, a description that accords with the foundational character ascribed to it by Fan (2017; Fu 2000, 116; Wu et al. 2004, 118; Hu 2008, 41; Guo 2013, 922; Wu 2014; Fang 2016). This is because the failure to safeguard culture can inflict serious existential costs: without cultural security, political authority unravels, legitimacy is damaged, economic development is reversed, and societal cohesion is shattered. The loss of cultural security is thus construed as a devastating blow to national security, auguring the dissolution of the nation-state and even the extinction of a people (Zhang 2007; Li 2007, 99; Wang 2009, 9; Zhao 2011, 69–72; Wang 2017). It follows that culture is conceived as the "main battle front" (*zhuyao zhanxian*) of national security, the collapse of which signals conclusive defeat in the war to preserve the party-state and even China itself (Yang 2006; Cheng 2016).

A common definition of cultural security proffered by the literature is that it is a strategy used by a sovereign nation to ensure the survival and development of its national culture without obstruction or hindrance (Liu 2011, 14–21). Cultural security is thus concerned with counteracting those external and internal threats that might "erode, destruct, subvert, interfere in, control, and homogenize" (*qinshi, pohuai, dianfu, ganrao, tonghua*) the national culture and its affiliated minority cultures (Shi 2000, 11; Fu 2000, 117; Wang 2016; Su 2011, 22–28). The right and ability to counteract and determine

the course of development of the national culture is explicitly identified in many works as cultural sovereignty (Fu 2000, 115; Fu and Ya 2013; Yan 2014). The latter is considered intimately bound up with political sovereignty, a conceptualization consistent with the logic that underpins the linkages presumed to exist between cultural, political, and ideological security (Wang 2001, 37). Cultural security therefore blurs the distinctions between Chinese culture, the Chinese nation, the PRC, and the CCP, collapsing all these different signifiers into one single category—culture—which requires active defense by the party-state out of existential concern.

Threat Typologies of Cultural Security

Threats to culture are categorized in the literature as being of two types: external and internal. External threats are those acts of "cultural expansion" (*wenhua kuozhang*) carried out by a "cultural hegemon" (*wenhua baquan*) which are aimed, in lieu of costlier and more overt military means, at gradually reshaping the domestic and foreign policies of weaker states (Xu 2002; Xie 2003, 28–29; Pan 2005, 13–14; Zhang 2012a; Guan 2013, 59; Su 2018, 33). This is accomplished by influencing the soft underbelly of culture and subverting it in ways favorable to the interests of the cultural hegemon. The United States is considered the current cultural hegemon, a status it obtained in the wake of the successful "cultural Cold War" (*wenhua lengzhan*) it had executed against the Soviet Union, which ultimately led to the latter's demise (Liu 2001, 21–22; Hu 2007; 2008, 42; Fu and Ya 2013, 55). Consistent with how culture is linked to politics and ideology, many works in the examined literature treat American cultural expansion as denoting the exportation of (American) ideology (Zhang 2009, 467; Li 2010; Tu et al. 2013, 26–29; Tu 2013; Huang and Yao 2016, 114). The United States is imagined as pursuing a "unilateralist cultural strategy" (*danbianzhuyi wenhua zhanlüe*) that exploits the processes of globalization and "informatization" (*xinxihua*) in order to spread its ideological influence and consolidate its hold over the international system (Xu 2000, 27; Wu 2003, 112–13; Wang 2009, 10; Chen 2012; Tu et al. 2013, 25; Wang 2014, 25).

The PRC is depicted in the literature as the supreme victim of this ongoing "culture war" (*wenhua zhanzheng*), or "formless war" (*wuxingzhan*), being waged by the United States and its allies (Han 2004, 12; Yan 2014; Huo 2016). This assault by the American hegemon is driven by three considerations. First, the PRC is the last remaining major socialist power in existence and its elimination is necessary if the United States is to assert total ideological

supremacy over the globe (Cao 2017, 69–72). Second, the PRC is one of the few remaining actors that could credibly—at the material and ideological levels—challenge the United States and contest its domination over the international system. Third, as the PRC embodies a major non-Western civilization, its elimination would constitute a major cultural and even racial victory affirming the superiority of the West (Liu 1999; Hu 2006, 5–7; Huang 2009, 99; Bai 2009, 1; Li 2009; Xin 2010). Through a targeted campaign of cultural expansion against the PRC, the United States hopes to vassalize the country, either through gradual peaceful evolution or a more instantaneous color revolution, thus derailing the country's rise and neutralizing it as a threat to American power and Western civilization (Xu 2000, 27–30; Liu 2001, 22–23; Yan 2014).

According to the literature, cultural expansionism is carried out through multiple methods, one of which is the mobilization of Western media, including such outlets as the Voice of America, Radio Free Asia, and the Cable News Network, in addition to well-known newspapers such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, to execute so-called "cultural-psychological warfare" (*wenhua xinlizhan*) against the PRC (Tu et al. 2013, 29; Wu 2018). This warfare mainly involves the propagation of anti-China discourses which promote the "superiority of human rights over sovereignty" (*renquan gaoyu zhuquan*), spread confusion and despair over the viability and legitimacy of the CCP's governing model among the Chinese populace, and question the ethnic-territorial integrity of China (Xu 2000, 30; Shi 2004, 11; Han and Wang 2005, 269–72; Luo 2006, 99–100; Lu 2010). Such propagandistic warfare leads to demoralization within the cultural sphere and undermines collective solidarity, the sense of identity, and the trust in the party-state shared by the citizens of the PRC.

Another important method is the cultivation of sympathetic elites capable of subverting the cultural sphere for the cultural hegemon. Promising candidates—typically young overseas students hailing from "cadre-official families" (*gaogan zidi*) and with promising future careers in government or academia back home—are actively targeted by the Central Intelligence Agency for brainwashing and co-optation (Lin 1999; Xu 2000, 27–29; 2002; Li 2002; Yan 2014; Huang and Yao 2016, 113–14).[11] Through such efforts, a

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11   One popular narrative, repeated in the cultural security literature, claims that the Agency has been carrying out a coherent strategy of cultural subversion against China since the 1990s. This strategy is presumably outlined in a leaked document entitled the "ten commandments" (*shitiao jieling*), which provides detailed instructions for Agency operatives as to how to ideologically corrupt overseas students, minority ethnic groups, and intellectuals, among other vulnerable elements in Chinese society.

"Western-aligned faction" (*xifangpai*), hostile to the interests of the PRC and sympathetic to those of the United States, is planted among Chinese elites (Zhu 2015e). This faction, described as "slavishly worshipping the foreign" (*chongyang meiwai*) opposition force, and imbued with values and ideological outlooks different from those of the Chinese mainstream, is entrusted with carrying out a plot to "re-engineer the political gene" (*zhengzhi zhuanjiyin gongcheng*) of the country and end party-state rule (Yan 2014; Zhu 2015d; Fan 2017). The most worrying aspect of this Western faction is its penetration of academia (Xu 2000, 27; Ma 2001, 39). From within the breached ivory tower, the faction's supporters actively popularize theories that position the West as an "international standard" (*yu guoji jiegui*) for all things; distort "understandings of Marxism by filtering them through a Western prism" (*yixi jiema*); and encourage people to "bid the revolution farewell" (*gaobie geming*) through intellectual delegitimization of the party-state system (Wang 2009, 13; Zhu 2015b; Cheng 2016, 21; Fan 2017). The Western faction is also accused of disseminating political values and norms that are antithetical to the PRC's national specificity, including multi-party democracy, universalist values, constitutional democracy, media freedom, civil society, and judicial independence (Hou 2015; Huo 2016; Fan 2017).

Yet another method of cultural expansion involves the intensified and targeted exportation of subversive "cultural products" (*wenhua chanpin*) to the PRC. The consumption of such products, per the literature, facilitates the spread of debilitating moral values, such as "individualism, money-worship, and hedonism" (*gerenzhuyi, baijinzhuyi, xianglezhuyi*), which are inimical to the well-being, cohesion, and integrity of Chinese culture and society (Xu 2002; Li 2006, 70–71; Guan 2013, 58–61). This corruption contributes to the weakening of the population's cultural confidence and "cultural awareness" (*wenhua zijue*), triggering a sense of crisis that makes society altogether more receptive to foreign subversion efforts (Shi 2007; Zhang 2012a). Such cultural products can be carriers of anti-CCP ideologies which belittle Chinese patriotism and glorify American "hegemonism and interventionism" (*baquanzhuyi, ganshezhuyi*), enhancing in turn the ability of the United States to interfere in PRC domestic politics (Hu 2002, 63–64; Wang 2008; Ai 2013; Zhu 2015e; Huo 2016).

As to internal threats, they originate from the cultural sphere itself, acting as centrifugal and fragmentary forces that can be exploited by cultural hegemons for their own ends. The literature identifies two types of internal threat, the first of which is the threat posed by the "old culture" (*jiu wenhua*), which was not completely uprooted by the party-state when it was replaced by the "new culture" (*xin wenhua*) of socialism during the

Maoist era. The persistent negative and feudal residues of the old culture are expressed in conservative cultural trends such as "revivalist" (*fuguzhuyi*) movements that seek to "expel Marx and restore Confucius" (*quma guiru*) in mainstream culture, to "Confucianize the CCP" (*ruhua gongchandang*), and to re-establish Confucianism as the national religion of China (Fan 2017). Another expression of these residues is the tendency towards "cultural separatism" (*wenhua fenliezhuyi*), sometimes referred to as "extreme nationalism" (*jiduan minzuzhuyi*) or "cultural fundamentalism" (*wenhua yuanjiaozhizhuyi*), which is ascribed to ethnic minorities in Inner Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang (Zhang 2006). This tendency, strengthened by transnational religious and cultural links, stems from the mistaken consciousness held by ethnic minorities that they are a self-standing group separate from the Chinese people (Chen and Zhang 2004; Zhang 2006a, 76–77; Zheng 2006; Guo 2013, 918). It is thus understood as a dangerous residue found within the cultural sphere, and one that needs to be repeatedly checked and eliminated before it endangers the integrity of the nation.

The second type of internal threat is the erosion of orthodox Marxist ideology as a commanding source for mainstream values since the 1970s (Wang 2014, 25–26; Zhu 2018). While the wider societal implications of this loss are considerable, the literature focuses on what this means for the CCP, representing as it does "the vanguard orientation of China's progressive culture" (*Zhongguo xianjin wenhuade qianjin fangxiang*).[12] Most notably, the CCP is imagined as facing an ongoing "crisis of faith" (*xinyang weiji*) wherein only a few cadres have sufficient knowledge of, let alone belief in, the ideology of the party-state (Zhu 2015c; 2015e; Fan 2017; Hou 2018). This crisis accounts for the popularity of superstitious beliefs as well as religion among cadres and has contributed moreover to a state of "ideological rigidity" (*yishixingtaide jianghua*) within the CCP, understood as the end/failure of the attempts to adjust ideology to suit the needs of the present (Zhu 2015e; Hou 2018). Such problems risk taking the CCP down the same path of destruction as its counterparts in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe—a process that began with their loss of ideological faith and their "willingness to fight" (*ganyu liangjian*) in the cultural sphere, and which made them vulnerable to accepting the values of others (Hou 2018). The lack of sincere and informed belief in ideology threatens the CCP with destruction, the outcome of which would result in the cultural sphere's capture, given the absence of the party-state's management and protection, by the cultural

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12   The quote is a key phrase from the theory of the "three represents" (*sange daibiao*), first described by Jiang in 2002 (*Baike* n.d.).

expansionism of hostile international forces. As a consequence, China would end up subjugated by the West.

The Practice of Cultural Security

Counteracting these external and internal threats to the cultural sphere requires a cultural security strategy that entails, as argued in the literature, the use of defensive and offensive measures. Defensive measures are those aimed at establishing what is varyingly described as a "cultural great wall" (*wenhua changcheng*), a "cultural firewall" (*wenhua fanghuoqiang*), or a "cultural security thought defensive-perimeter" (*wenhua anquan sixiang fangxian*) capable of protecting the PRC's "cultural frontiers" (*wenhua bianjiang*) from enemy attacks (Liu 2009; Chen 2012; Wu 2014; Cao 2017, 69; Fan 2017). These might include the passage and implementation of regulations, inspired by the French and Canadian "cultural exception" (*wenhua liewai*) laws, to limit the influx of dangerous cultural products into the PRC (Liu 1999a, 150; Bie 2002; Shen 2014). Censorship geared towards halting the dissemination of "cultural trash" (*wenhua laji*) and "decadent cultural dross" (*fuxiude wenhua zaopo*) on media platforms can also be useful in that regard (Lin 1999, 32; Shi 2007a; Hu 2008a; Chen 2012; Wang and Han 2015, 139–41). Yet another proposed measure is the launching of rectification campaigns within party-state media and educational institutions to transform them into "ideological battlefields" (*yishixingtai zhandi*) where those voices espousing pro-Western viewpoints can be silenced and those promoting correct party-state ideology can be amplified (Wang 2014, 30–31; Zhu 2015a; 2015c; Fang 2016).

Offensive measures, by contrast, are geared towards constructing a "cultural system" (*wenhua tizhi*) capable of upholding societal cohesion, addressing the cultural needs of the masses, and ensuring that one's culture remains dynamic and capable of innovation (Sun 2000; Zhang 2012, 12–13; Fu and Ya 2013, 55; Hu 2016, 63). Two types of offensive measures are repeatedly noted in the literature: cultural infrastructure development and cultural content enhancement. Cultural infrastructure development refers to the expansion of a country's cultural production capacities—namely, its cultural and creative sectors—through fiscal and legal support (Zhang 2001, 14–15; Wang 2014, 28, 30–31). Cultural content enhancement denotes the party-state's efforts to ensure that this cultural system produces good "cultural content" (*wenhua neirong*) appropriate for public consumption, which is defined by several criteria: that it has "attraction power" (*xiyinli*);

that it can help strengthen the "cultural immunity" (*wenhua mianyi*) of the population against the subversion efforts of hostile international forces; and that it reinforces the security of the regime through the promotion of a "correct political orientation" (*zhengque zhengzhi fangxiang*) among recipient audiences (Pan 2005, 19; Zhang 2006, 125; Jie 2007, 109–12; Jiang 2010, 89).

In generating this good cultural content, the literature proposes that the party-state make use of three existing resources found in the cultural sphere, the first of which is "excellent traditional Chinese culture" (*Zhonghua youxiu chuantong wenhua*; Shi 2007a; Fan 2017). Galvanized by the principle of "making the old serve the new, and making the old elucidate the present" (*guwei jinyong, yigu jianjin*), proponents argue that such material, with its unique values and aesthetics, fashioned by over five thousand years of civilization, could be an excellent source of attractive content (Shi 2000, 11–14, 18; Wang 2009, 11–12). The second resource that could be mined is "revolutionary culture" (*geming wenhua*), a reference to the values and aesthetics that dominated in the Mao era. Finally, the third is "socialist progressive culture" (*shehuizhuyi xianjin wenhua*), referring to those socialist ideals and impulses that have long existed within folk culture (Fu 2000, 117; Hu 2002, 65–66; Zhang 2007). By integrating these three resources through a well-planned process of cultural construction (or crafting) overseen by the party-state, good cultural content, serving the political and ideological purposes of the CCP, could be produced (Su 2011, 23; Peng and Sun 2012; Cheng 2016, 26; Fang 2016; Cao 2017, 72).

The literature proposes that these two offensive measures be deployed in combination with one another. A developed cultural infrastructure aids in the dissemination of good cultural content, enabling Marxism to regain its authoritative status within mainstream culture and emboldening the CCP to defeat its enemies within the cultural sphere (Yan 2014; Zhu 2015c; Cheng 2016, 21). This formula is not only imagined to apply in the domestic sphere but can be—or *should be*—replicated in foreign contexts as well. Many works assert that a "cultural going-out strategy" (*wenhua zouchuqu zhanlüe*), which would involve increasing the country's cultural product exports and establishing more Chinese-language learning centers, could have a positive impact on national cultural security (Fan 2001; Luo 2006, 97–100; Su 2017; Su 2018, 33–35). This is because the internationalization of PRC-tailored cultural content can strengthen the "discursive power" (*huayuquan*) of the party-state vis-à-vis other cultural hegemons like the United States, allowing it in turn to narrate its own stories and undercut the spread of anti-CCP cultural products (Luo 2012; Luo and Shi 2014, 66–68; Yan 2014). Such a proactive approach, intended to undercut hostile narratives in

foreign environments, would function as an additional defensive perimeter around the PRC's cultural great wall.

In discussing the offensive-defensive duality of cultural security, the literature stresses that the strategy should not be confused with a xenophobic reaction to globalization and foreign culture. Rather, as various works argue, and in an echo of Jiang's earliest invocation, cultural security is a strategy for the scientific and rational management of globalization. The latter is presented as a "double-edged sword" (*shuangjiandao*) that facilitates the entry of negative influences into the cultural sphere while also simultaneously introducing "new nutrients" (*xinde yingyang*) that could revitalize that sphere and stave off the internal dynamics of stagnation and decline (Sun 2000; Hu 2002, 63; Wu et al. 2004, 118–21). By adopting a cultural security strategy, then, the party-state is able to resist the two undesirable extremes of "national self-closure" (*biguan suoguo*) and "total acceptance" (*jianshou bingxu*) through a selective engagement with globalization, enabling Chinese culture to overcome external and internal threats to its survival and continued development (Pan 2005, 18; Li 2009; Wu 2014). As a result, a clear-sighted strategy of cultural security preserves social stability, the national sovereignty of the PRC, and the legitimacy of the CCP—holistically safeguarding national security.

Conclusion

This chapter traced the embrace of cultural security—expressed in terms of discursive invocations and formalizations—by the party-state, a process that began with the Jiang administration in the late 1990s and remains ongoing under the current Xi administration. Subsequently, the chapter provided an in-depth overview of how the concept was theorized by party-state elites, drawing heavily from a representative sample of works associated with a cultural security literature published in the PRC in the period 1999–2018. In the absence of an officially endorsed party-state definition of cultural security, these sources, produced by academics embedded within or in close proximity to party-state institutions, provided insights into how the concept is understood and operationalized by party-state elites.

The chapter examined the definition and framework, threat typologies, and practices of cultural security proffered by the literature. It found that cultural security was imagined to correspond to political and ideological security and is chiefly concerned with the preservation of CCP power under conditions of globalization and an intensifying ideological struggle with the

West. Threats are identified as emanating from the subversive efforts of external cultural hegemons as well as negative residues inherent to the cultural sphere. The implementation of a cultural security strategy necessitates the party-state's systematic neutralization of such threats and an interventionist remolding of that sphere in ways that serve its interests. Insufficient cultural securitization is understood in starkly existential terms as leading to a loss of social stability, national sovereignty, and regime legitimacy.

As a whole, the literature points to the anxieties and fears that have shaped the thinking of party-state elites over the past two decades regarding the durability of their political-ideological order under conditions of globalization and Western (American) ideological hegemony. The logic underlying the adoption of a cultural security strategy is that it provides a solution—in the form of state-led scientific management of the cultural sphere—familiar to the CCP (i.e., rooted in its own paradigm of culture), refracted through novel notions about culture and security, and capable of addressing the dangers perceived to be facing the regime.

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3.   Taking Sides: Differences in How the People's Republic of China Securitizes Uyghur and Hui Muslims

Hacer Z. Gonul and Julius M. Rogenhofer

Abstract: This chapter critically examines how securitization campaigns by the CCP turn Muslim minorities into potential threats, thereby drawing into question their sense of cultural security. Applying the framework of Copenhagen School securitization theory, it examines whether there are ethnicity-based differences in the securitization of Hui and Uyghur Muslim minority groups and why such differences exist. The advent of Xi Jinping's tenure at the helm of the CCP coincides with a shift in government policy towards both Muslim minority groups which scrutinizes most visible manifestations of Islamic religious practice and places loyalty to the party at the center of state-sanctioned religion. These developments have resulted in a partial convergence in the cultural insecurity experienced by both Hui and Uyghurs.

Keywords: Hui, Uyghurs, China Islamic Association, *jiejing*, securitization

> *Anyone attempting to split China in any part of the country will end in crushed bodies and shattered bones.* (Xi Jinping 2019)[1]

This chapter employs securitization theory to understand the CCP's domestic security campaigns aimed at the Uyghur and Hui Muslim minority nationalities in China and the effect of such policies on each group's sense of cultural

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1   The General Secretary of the CCP, Xi Jinping, speaking with the Nepali Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli during a state visit to Nepal in October 2019 (Awan 2020).

security. We uncover ethnicity-based differences in the CCP's approach as well as the historical origins of such differences. While we trace the origins of contemporary security policies back to attempts by the CCP's General Secretary Jiang Zemin (in power 1989–92) to make religion compatible with the party's goals and priorities in the 1990s—themselves rooted in the reform and opening (*gaige kaifang*) policy of the 1980s—our focus is on Xi Jinping's efforts to "sinicize" Islam in China since 2012. Such policies define many Uyghur and Hui religious and cultural practices as potential threats, thereby imperiling each minority's sense of cultural security. The CCP has implemented assimilative policies that aim at merging distinctive ethnic identities into a unified, largely Han-centered Chinese identity, itself constructed. Therefore, historical efforts by Uyghurs and to some extent by the Hui to retain elements of their distinct cultures are presented by the CCP as threats to national unity.

The PRC defines itself as a multi-ethnic unitary state (*duominzu tongyi guojia*) consisting of fifty-six nationalities (*minzu*), ten of which are predominantly Muslim. The largest are the Hui, numbering 11,377,914 (China Population Census Yearbook 2020), who mostly inhabit the Ningxia Autonomous Region and Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan provinces. Uyghurs are the second largest with 11,624,300 people living predominantly in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (China Population Census Yearbook 2020).[2] Historically, the PRC's ethnic and religious minorities have experienced only a limited degree of tolerance (Leibold 2016), and public acknowledgement of diversity has often been conditioned by the minorities' demonstrated willingness to adapt to a CCP-defined ideal, itself molded around Han culture. Uradyn E. Bulag (2000, 196) argued that the Sino-centered assessment of ethnic minorities has historically been based on how culturally close they were to Han culture and the extent of their service to the Chinese empire and state.

Islam is an important source of culture and identity for all Muslim minorities in China and is the principal means by which Hui Muslims distinguish themselves from the Han majority (Stroup 2016, 999). For example, Hui regard Islamic education as a marker of Muslim identity in a non-Muslim country (Jaschok and Chan 2009, 2). At the same time, the CCP tends to view Islam and other monotheistic religions with considerable suspicion. Following the CCP's declaration of its own "War on Terrorism" in 2014,

2   Recently the CCP has sought to rebut allegations of genocide against China's Uyghur population by issuing new 2020 census statistics, which claim that the Uyghur population has grown 16 percent over the past decade (*Xinhua* 2021). These statistics are contested by the international community (Tang 2021).

Uyghur demands for more autonomy from China and their alleged ties with Islamic fundamentalist terrorist groups in the Middle East helped the CCP depict this minority group as an existential security threat. The CCP's express concern with socio-political unrest in Xinjiang was used to justify harsh counter-insurgency policies towards Uyghurs and, to a lesser extent, the Hui people. The way the CCP applied the label "War on Terrorism" made it difficult to distinguish between ordinary crimes, non-violent political protest, and violent activities (Roberts 2020). These policies are framed by the CCP as a means of countering the "three forces" (*sangu shili*) of ethnic separatism, religious extremism, and terrorism (Chung et al. 2006). By increasingly viewing all visible forms of Islamic religious practice through a security prism, such policies undermine the Uyghur and Hui sense of cultural security.

The significant differences in the extent to which the CCP sees Uyghurs and Hui people as a security threat can be explained using the "model minority" theory. In 2010, the Chinese academics Zhao Lisheng and Ma Zhiqiang (2010, 47) claimed that there were no significant ostensible distinctions between Hui people and the Han majority in Ningxia. The Hui speak Mandarin and share many Han cultural traditions, making it easier for them to socialize and do business with the majority population. Given Hui cultural similarity and ethnic proximity to the Han majority, the CCP has long portrayed Hui people as geographically, historically, and socially better adapted than the Uyghurs to China's modernization process, characterizing them as the type of Muslim that it did not need to worry about (Meyer 2012, 42). Although there were number of violent Hui rebellions during the Qing dynasty in Qinghai, southern Gansu, and elsewhere, these were typically viewed as result of local contention rather than an existential threat to the authority (Lipman 1997; Kim 2004; Friedrichs 2017). The privilege that comes with being a "model" Muslim in the Chinese context is ambiguous and, at best, always conditional on the CCP's interest. Conversely, Turkic-speaking Uyghurs often have more in common with their Central Asian neighbors than their Han Chinese compatriots.

Until Xi Jinping's ascent to power in 2012, Hui people's assimilation into Han culture and society led the CCP to portray them as a "model minority," especially when compared to Uyghurs. In the CCP's Sinocentric socio-spatial hierarchy, Hui Muslims are closer to the Han center than any other Muslim group (Friedrichs 2017, 58). Due to the greater level of assimilation to Han culture, Hui religious identity was often understood in apolitical terms, enabling community members to adapt and flourish while dynasties and governments changed (Hammond 2020, 226). This assimilation

notwithstanding, there are instances throughout history where Hui people have pursued their interests politically, engaging in constitutional debates both in the Republic of China and during the early PRC to secure rights and privileges in the fields of politics, economics, and education (Eroglu Sager 2021, 12–13). The CCP frames any residual or ongoing Hui–Han conflict as "misunderstandings" and claims that "conflicts between ethnic groups are often triggered by small problems" which can be solved if people "respect each other and follow the customs" (*CCP News* 2014; *Zhongguo xiaokang* 2016). Particularly, during the early and mid-1990s, the government-led China Islamic Association (CIA) begun celebrating Hui Muslims as people who gradually abandoned farming and started new businesses. It portrayed them as a "model examples" for economic development, compatible with China's speedy modernization (see example, CMJ 1996.5).

In fact, Hui have been portrayed as the best example of civilizational dialogue between Confucianism and Islam (Ma 2016), sometimes even being seen as suitable "cultural ambassadors" and "cultural mediators" of Sino-Muslim world trade (Ho 2013). Even in Xinjiang, Hui people obtained economic and political advantages over Uyghurs (Côté 2015, 137) and were, until recently, rarely victims of religious discrimination by the authorities. Prior to the Xi era, Hui people could even advocate a form of Wahhabism in Ningxia, whereas for Uyghurs such religious strains have not been tolerated (Gonul and Rogenhofer 2017; Al-Sudairi 2016).

This chapter identifies a shift in CCP policy from ethnic identity securitization to the securitization of religious practice between the early 1990s and 2018. By claiming that the security threat posed by Islam is existential, the CCP now categorizes all visible manifestations of Islamic religious practice as potential threats, thereby undermining the Uyghur and Hui sense of cultural security. Before examining such policies in more detail, we review securitization theory and its application to non-democratic contexts.

Securitization in Non-Democratic Contexts

Securitization theory studies how governments frame issues as existential security concerns to legitimate their policies. It understands security as a self-referential practice, which means the issue in question is not necessarily a real threat; it is only presented as such. The Copenhagen School of security studies sees security as a speech act, a quality injected into certain issues that places them in a realm above normal politics, a realm where extreme measures must be adopted in order to guarantee the survival of referent

objects like the state, the individual, the society or the environment (Buzan et al. 1998, 24). Wæver adopts the concept of the speech act from John Langshaw Austin's theory of language (1995, 46). Speech acts not only describe the world but are also capable of changing it, being both performative and constitutive. In other words, any issue can be turned into a security issue and an existential threat is understood to exist as soon as it is framed this way.

While there is a debate over whether securitization theory can be applied to non-democratic contexts (Browning and McDonald 2011), Vuori persuasively uses a variant of this theory to study the CCP's security policies towards the Tiananmen protests and the Falun Gong (2011). The extension of this analytical approach beyond security policies in liberal democracies emphasizes securitization's illocutionary logic (Vuori 2008). The focus on communicative effects and implied meanings allows researchers to "see through" the formulaic and propagandistic communication style of the CCP. We suggest that the use of illocutionary acts allows the CCP to implicitly promote its model of governance, which is at odds with liberal democratic conceptions of citizenship, freedom, universal rights, democracy, and self-determination, while at the same time ostentatiously acknowledging them. We thus argue that the CCP exercises power not only through coercive mechanisms such as the police, military, and legal system, but also through a variety of seemingly non-coercive means, including the conferral of economic benefits (through infrastructure projects and trade policies), cultural policy and religious guidance by institutions such as the CIA (Glasserman 2016).

Adopting a similar argument, Topgyal (2011a; 2011b) shows how CCP discourses and policies inflate Tibetans' insecurities about their way of life and belonging within the national collective. Securitization at the state level can thus result in the cultural insecurity of ethnic and religious minority groups. In the context of the PRC, the non-democratic character of the regime results in a linkage of the CCP's security discourses to matters of regime stability. This security discourse is concerned particularly with borderlands such as Xinjiang, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia, all of which, historically, have exhibited centrifugal tendencies and could conceivably threaten the territorial integrity of China. The PRC government therefore delegitimizes such trends by labeling individual outbreaks as "incidents" (*shijian*), separating each case from others and thus downplaying long-term social and political grievances. Building on the above-mentioned theories of securitization and Topgyal's case study, this chapter investigates the differences in the CCP's securitization practices targeting the Uyghurs and Hui using the example of the Sinicization of Religion (*zongjiao Zhongguohua*) campaign.

CCP Security Policy towards China's Muslim Minorities Prior to Xi Jinping

The following pages focus on the CCP's reaction to key incidents taking place between the CCP and Uyghurs and Hui people during the two decades before Xi Jinping's ascent to the leadership of the CCP. By reflecting on the 1990 Barin uprising and the 1997 Ghulja unrest and the CCP's policy towards Uyghurs and Hui people during the 2008 Beijing Olympics, we show significant differences in how the party framed each minority's religious practice, thus affecting their sense of cultural (in)security. We illustrate that while the Uyghurs were long framed as threatening and suspicious by the CCP in the Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao (2002–12) eras, Hui Muslims remained relatively unscathed by CCP securitization practices.

In 1990, Jiang Zemin proclaimed that "Marxist views of nation and religion" (*Makesizhuyide minzuguan he zongjiaoguan*) must be established and that "religious work must be done properly" (*yiding yao zuohao zongjiao gongzuo*; United Front Work Department 2014). Jiang also imposed restrictions on religious activities by ordering all places of worship to register. Registration was framed by the CCP as a way of safeguarding social harmony by imposing much stricter control of religious organizations than it had previously (Leung 2005, 909). At the United Front Work Conference in November 1993, Jiang emphasized the need to make "correct" (*zhengque*), i.e., modify, religious beliefs and practices in China because of "the manipulation and control [of Catholicism and Protestantism] by imperial powers." Religious practice in China would henceforth be adapted to socialist society (United Front Work Department 2014). According to what became known as the "three sentences" (*sanjuhua*), articulated in 1993, the CCP's policies should be thoroughly implemented, and religion should be administered according to law and made compatible with socialist society (Potter 2003, 323). In December 2001, Jiang added that the principles of national independence and self-governance should be firmly upheld (Fang 2014, 339).

Despite the CCP's formal acknowledgement of religious freedom, many religious communities felt that such recognition was insufficient. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of Central Asian republics in 1991, Uyghurs became more concerned with questions of independence, freedom, and self-determination. Restrictions on their cultural and religious practices led to several confrontations with the authorities (Clarke 2015, 218).

The 1990 uprising in Barin Township in Kashgar Prefecture is attributable partly to the dissatisfaction of Uyghurs with the mass immigration of Han

Chinese into Xinjiang, the closure of a local mosque prior to a religious festival, and the extension of strict family planning policies to the Uyghurs (Amnesty International 2010, 9). In response to a violent incident involving around 200 Uyghurs in Barin, the CCP launched a region-wide campaign to repress dissent and separatism (Millward and Peterson 2020). The CCP's so-called Strike Hard against Violent Terrorist Activities (*yanli daji baoli kongbu huodong*) campaign would become one prong in its long-term strategy to tighten its grip over Uyghurs in Xinjiang, thereby curtailing their cultural autonomy and security.

In contrast, when Hui people clashed repeatedly with Han throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, such conflicts were framed by the CCP not as matters of separatism or (dis)loyalty to the Chinese state, but as matters of poverty and inequality (Stroup 2021). The authorities did not frame the Hui–Han clashes as terrorism or as a threat to the country's unity and rejected the idea that the global Islamic revival and the Hui were linked. The party-state frames Han–Hui conflicts as a "lack of ethnic knowledge, never a deliberate provocation" (Lu 2010).

Even though the eruption of conflicts with the majority Han population involved both groups, the official portrayals of both groups were different. Uyghurs were presented as the "dangerous" or "bad others," while the Hui continued to be perceived as a model, "non-threatening" minority or "familiar strangers" (Lipman 1997) and their protests were downplayed as manageable disturbances and economic grievances. As a result, Hui people's cultural autonomy remained largely unaffected. Close cooperation with the CCP, including through the Hui-dominated and state-controlled CIA, allowed Hui people to affirm their sense of cultural security by framing their religious practices as the only form of "compliant" Islam within China. Hui religious practice was framed as "modernist," i.e., committed to making Islam compatible with CCP ideology, specifically the "love the country, love the religion" (*aiguo aijiao*) principle, which insists that religion must always be subordinate to the goals of the nation and compliant with the demands of national authorities (Glasserman 2016).

This framing of "compliant" Islam around Hui culture and religious practice would, in turn, threaten the cultural security of Uyghurs, a fact brought out by a second outbreak of unrest in Ghulja in 1997. Following the Barin uprising, the CCP feared that Uyghurs would follow other Central Asian independence movements and attempt to separate Xinjiang from the rest of China. Policies that encouraged hundreds of thousands of Han people to relocate to Xinjiang as part of CCP efforts in urbanization, industrialization, and economic development (Becquelin 2004) amplified Uyghurs' grievances

as jobs and economic opportunities were increasingly transferred to the Han population. Predictably, such dissatisfaction found its outlet in the Ghulja protests of February 1997, when Uyghurs protested the harsh policies, including restrictions on religious and cultural activities in Xinjiang, including *meshrep*, a form of collective cultural expression that includes Uyghur music, songs, and the recital of poetry, which offered Uyghurs an indigenously produced means of maintaining their ethnic boundaries vis-à-vis the Han majority (Roberts 1998). Rachel Harris (2020) illustrates how *meshrep*, as an important Uyghur cultural practice, was recognized on UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage. The same practice was subsequently targeted by the Chinese government's "counter-extremism" measures. Uyghurs in Ghulja had used *meshrep* gatherings to revive Islamic culture and to counteract social problems such as alcoholism and drug abuse in their community. Its prohibition and the arrest of a prominent *meshrep* leader in 1996 caused considerable resentment among Uyghurs. Fearing a further erosion of their culture, Uyghurs demanded that the laws and regulations on the "autonomy of ethnic regions," which ostensibly govern all ethnic minority regions in China, be respected in Xinjiang. The Ghulja protests were violently suppressed by the authorities and more than 150 people were reportedly killed by security forces (Wayne 2009, 250). The Chinese government arrested over one thousand Uyghurs and closed mosques and religious centers (Amnesty International 2007).

After the Barin and Ghulja unrest, the relations between the party-state and the Uyghurs gradually worsened, leading to harsh repression of Uyghur identity (Castets 2004, 28). The CCP bolstered its campaign against alleged separatism in Xinjiang, which it described as a "people's war" against "ethnic separatism and illegal religious activities" (*Xinjiang Daily* 1997 cited in Dillon 2003, 106). While this discursive framing may have been effective for the CCP's domestic audience (Trédaniel and Lee 2017), the Chinese state still lacked a compelling narrative to legitimize its security policy for an international audience; its promises of gradual "liberalization" were not taken seriously (Dreyer 1993).

The Impact of the Attacks of September 2001 and the 2008 Beijing Olympics

China's response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the U.S. eventually spurred new regulations targeting the Uyghurs, who perceived these changes as threatening to their cultural security. Many such policies,

including prohibitions on Uyghur funeral rituals and scattered (non-CIA approved) *hajj* pilgrimages (*lingsan chaojin*), were supported by the Hui-dominated CIA, which helped the party-state label Islamic practices common among Uyghurs as harmful (Glasserman 2016, 52–54). Both Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao emphasized that the Chinese state clearly distinguishes between the "three forces" and Islam itself (CMJ 1999.1). Nonetheless, the party alleged that Uyghur opposition to the state and outbursts of violence in Xinjiang were rooted in connections between Uyghurs and the Taliban and in Uyghurs' alleged support for Osama bin Laden (Shichor 2006, 99).

While the CCP's claims about links between the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM)[3] and international terrorist networks remain unproven (Roberts 2020), the CCP nonetheless succeeded in framing Uyghur nationalism as a cause of terrorism within China. Uyghurs who tried to flee Xinjiang were often accused of being "violent terrorists" seeking overseas training (Rodríguez 2019). The separatist threat allegedly posed by traditional Uyghur culture was conflated with another threat allegedly emerging from their Islamic religious practice (CMJ 2001.3).

The focus on terrorism within China became particularly acute during the 2008 Beijing Olympics, which were preceded by a violent incident in the city of Kashgar in which sixteen soldiers of the People's Armed Police Force were killed (Gunaratna and Wang 2010). The threat of terrorism allegedly emanating from the Uyghur community prompted a crackdown in Xinjiang which would severely curtail Uyghurs' daily life and cultural practices.

In contrast, Hui Muslims were used to showcase China's "friendly Muslim face" to a global audience (CMJ 2008.2; CMJ 2008.4). While interactions between Uyghurs and foreign Muslims were viewed with the utmost suspicion, the CCP promoted Hui engagement with the attendees of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, who were invited to "learn about Chinese Muslims and Islam in China through [their] perspective" (CMJ 2008.5). After the opening of the Olympic Village, thousands of Hui volunteers (CMJ 2008.5a) and fifteen Hui imams from Beijing were chosen as religious volunteers, tasked with providing religious services including the Friday prayers and consultation to Muslim athletes in the Olympic Village. These activities were articulated with the slogan "I participate, I dedicate, I am happy" (*wo canyu, wo fengxian, wo kuaile*; CMJ 2008.5b). Muslim athletes were escorted by volunteers to visit Hui mosques and the Niujie Halal Supermarket in Beijing and given introductory CDs and books about Islam and Muslims in

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3   East Turkistan is a term used by some Uyghurs to refer to their homeland and refers to two East Turkistan Republics founded in 1933–34 and 1944–49.

China, which collectively emphasized the Hui element (CMJ 2008.5b). Hui students from the CIA branch in Beijing were also introduced to domestic and foreign reporters as patriotic, loyal, and content with the CCP (China Islamic Institute 2008; see also Jarmila Ptáčková's chapter). The prominence accorded to Hui Muslims as the outward-looking face of Chinese Islam also increased the popularity of the 2008 Beijing Olympics among Hui, who often attended public viewing gatherings to support the athletes. This practice contrasted with the stringent security measures encountered by China's other Muslim communities. For example, Uyghurs were banned from public gatherings.

The Hui's crucial role in legitimating the 2008 Beijing Olympics to a global Muslim audience bolstered their status as a model minority, a condition that helped them preserve a sense of purpose, prosperity, and cultural security. In contrast, the definition of Uyghur religious practice as unlawful and dangerous and its complete exclusion from the Muslim face on display at the 2008 Beijing Olympics further eroded their cultural security. This led to a series of incidents surrounding the games. The bombing of two public buses in the city of Kunming in July 2008 increased tensions between Uyghurs and the government, even though the CCP publicly denied that the explosions were an act of terrorism (BBC 2008). As the CCP's definition of terrorism was kept intentionally vague, Uyghurs lived in constant fear that their non-violent public activities, art, and literature would be framed as illegal and threatening to national unity.

Xi Jinping's Authoritarian Revival

The appointment of Xi Jinping as the CCP's general secretary in November 2012 started a new stage in the policies towards ethnic and religious minorities. One indication of the change was the promulgation of the 2015 Counter-Terrorism Law (*fankongbuzhuyifa*). With the increased securitization of Islamic practice, Hui Muslims' identity and religious life would be increasingly affected, as the Uyghurs had been impacted before. The Hui now risk losing both their status as a model Muslim minority and the high level of cultural security associated with this status. The cultural security of all Chinese ethnic and religious minority groups is now increasingly threatened the CCP's more and more assertive sinicization policies.

In the Xi era, the party-state became even more forceful than in the previous Hu era in its efforts to control China's religious and cultural traditions and in demanding their subordination to the CCP's ideology (Freedom

House 2018). Under Xi, the party emphasized that "communist party cadres must be unyielding Marxist atheists" and must "guide and educate religious circles and their followers" (*China.org* 2016). Although the CCP had been presenting conflicts with Uyghurs as part of a Global War on Terrorism for over a decade (Roberts 2020), such fears of foreign influence were now extended to many everyday practices of Islam.

The definition of non-violent expressions of resistance and religious faith as terrorism (Roberts 2020; Harris 2018) has caused increased tensions among religious and ethnic minorities. Although both Uyghurs and Hui people have faced increased cultural insecurity, for the Hui the situation has been new in that their elevated status as a model minority has increasingly been drawn into question. In Xinjiang, these measures have resulted in an increased security presence. CCP cadres, moreover, have been ordered to rural areas to "educate" the people regarding the threats of Islamism and to protect "ethnic unity" and "stability" (Human Rights Watch 2018).

While the CCP describes virtually all forms of unrest in Xinjiang as terrorism, it is important to distinguish growing unrest—some of it violent and emergent in response to increasingly repressive government intervention in Muslims' daily lives—from the four acts of civilian-targeted violence perpetrated in 2013–14 (Millward and Peterson 2020). In 2014, a group of knife-wielding Uyghur assailants killed 28 people and injured over 113 others at Kunming train station, an incident that became known as China's September 11 (Kaiman and Branigan 2014). The attack provoked outrage on Chinese social media and forced the government to intensify its already repressive measures (Abuza 2017).

In December 2015, the party-state implemented a new Counter-Terrorism Law, which would provide the basis for the subsequent mass internment of Uyghurs. Embracing a discourse of terrorism-related security threats, the government began securitizing religion and identity through the notion of "de-extremization" (*qujiduanhua*), which is focused on individuals, and "counter-extremism" (*fanjiduanhua*), which deals with groups (Topal 2021). In effect, Uyghur expressions of ethnic or religious group identity were equated with dangerous and illegal conduct. The new restrictions also prohibit veiling and fasting during Ramadan as well as the possession of religious texts and prayer carpets, which are important cultural and religious identity markers (Cook 2017). As these restrictions suggest, Uyghur-populated areas are increasingly subject to constant surveillance (Tobin 2020), which characterizes their inhabitants as a potential threat to national unity.

The Xi administration implemented new policies through the United Front Work Department, whose task is to subordinate all aspects of society

to the CCP, thereby eliminating non-party-controlled intermediary bodies and civil society groups (Wang and Groot 2018, 569). From the late 1940s onwards, the regulation of ethnic and religious communities has constituted the department's central preoccupation, and this task has only gained in importance in recent years (Wang and Groot 2018, 580). One major tool for strengthening loyalty to the regime presented as patriotism and support for the CCP among China's ethnic and religious minorities is the policy to sinicize religious practice within China—most obviously the three major religions of Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam. In effect, the campaign would lead to a reduction in the religious and cultural autonomy of religious minority groups in China.

Sinicization demands the removal of all foreign influences from the faith, a paradox since Islam was imported to China by Muslim traders. It entails the removal of Arabic script and architecture as well as calls to combat "halalization" (*fanqingzhenhua*, *qingzhenfanhua*), i.e., the alleged overreach of religious doctrine into everyday life. It also seeks to bring any residual permitted religious activities more firmly under party control (Grose 2020). Li Jianhua, secretary of the Party Committee of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region echoed Xi's demand "the notion of halal should not be generalized," for instance, by using halal designations outside dietary contexts and insisted (China Youth Network 2016) that "all Hajj pilgrimages that are not organized and administered by the CIA must be stopped to resist foreign infiltration" (*Zhongguo zongjiao* 2017, 20). These strict measures are intended to curb so-called de-sinicization (*quzhongguohua*) through the Arabization (*Ahua*, *Alabohua*), Saudization (*Shatehua*, *Shahua*) and halalization of Islam in China, referred to as "three -izations" (*sanhua*; see also Jarmila Ptáčková's chapter). In 2018, the party-state developed a new narrative of allegedly combating "foreign infiltration" among China's Muslims, particularly targeting Hui-inhabited areas. This extension of the policy of the "three forces" under the sinicization campaign was titled the "three -izations and two fevers" (*sanhua liangre*), which refers to the need to fight "Arabization," "Saudization," "halalization," and the "fevers of mosque building and hajj" (Lanzhou Honggu District Government 2020). The trend was described using the example of Gansu Province:

> [I]n the construction of Islamic activity venues, large domes and high preaching towers are built, burqas are worn, religious observance imitates the rituals of Arab countries; the interpretation of [Islamic] classics does not conform to China's national conditions, Chinese culture, and social

development, but seeks and follows models from abroad, and Arabic is
used as the language of the Hui. (People's Government of the Zhangjia-
chuan Hui Autonomous County 2018)

As a result of this new CCP discourse, similarities to global Islamic culture,
whether in the form of architecture, food culture, clothing, grooming, or
language, have increasingly been deemed deviant and problematic, not just
for Uyghurs but also for Hui people, who had previously enjoyed considerable
discretion to engage in the activities in question.

As part of the CCP-directed and CIA-administered *jiejing* (religious
interpretation) policy, Xi's sinicization campaign aims to strengthen the
"ideological guidance" given to Chinese Muslims and emphasizes the
need to implement strict measures against "infiltration by foreign actors
in China" (*Huanqiuwang* 2017). *Jiejing* means "(re)interpreting the Quran"
and has been implemented by local CIA branches since 2001. *Jiejing* reveals
the sophisticated ways in which the CCP exercises control over religious
officials and, we argue, ascribes a religious mandate to their own policy
priorities (Doyon 2014, 49). While it is sometimes described as a curriculum
of scriptural interpretation that emphases "patriotism," "territorial unity,"
and "ethnic unity" as core tenets of the faith (Glasserman 2016), *jiejing*
goes beyond mere curricula to establish a party-controlled and allegedly
religiously mandated way of thinking and acting for Muslims.

The use of *jiejing* work as a control mechanism is highlighted in a speech
given by CIA president Chen Guangyuan at a conference on Islamic interpre-
tation, which demanded that *jiejing* "meets the needs of Xinjiang's struggle
against separatism and actively guides China's Islam to adapt to socialist
society" (*Zhongguo zongjiao* 2011). *Jiejing* work seeks to combat the "three
forces," particularly among the Uyghur community in Xinjiang (*Zhongguo
zongjiao* 2013). In its most recent iteration, *jiejing* prevents Muslim pilgrim-
ages without CIA chaperones, the reading and possession of religious books,
translations of the Quran other than the state-sanctioned translation by
Hui scholar Ma Jian and the adherence to and propagation of *halal* lifestyles
that differ from the CIA versions.

The Regulations on Religious Affairs, amended in September 2017 and
implemented since February 2018, define the CCP's role as "protecting
legitimate religious activities while curbing and preventing illegal and
extreme practices" (State Council of the PRC 2017). However, these new
policies go beyond pre-existing requirements for religious organizations to
be registered by the state to possess property, publish literature, train and
approve clergy, and collect donations (Albert 2018). By regulating religion

through the lens of "illegal and extreme practices," religious life in China has been severely curtailed.

Additional sinicization requirements were detailed in a report titled "Religious Work Series, Five Years of Hard Work—Review of Islamic work since the Eighteenth National Congress of the CCP" (*Zhongguo zongjiao* 2017). The document states that the State Administration of Religious Affairs aims to resolutely forbid all private places of worship. In effect, all religious activities in personal dwellings were deemed unauthorized religious activities. This invasive approach to religious practice can also be traced in a campaign launched in 2014 and known as *fanghuiju*, i.e., "visit the people, benefit the people, and get together the hearts of the people" (*fangminqing, huiminsheng, juminxin*; Wang and Lei 2017, 32; see also Giulia Cabras' chapter). This campaign mandates officials from government agencies, state-owned enterprises, and public institutions to regularly visit and monitor predominantly Uyghur citizens in their homes and places of work. This practice shows that the autonomous spaces of Uyghurs in their own homes have been taken away by a party-state which makes a connection between the intimate details of people's daily lives and counter-terrorism. Visitors report on "extremist" behavior, which includes a range of daily Islamic practices such as praying, fasting, veiling, avoiding alcohol, speaking Uyghur, or expressing opinions not unreservedly supportive of the CCP (Smith Finley 2019). Visitors have also disseminated propaganda and attempted to "educate" away their Uyghur hosts' allegedly extremist beliefs (Byler 2018).

In 2016, the CCP used the same framing to launch the Becoming Family (*jiedui renqing*) campaign, which paired Uyghur families with Han party members or cadres of different ethnicities, allegedly to "improve Uyghurs' understanding of the identity and role of the Chinese nation" and "to crack down on illegal religious activities in accordance with the law" (Pu and Yang 2018, 39; Wang and Lei 2017). This policy meant that Uyghur families were forced to welcome supervisors into their homes, their lives, and even their beds (Kang and Wang 2018), effectively coercing Uyghur hosts to adopt Han culture and thus eliminating their cultural security and feeling of privacy. In early 2018, Xinjiang's authorities extended this program by tasking the cadres to spend at least five days out of every two months in Uyghur homes (Human Rights Watch 2018).

The crackdown on Islamic culture and religious practice now extended beyond Uyghurs and targeted Hui in Xinjiang and elsewhere. CCP officials defined "four activities" (*sixiang huodong*), i.e., the naming of new-born babies, circumcision festivities, weddings, and funerals (*qiming, geli, hunli,*

zangli), as additional security concerns (Cao 2017). It is these "four activities" which distinguish the Hui from the Han majority and are thus central to their sense of cultural security. While Hui people in some parts of China still use the guise of "culture" to engage in some of the above-mentioned activities (particularly outside Xinjiang), they face increased suspicion and scrutiny by the party apparatus.

In 2018, the CCP secretary of Cherchen (Ch. Qiemo) county in southern Xinjiang declared that:

> [W]e should no longer exclude the delicacies of all ethnic groups with "halal" and "non-halal," and all Uyghur party members and cadres must start "de-extremization" by emancipating their minds from the tip of their tongues, starting with dietary practices and with daily life practices such as naming, circumcision, weddings and funerals. We should declare war on "religion and clan bondage" and promote the complete separation of religion from ethnic customs ... We must resolutely prevent the religion-ization and religious extremization of ethnic customs ... (*Shouhu jiayuan* 2018)

As a result of this ever more expansive definition of extremism, cultural activities were emptied of all religious content and pressed into a secular mold, affecting both Uyghurs and Hui, particularly in Xinjiang.

An extended crackdown on religious practice was introduced with the "four entries to the mosques" (*sijin qingzhensi*), announced in May 2018 by the CIA. The policy demanded that "the national flag and anthem enter the mosque, the constitution, laws and regulations enter the mosque, the core socialist values enter the mosque, and the Chinese excellent traditional culture enters the mosque" (CMJ 2018.4; for more on "Chinese excellent traditional culture" and "core socialist values," see the introductory chapter by Jarmila Ptáčková and Ondřej Klimeš, as well as the chapters by Mohammed Alsudairi and Jarmila Ptáčková).

In late 2018 the "four entries to the mosque" were expanded to "five entries and five goods" (*wujin wuhao*) by adding the "spirit of the Twentieth National Congress of the CCP" (Hengyang City Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau 2022). The addition was explained as "forming a further exploration of Muslims' [in China] adherence to the direction of sinicization" (*Zongjiao minzubao* 2022). Yang Guanjun, President of the CIA's Beijing branch added that the "five entries" activities aim to improve "the patriotic enthusiasm of the Islamic community and Muslim masses, build a solid ideological foundation of being united with the party and walking with the country, and

further strengthen and deepen the understanding of the great motherland
…" (*Zongjiao minzubao* 2022). The "five goods" are "good political character,
good compliance with the law, good civilized and friendly behavior, good
cultural heritage, and good service to the society" (United Front Work
Department of the Yunnan Provincial Committee of the CCP 2019; CIA
Hunan 2018). These new policies require Hui people to publicly prove their
loyalty to the "party's religious policies and the spirit of General Secretary
Xi Jinping's speeches on religious work" (United Front Work Department
of the Yunnan Provincial Committee of the CCP 2018). In the same year,
Chinese authorities in Yunnan shuttered three Hui mosques for "illegal
religious education" and "illegal worship" (Chen 2018). Moreover, about
100,000 copies of the Quran were confiscated from closed Arabic language
schools and children were banned from learning Arabic in Shandong in
2020 (Ma 2020). The policies which had been applied to Uyghurs since 2014
were thereby imposed on the Hui.

The erosion of Hui privileges is also evident in the destruction of domes
and minarets on mosques in Inner Mongolia, Henan, Qinghai, Yunnan, and
even in the so-called "little Mecca" in Linxia, Ningxia (Domonoske 2018;
Feng 2019; Gan and Chang 2023; Myers 2019). Some Hui schools in Inner
Mongolia were "sinicized" by having crescent-shaped stone monuments
removed from their courtyards and Arabic slogans replaced with slogans in
Chinese (Ma 2020). Across China, Hui officials were prohibited from publicly
using Arabic script (Feng 2019). Some Muslims of the Zhuang nationality
in rural Yunnan were even forced to cremate their dead.[4] The *Chinese
Muslims* journal (*Zhongguo Musilin*; CMJ), which had previously praised
the construction of Arabic-style mosques and the interaction of Chinese
Muslims with Muslim-majority countries, now claimed that restrictions on
Hui religious practice had been unduly delayed by an excessive focus on
economic development (CMJ 2018.6a; for more on the reversal of the previous
cultural diplomacy with Arab countries in Ningxia, see Jarmila Ptáčková's
chapter). Similar restrictions were also applied to *halal* signage, whose
removal was presented by the CIA as a matter of "de-extremization" (CMJ
2018.6a). The party-state claimed that such measures are a way of helping
Chinese Muslims, a legitimation strategy that is echoed in a statement by
the Third Division of the State Bureau of Religious Affairs, which decried
the peddling of "fake *halal*" (*jia qingzhen*) food (CMJ 2018.6a).

The crackdown on China's Hui Muslims since 2016 is partly rooted in
the party-state's fear of fundamentalist strains of Islam, i.e., Salafism and

4   Confidential recordings.

Wahhabism (Al-Sudairi 2016; Gonul and Rogenhofer 2017). These strains are believed to be spread by Hui students who received private scholarships to attend religious institutions in Saudi Arabia or Pakistan (Leibold 2016; Durneika 2018). Patriotic slogans are no longer sufficient for Hui Muslims to be considered loyal; the sinicization campaign instead expects believers to sacrifice multiple aspects of their religious and cultural lives. As a result, the Hui are now experiencing a rapid erosion of their cultural security. The elevation of Hui culture and religious practice as the only legitimate form of Islam was used to isolate other Muslim minorities, particularly Uyghurs, but the same processes of othering and discrimination which first criminalized Uyghur Muslims have subsequently been extended to the Hui. Nevertheless, the sweeping arrests of Uyghur writers, scholars, and musicians (Ramzy 2019) and the mass incarceration of over one million Uyghurs in internment camps (Roberts 2020) suggest that Uyghurs remain the primary target of the CCP's religious and cultural sinicization policies. As a result, Uyghurs face an unprecedented level of cultural insecurity.

Conclusion

This chapter builds on studies by Vuori (2008; 2015) and Topgyal (2011a; 2011b), who showed that securitization also applies to non-democratic regimes and surfaces in the CCP's security discourses and policies towards its domestic population. We traced significant shifts in the CCP's approach towards its two most significant Muslim minority groups: Hui people and Uyghurs. Religious practice in China is always constrained by the requirements of compatibility with and subordination to CCP ideology. However, under Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin a degree of religious freedom existed, with Uyghur unrest in Xinjiang framed primarily as an issue of separatism. Following the September 2001 terrorist attacks, the CCP appropriated the U.S. discourse of the Global War on Terrorism to demarcate violent incidents and political protests in Xinjiang. The Hui Muslims were relatively unaffected by the securitization measures applied to Uyghurs at the time, and their characterization as a model minority provided many Hui people with access to economic opportunities and a level of cultural security. In the Xi era since 2012, the authorities' emphasis on sinicization has reinterpreted all acts of Islamic religious practice as potentially subversive behavior linked to terrorism. Uyghurs remain the primary target of this campaign, but the Hui have become an ancillary

target, which draws into question their model minority status and impacts their cultural security.

As Muslims in China cannot be treated as a singular entity, each of the PRC's predominantly Muslim nationalities faces distinct challenges to its perceived cultural security. Despite the Chinese government's efforts to promote a fixed and cohesive Chinese Muslim identity constructed around Hui religious practice, Muslim life in China remains complex and diverse. The CCP defines Muslim identity around the ideological aspiration to a harmonious society (*hexie shehui*), which includes the promotion of patriotism, economic development, social stability, and interethnic harmony. Its *jiejing* policies define the parameters of lawful Islam in China, including the religious tenets and practices tolerated by the party-state. Any forms of cultural or religious practice seen as violating this framework are treated by the CCP as a challenge to its power.

The articulation of religious and cultural practices under the "love the country, love the religion" policy (Ho 2013) initially enabled Hui Muslims to distinguish their Muslim identity from the securitized cultural and religious practices of Uyghurs. In contrast to Uyghurs, Hui Muslims were not viewed as a challenge to the PRC political order prior to the Xi era. Since 2012, visible signs of Islamic religious practice and other features that differentiate Hui and Han people have been considered threatening. These are therefore otherized and securitized under the label of "illegal religious activities" or "religious extremism." The gradual revocation of the model minority status of the Hui during Xi Jinping's reign suggests that the privileges granted due to Hui ethnic proximity to the Han are increasingly being subordinated to security policies. The Hui are now seen as more Muslim and less Chinese. Their friendly Muslim faces, which were on display during the 2008 Beijing Olympics and beyond, are nowadays deemed increasingly threatening by the CCP.

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4.   Muslims with Chinese Characteristics: The Sinicization of Ningxia after 2017

Jarmila Ptáčková

Abstract: In order to establish trade connections with Central Asia and the Middle East, Ningxia was promoted as a bridge connecting China, through its Muslim minorities, with the international Muslim community. Abrupt change came when the accent on nation-building overshadowed aims of cultural diplomacy and strategies for economic development. In the new context, the visualization and development of specific "unchinese" minority cultural features started to be understood as an obstacle to the nation-building efforts introduced by Xi Jinping. The capital city of Yinchuan changed from a "Muslim" city to a pure "Chinese" one within only one year. Ningxia is an example not only of the extreme inconsistency and waste of China's policy but also of the diverse mechanisms of (re) inventing cultural identity.

Keywords: Ningxia, Hui, Muslim China, cultural diplomacy, China-Arab connection

The city of Yinchuan, as well as the whole Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, used to be promoted by the local as well as the central government as China's center of Muslim culture. Hui culture and Muslim identity were made the fulcrum of local development. This narrative was made official in 2010, when the first China-Arab Economic and Trade Forum (later the China-Arab States Expo) was held in Yinchuan. To support the new "Muslim image" of the autonomous region, Arab architecture—or, at least, added ornaments—dominated the city. Even the street signs were equipped with captions in Arabic (which, according to my informants, were not always grammatically correct). This was intended to attract Arabs and other Muslims to invest in the development of Ningxia and solve its problematic economic situation

(Ma et al. 2009). The plan was adopted as part of general state strategies such as the domestic Great Opening of the West (*xibu da kaifa*) development strategy or the international Belt and Road (*yidai yilu*) initiative. Ningxia also became an important part of China's public diplomacy targeting Arab and other Muslim countries (see also Silverman and Blumenfield 2013). The international promotion of Hui Muslims in Ningxia also aimed at countering China's negative image caused by the repressive treatment of the Uyghur community in Xinjiang.

The visual "Muslimization" of Yinchuan was at its peak during my first visit in 2016. However, only a year later the elaborate transformation of Yinchuan had been reversed and the state- or province-funded public decorations that were supposed to evoke associations with global "Muslim culture" had been replaced with new "Chinese" symbols, such as red lanterns or carving-like ornaments. Arabic letters were removed from public spaces. And Islam in Ningxia and the Hui population became objects of re-sinicization. During my second visit only three years later, in 2019, Yinchuan thus appeared to be just another Chinese city hit by the most recent wave of development. Nothing was left of the "Muslim image."

The abrupt change recalls concerns already raised during the identification of nationalities (*minzu*) after the establishment of the PRC that "attributing too much importance to Islam would prevent the adaptation of the Hui to a modern Chinese nation" (Eroglu Sager 2021, 850). The growing influence of the international Muslim community on Muslim groups in China in the twenty-first century and the resulting increase in radicalization among Muslims in China (see Hacer Gonul and Julius Rogenhofer's chapter) caused worries for the CCP that the planned strengthening of Hui Muslim identity in Ningxia could lead to waves of unrest based on ethno-religious differences even from the Hui community (see, for example, Tobin 2015), which had so far been understood by the state as a group more compatible with the Han majority (see Friedrichs 2017) and more loyal to the Chinese state than other Muslims living in China, such as the Uyghurs (Bhalla and Luo 2013, 5).

The change started in 2017 (Stroup 2019), and the decisive moment leading to a rethink of Ningxia's development plan was the meeting of the 19th National Congress of the CCP, where president Xi Jinping (2017) called for the development of a "socialist culture with Chinese characteristics" and launched the final stage to unify all citizens as one Chinese nation (*Zhonghua minzu*), which was planned to be accomplished by the 100th anniversary of the founding of the PRC in 2049. As a result, the long-promoted multicultural image of China (Silverman and Blumenfield 2013, 6) was replaced by a

"unicultural Chinese" concept. Although some parts of the non-Han cultural heritage, such as the heroic legacy of Central Asian personalities or religions, have been reimagined as parts of the shared "Chinese culture" (Bulag 2020; Clark 2018), other aspects which clearly differentiate groups and support the establishment of different identities, such as language, are being removed as "obstacles to progress" (Bulag 2020). The second-generation ethnic policy forging a common culture, consciousness, and identity (Roche and Leibold 2020) shifted the accent from the fifty-six recognized ethnic groups as children of the mother China to one undistinguishable mass of the "Chinese nation" loving their country and loyal to the ruling CCP.

An Adjustable Hui Identity?

Islam was introduced to China by Arab and Persian merchants and soldiers who came via the ancient Silk Road or across the sea during the Tang dynasty (Na 2001, 177). The term *hui* as a consistent term for Muslims first started to be used in the thirteenth century (Gladney 1996, 17), and Islam was officially recognized as the fourth national teaching after Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism in the late Ming dynasty (Cheng 2018, 43). During the Ming and Qing dynasties, Islam underwent a decisive process of sinicization, which materialized through *Han Kitab*, a canon of Islamic literature written in Chinese language (see Bhatt 2023, 5). Islam adapted to Confucian principles through the "concept of dual loyalties"—claiming faith both to Allah and to the emperor, who was later replaced by the state and the party (Masumi 2006; see also Lipman 1998; Theaker 2022).

The Hui, who are not attached to one particular territory and in general consider China their home, who use Chinese as their own language (see also Na 2001; Ha 2020) and whose religion is adapted to Chinese circumstances, were not perceived as a foreign element in Chinese society (Lipman 1998). Their mosques were constructed with the same techniques as other temples and, from the outside, did not differ significantly from other Chinese religious sites, besides the crescent moon on the roof. This lack of clear visual attributes that would distinguish areas dominated by the Hui population from regions dominated by the Han was one reason why, during the second decade of the twenty-first century, the local government in Ningxia started to invest in building a more "Muslim" image for the Hui Autonomous Region that would be more consistent with claims about a shared cultural heritage and religious background of the Hui and other Muslims around the world.

Nevertheless, the Hui differed from the majority due to the social customs associated with their religion, which did not allow them to mingle with the majority population and gave them the status of a minority—an inferior status from the perspective of the Han (Bhalla and Luo 2013, 41). It is this "otherness" that has led to several waves of persecution against them throughout history (see for example Ouksel 2008). Their minority status later determined their identification as a nationality when the PRC was attempting to fulfil its "commitment to recognizing the existence of ethnonational diversity" (Mullaney 2010, 2–3). Seeking a "distinction between them and non-Muslim Chinese (Han), and between them and non-Chinese Muslims" (Benite cited in Gillette 2008, 1015), the Hui were one of the groups who proposed that they should obtain an official identity as a nationality. The confirmation of the ethno-cultural otherness of the Hui through their identification as a nationality had an "ideological, political and practical meaning" (Anttonen 2005, 79) for themselves as well as for the state. Together with the Mongols, Tibetans, Uyghurs, Miao, Yi, Koreans, Manchus, and Li, the Hui were considered a "generally accepted minority" or "existing group" with no need for further investigation and were recognized as a nationality in 1954, during the first wave of the identification of nationalities.[1]

For the Hui nationality, the religion plays an important role in marking the boundaries between them and the rest of the Chinese population. However, especially when dealing with other populations who believe in Islam, the nationality label appears to be equally important in defining one's identity. Eroglu Sager (2021, 852) suggests that "ethnicization of Muslim identity was the safest way to guarantee integration into a non-Muslim majority nation-state without jeopardizing their distinct Muslim identity." The contemporary Hui community thus defines itself in terms of both religion and ethnicity (Gladney 1996; Malzer 2020; Kang and Sutton 2016, 10). It is a group of multiple identities (Stroup 2016, 2) embodying the identity of the Hui nationality and the Chinese national identity as well as the supranational Muslim identity (Eroglu Sager 2021, 834; see also Bian Simei's chapter).

For some of today's Hui, their ethnic affiliation, i.e., their ability to trace their lineage to Arab or Persian ancestors, predominates as a major identity marker and is understood as a prerequisite for membership of the Hui community (Turnbull 2016; Lipman 2014, 144–45). For the majority, however, including those who converted, it is Islam that serves as the source of their collective identity (Gillette 2008, 1015–16; see also Eroglu Sager 2021),

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1   Groups repeatedly mentioned in imperial or republican texts (Zhongguode minzu shibie 106, cited in Wang 2015, 9; see also Gillette 2008, 1015; Bhatt 2023, 6).

distinguishing them from their neighbors of various ethnicities, whose language and some of whose cultural markers the Hui were able to adapt (see also Ding 2001) or to which they belonged before converting to Islam (see Chang 2015). The ability of the Hui to adapt to local circumstances, which allows them to integrate effectively into Chinese society, simultaneously distances them from the transnational Muslim identity (Holder 2016, 35). The Hui are thus people particular to China (Gillette 2008, 1017), to whom the distinctiveness of being a Muslim is as important as their Chineseness (Eroglu Sager 2021, 827). Perhaps more precisely than Islam, it is the term "*qingzhen*" that is characteristic of Hui Muslim identity in China (Gladney 1996). Meaning purity and truth, "*qingzhen*" not only refers to Islam and to the interpretation of its principles in accordance with Confucianism but is also symbolic of the entire Hui lifestyle and indigenousness (Zhang 2016, 157; Stroup 2022, 97–99; Bhatt 2023, 41).

In the period of Reform and Opening of the 1980s, the Chinese government decided to restore the Muslim identity of the Hui and other Muslim minorities in China as they were selected to boost economic development by helping to establish economic ties with the Middle East (Dillon 1999, 179). In a form of reciprocity, the Hui Muslims developed flexible strategies in response to the changing ruling policies that could be described as "practical rationality," which accentuated political and economic interests while preserving culture (Gui 2016b, 80).

The improvement in the economic situation of local Muslim communities as well as the revived contact with the global Muslim population which resulted from China's Islamic diplomacy helped to "renew interest in traditional Islamic values amongst Hui" (Holder 2016, 41). In this period (in 1981 in particular) the Nanguan Mosque was rebuilt after being destroyed during the 1960s and became the first mosque in Yinchuan to use Arabic architectural elements (Malzer 2020, 155). The visibility of Hui communities further increased following the launch of the Great Opening of the West development strategy and Islamic diplomacy has continued throughout the very recent Belt and Road initiative (Ptáčková 2020). The renewed economic prosperity of the Hui can be seen, for example, in the growing number of newly constructed mosques sponsored by local Hui communities. The preference for Arab-style mosque construction in recent decades reflects the aim to re-establish the transnational connections of the Hui with the global Muslim community along China's paths of economic and cultural diplomacy. According to my informants in Ningxia, the preference for Arab-style concrete mosques was also motivated by lower construction costs compared to the elaborate Chinese-style wooden roofs.

The large number of newly built mosques in the Arab style, however, suddenly made the landscape appear very Muslim. Even in regions perceived as culturally rather Tibetan, such as Qinghai Province, the new mosques gave the area a clear Muslim look. They manifested not only the overall presence of Hui communities—even outside the Hui autonomous areas—but also the continuous presence of Islam as a parallel authority to the party-state. This change in the landscape, which demonstrated a possible increase in the identification of China's Muslims with the global Muslim community to the detriment of their patriotic feeling towards the Chinese state, might have alerted the central government to a potential threat to its authority and led to the extension of restrictive and assimilatory policies to target not only undesirable expressions of ethnic identity but also unduly overt expressions of religious identity (see also Gonul and Rogenhofer 2019, 32; CECC 2021).

The fear spreading among the wider Muslim community abroad is that the policy change will lead to general persecution of Muslims in China. The Arabs, the objects of the former China-Arab friendship policy, observe with discontent, for example, increasing difficulties regarding the *hajj*. Besides religion, the Arabs fear a negative impact on the economy, although according to the Ningxia China-Arab Trade Office, from an economic point of view, Arabs are still welcome in China.[2] China's anti-Muslim sentiment could, however, undermine its Middle Eastern interests in the Belt and Road initiative.

The inconsistency of China's ethnic governance of Muslims, which is also apparent in the contemporary ethno-religious policies of the PRC, could also make the Hui "feel less belonging to the Chinese state" (Turnbull 2016, 132) and support their cultural transnational belonging instead. The cultural security of the Hui community is shaped on the one hand by their local socio-religious context and on the other by their belonging to the international Muslim community. The latter was the key factor that helped the Hui survive and develop cultural continuity even during times of local persecution. In the context of the contemporary Chineseness-oriented policy promoted by Xi Jinping, both of these pillars of the Hui Muslim identity—local as well as transnational—are being systematically removed. Moreover, in contrast to what McCarthy (2009) was able to observe earlier, the sinicization policy now affects the ethnic part of the Hui identity as well. The idea of replacing it with a "new national identity" represents a serious threat to the cultural and social self-consciousness of the Hui.

2   Interview with an employee of the China-Arab Trade Office, Yinchuan, May 2019.

From Chinese MUSLIMS to CHINESE Muslims

In contrast to the previous aim to emphasize the "Muslim" side of the Hui, the so-called "Chinese Muslim" community, the current sinicization policy accentuates the term "Chinese" (see Madsen 2021). Through its increasing global economic influence, China's controversial regime has gained acceptance among the wider international political community. This may be interpreted by the CCP as an endorsement of its development model. After humiliation and subsequent condescension from many Western countries throughout the twentieth century (see also Kaufman 2011), China is eager to assert its economic, political, industrial, and technical independence or even superiority over the Western powers in Europe and the USA. Through concepts such as the Chinese Dream (*Zhongguo meng*) or strategic plans such as Made in China 2025 (*Zhongguo zhizao erlingerwu*), the Chinese government is thus calling for faith in China and promotion of "Chineseness." In this context, the Hui in Ningxia are not promoted as part of the global Muslim community, but rather as Chinese people who believe in Islam. As such, their belief is localized and still considered part of Chinese culture. The emphasis is placed on the unique "Chinese Islam" that developed in the Chinese environment (Zhongguo Yisilanjiao xiehui 2019). This premise led to a ban on all expressions of Hui culture influenced by Arab Islam, as this might indicate that the Hui belong to the transnational Muslim community as well. The changing attitude of the state towards Hui communities can also be interpreted as an expansion of the "Xinjiang Model" of severe restrictions on expressions of Muslim culture and Islam beyond the borders of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (*Sina* 2018; CECC 2021; see also Harris 2010; Hacer Gonul and Julius Rogenhofer's chapter). In particular, this changing policy approach is noticeable in areas with administrative autonomy, such as Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region or Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu Province, which used to be called "the little Mecca of China." More recently these practices were observed also in Qinghai and Shaanxi (Bhatt 2023).

Restrictions on the religious and cultural expression of Muslims in China are part of the policy to sinicize the religion (*zongjiao Zhongguohua*), i.e., to make it "compatible with socialist society,"[3] which grew out of the fear

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3   "Already in 2001, as a response to both the global discourse on Islamic terrorism and domestic interethnic violence involving the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, the CCP established the Educational Administration Guidance Committee (*Jiaowu zhidao weiyuanhui*)" (Erie 2014). In the same year, the "China Islamic Association (*Zhongguo Yisilanjiao xiehui*) conducted and published

that the love of God could challenge the love of the motherland and the party (see, for example, General Office of the Central Committee of the CCP 2017, 22–23). According to this policy, religious faith, practice and rituals in Chinese culture and society should be "indigenized" and the sinicization policy should build "a juridical framework to monitor and control the growth of religion and its influence in China" (Harvey, 2020).

Following the 2015 United Front Work Conference, Xi Jinping advocated "fusing religious doctrines with Chinese culture and preventing the interference of religion in government affairs and education" (Leibold 2016, 12) and "to unite and organize the religious believers to strive for his Chinese Dream" (Shengtai baohubu 2021; Chang 2018, 37). Systematic changes intended to accomplish these goals began to be put in place in 2017, along with Xi's call to "fully implement the Party's basic policy on religious affairs, uphold the principle that religions in China must be sinicized (*Zhongguohua*) and provide active guidance to religions so that they can adapt themselves to socialist society" during the CCP's Nineteenth National Congress (Xi 2017).[4] Updated Regulations on Religious Affairs were passed by the State Council in September 2017 and took effect in February 2018. In March 2018, the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference approved the bureaucratic, ideological, and legal structure of sinicization that came into force in February 2020 (Haddad-Fonda 2019, 7).

With the premise that sinicization should lead to "more Chinese religious values, more Chinese religious symbols and more Chinese practice of the faith" (Vermander 2019, 136–37), the Five-Year Planning Outline for Persisting in the Sinicization of Islam in China (*Jianchi woguo Yisilanjiao Zhongguohua fangxiang wunian gongzuo guihua*; 2018–22), confirmed by the China Islamic Association, targeted the architectural style of mosques, which should "persist in frugality and practicality; and should be suited to China's characteristics, highlighting Chinese elements; and not chase after the big and exotic or use foreign architectural styles as the standard" (Zhongguo Yisilanjiao xiehui 2019). It also addressed the character of Muslim dress and religious ceremonies, which should "embody Chinese character and style, standardize Muslim attire for the *hajj*" and "not imitate foreign

interpretations of Islamic scripture, belief and law in accordance with state policy and Chinese socialism (*jiejing*)." It emphasized "justification for patriotism through Islamic rules, *aiguo aijiao* ... the central component of Chinese Islam" (Glasserman 2016, 48).

4   Xi had already mentioned the need to make sure China's religions are "Chinese in orientation" (*Zhongguohua fangxiang*) in his speech a year earlier, during the National Religious Work Conference on April 24, 2016 (Xi 2016).

dress." In terms of language use, Chinese should prevail as the language of religion (see also General Office of the Central Committee of the CCP 2017).

Confucius and his teaching has been revived as one of the symbols of Chinese culture. Adjusted to the contemporary situation, a modern adaptation of the Confucian principle of faithfulness to the emperor should be demonstrated through public displays of the loyalty of religious institutions to the CCP through the "four entries to the mosques" (*sijin qingzhensi*), which require mosques to be equipped with a national flag, to display the constitution and laws and regulations regarding religion, to uphold "core socialist values," and to adjust to "Chinese excellent traditional culture" (Zhongguo Yisilanjiao xiehui 2019; see also Hacer Gonul and Julius Rogenhofer's chapter). In 2018 further regulations prohibiting the spreading and sharing of religious content online, including videos or photos from masses or incense burning, were drafted and significantly expanded the platform for state interventions in connection with daily religious services (Vermander 2019).

Theoretically, Hui communities were not banned from practicing Islam; in reality, however, any semiotic expressions of faith or social differentiation through clothing or diet can be perceived negatively and at least as a lack of patriotic enthusiasm by the authorities (see also Grose 2020; Bhatt 2023). To comply with the rules of the Five-Year Planning Outline for Persisting in the Sinicization of Islam in China, mosques with Arab-style architecture were partly demolished as they had to undergo "height limitation" (see also Zhongguo Yisilanjiao xiehui 2019). The Arab decorations and inscriptions were dismantled, and the domes and minarets were removed and partly replaced by Chinese-style ornaments and roofs. The public call to prayer was stopped, so believers now have to keep track of prayer times by themselves. Prayers and rituals can only be performed in mosque complexes and nowhere else. Red national flags are displayed at each mosque, and all mosques are decorated with patriotic slogans as well as the new laws and regulations on religion. Children under eighteen are not allowed to visit mosques and participate in religious classes but are encouraged to attend school and vocational training instead. According to my informants in Ningxia, it is forbidden to speak Arabic at home, in mosques or with foreigners. Women are called upon to emancipate themselves through work in "poverty alleviation factories," to sew, or to embroider (Su 2020). In summary, the sinicization of Islam was interpreted by my Hui informants in the following way: "It is possible to believe inside, but on the surface you should appear like a Han."[5]

5   Interview with a Hui intellectual, Yinchuan, May 2019. See also Bhatt 2023.

For the Hui, Islam and its symbols constitute an important marker of their identity (Stroup 2016; Gladney 1996; Malzer 2020; Gui 2016a). As a group "dually peripheral: to the imagined center of the Islamic world and to the mainstream Chinese cultural and political spheres" (Turnbull 2016, 133), the Hui are fundamentally reliant on their local socio-religious community. The restrictions on the expression of their faith and affiliation to the cultural and religious community built around the mosques thus severely endanger their feeling of cultural security. For what remains of a Chinese Muslim deprived of his religion? A Chinese.

Rethinking the Image of Ningxia

The growing awakening of cultural awareness among the Hui and other minority nationalities started to be perceived by the contemporary regime as an element that could potentially endanger China's political and perhaps also geographic integrity. The government thus re-evaluated its support for multiculturalism and reverted to consolidating social control. Even though there was no ethnically or religiously motivated unrest in Ningxia, as a measure of prevention and in line with the new policy directive of the sinicization of Islam, the government of the autonomous region stopped promoting actions that could be perceived as encouraging the spread of Muslim influence through the "three -izations" (*sanhua*)—Arabization (*Ahua, Alabohua*), Saudization (*Shatehua*, *Shahua*), and halalization (*fanqingzhenhua*, *qingzhenfanhua*; see also Hacer Gonul and Julius Rogenhofer's chapter). The systematic elimination of anything that could be interpreted as a foreign element of Islam severely impacted not only the Hui cultural environment but also the entire economic development plan for Ningxia based on its Arab image and the international promotion of its Muslim community. The new policy directive, which is promoted as enhancing Chinese cultural unity, only permits cultural expressions that unmistakably represent Ningxia's relationship to Chinese culture, social organization, and history.

The new policy can be seen in the ban on Arabic script, which led to the removal of Arabic signs from public spaces, *qingzhen* or *halal* signs from restaurants, and Arabic descriptions on products (see also Bhatt 2023). Arab-style ornaments were removed from the facades of mosques and houses, the construction of new mosques was banned and standing Arab-style mosques were to be demolished or rebuilt in a "Chinese way" (RFA 2018).

In Yinchuan city, starting from 2017, the monuments celebrating Chinese-Arab friendship were removed or rebuilt. The brand new public promenade

China-Arab Axis (*Zhong A zhizhou*) was renamed Unity Lane (*tuanjielu*) and redecorated with red Chinese ornaments reminiscent of Chinese carvings and lanterns. Minor changes were made to the neighboring Ningxia International Hall, where the China-Arab Expo takes place, which was originally designed to resemble a Hui woman's head covering. Another marker of the city center, the China-Arab theatre, was renamed Ningxia People's Theatre.

The planned World Muslim City on the outskirts of Yinchuan is now simply called the International Trade City (*guoji shimaocheng*). The plans to focus on Islamic culture drawn up during city planning (Ptáčková 2020) and construction were abolished and the site became just another anonymous development area.

The Park of China's Hui Homeland Culture (*Zhonghua Huixiang wenhuayuan*), a former center to promote the Hui Muslim cultural image of Ningxia in Yinchuan, was never overcrowded with visitors. In 2019, however, it became a ghost park. The artists employed there to perform "Hui" dances to the visitors had already been fired in 2017. In May 2019, the Golden mosque that was conceived not as a religious building but as a museum was awaiting a reconstruction to appear more "Chinese."[6] The Silk Road Museum, which had previously focused on providing evidence of historical interconnections between Chinese Muslims and the Muslims of the Middle East and Central Asia, complied with the new policy directives by removing all the exhibition panels that had previously elaborated on the transnational affiliation of the Muslims of China. Only panels describing the Hui in China were left, and among them empty spaces and traces of glue on the museum walls were the only reminders of the rest of the exhibition (see also Malzer 2020). The change in policy is even noticeable before entering the cultural park. From its original name, Park of China's Hui Homeland Culture, which was depicted in golden characters on the impressive entrance redolent of the Taj Mahal, the word *Zhonghua* (China's) has been removed and only Park of Hui Homeland Culture (*Huixiang wenhuayuan*) remains. This might only be a matter of coincidence, or it might be a demonstration of the restrictions on the use of the term *Zhonghua* in certain religious or social contexts (see Central government of the PRC 2019). Moreover, it might be intended to underline the proposed aim of the central government that the contemporary society of the PRC cannot be divided into China's Hui, China's Tibetans, or China's Han, but is instead one homogenous society consisting of all China's nationalities, the Chinese nation. However, as we

6   Interview with a park keeper and former dancer in the Hui cultural park, Yinchuan, May 2019.

can still find the term *Zhonghua* in connection with a certain "*minzu*" (as in Jan Karlach's chapter[7]), the problem might actually be the term *xiang* ("homeland"), since evoking the designation of Ningxia as the "homeland" of the Hui might actually grant them the common territory they lack (for example, in contrast to the Uyghurs or the Tibetans). Within the *Zhonghua* concept, everyone shares one homeland and that is China.

Through the same solution of removing the term *Huizu* from the exhibition boards of the Ningxia handicrafts center, the traditional handicrafts earlier praised as a specific feature of the Hui community suddenly became a part of the common Chinese cultural heritage (*Zhonghua wenhua*) in Ningxia.

Although the Ningxia government did its best to comply with the new policy of sinicization of culture and religion, during his visit to Ningxia in June 2020, President Xi Jinping urged the local administration to be more thorough in implementing religious reform (Ma 2020). As a result of his visit, from the second half of 2020 more mosques lost their minarets and domes and were rebuilt to comply with the "Chinese style," meaning that all Islamic ornaments and instances of Arabic script were removed.

The negative impact of the systematic de-Islamization policies promoted through the Five-Year Planning Outline for Persisting in the Sinicization of Islam in China on local development can be seen, for example, in the reduction of targeted tourism from Arab countries. Plans for the expansion of *halal* food production were canceled and caused a large loss to Ningxia's economy (Zhongguo Yisilanjiao xiehui 2019; see also Erie 2014, 95). Although my informants said the central government had partially made up for the resulting local GDP deficit, the change in policy meant it was necessary to start yet again to create a new model for Ningxia's sustainable economic development. Instead of promoting Hui Muslims and their culture, the "Beautiful New Ningxia" policy emphasizes the rather neutral topic of environmentally sustainable solutions, environmental protection and tourism focusing on natural sites (Wang 2018; *CCP News* 2021; *Ningxia xinwenwang* 2020).

The importation of the "Xinjiang Model" to Ningxia is evident in far more areas than religious-cultural restructuring. It is also apparent in a new level of technological surveillance, demonstrated through full face recognition at Yinchuan airport, which Beijing could only have dreamed of in 2019 (see also Zizhiqu gonganting 2020 nian du fazhi zhengfu jianshe gongzuo

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7   At least in regard to certain events and groups, such as the Yi, the connection of *Zhonghua Yizu* (*Zhonghua Yizu jizujie*) still seems to be in use in 2023 (http://www.dlweishan.gov.cn/wsrmzf/c102087/202302/0fd2a894707644cdb27f1377a5d849bf.shtml).

qingkuang baogao). The widespread installation of facial recognition and other mechanisms of daily surveillance in other parts of China, including Beijing, was only possible as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was used to justify many centralized control measures.

Muslims with Chinese Characteristics

The multifaceted and "simultaneous" (Bhatt 2023; 12) identity of the Hui has enabled them to adapt to new geographical, ethno-cultural and political environments, and they have been able to prosper in China under its various regimes. Their flexibility in this regard made them perfect candidates to assist with economically driven state policies targeting prosperous Muslim countries in Asia and the Middle East. Their ability to absorb external cultural influences has also allowed the government to shape Hui Muslim "identity markers" according to its needs. This is exemplified by the deliberate Arabization of the Hui identity in Ningxia during China's campaign to attract Arab investors (see Ptáčková 2020)—a development that might have strengthened or awakened a sense of common belonging to the global Muslim community among some members of the Hui community, while it would have left others almost untouched, as they no longer considered the Arab-Islamic cultural heritage their own. Many Hui did not understand the Arabic language that was displayed on public signs as the language of their daily practice; neither did they identify with the rather Central Asian clothing promoted by the state at the Hui cultural parks and museums.

By contrast, the Hui community was deeply impacted by the sinicization policy, which touched the core of a Hui Muslim ethno-religious identity built around the mosques as social spaces and places of faith, and which is systematically destroying an entire socio-cultural structure built around Islam and the *qingzhen* way of life. It could be argued that an elimination of religion-based behavior patterns that demarcated the Hui from non-Muslim Chinese society might increase their assimilation. On the other hand, depriving them of their sociocultural self-confidence, i.e., their cultural security, could reduce their willingness to adapt to the sociocultural landscape they share with other ethnic groups that still maintain the markers of their cultural identity. Moreover, the policy reversal might not prevent discontented Hui from venting their grievances against the CCP's authoritarian rule, but rather encourage them.

The "Chinese culture" Xi Jinping (2017) is calling for, which is intended to become the basis for China's future development, should not be understood in the context of art or as a specific historical heritage that developed within

an ethnic group and became its identity marker (see also Mohammed Alsudairi's chapter). Neither is there something that can be called "Chinese religion" (Vermander 2019). In the CCP's discourse, the term "culture" can be read as "socialism with Chinese characteristics"—as blind obedience to the CCP, which in China "permeates every aspect of the state and its functions" (Narayanan 2011). This "socialist culture with Chinese characteristics" is now supposed to replace all structures hidden in local ethno-religious contexts that could challenge the superiority of the CCP. The potential of religion to challenge and even undermine the hegemony of socialist thought in the country has been clear since the introduction of socialism as a social and political system. But only recently has the Chinese party-state felt strong enough, through its level of infrastructural development and technological advancement, to directly confront religious institutions and people's faith. China's leadership now feels it has the means to enforce society's break with religion. In this manner, the policy to sinicize religion aims to deprive all religious institutions of their autonomy and prevent them from acting as parallel sources of authority to the CCP and Xi Jinping as the ultimate ruler of China. The "Chinese religion" is merely a transmitter of the CCP ideology to the believer community.

As the Chinese party-state does not allow for cultural autonomy within the Chinese culture for the New Era, there is not enough space for Muslims within Islam with Chinese characteristics. Moreover, we see the realization of James Leibold's (2016, 15) prediction that China's policies to limit the expressions of cultural identity of its various ethnic communities will not help the assimilation process but "deepen the divide between the Han majority and China's 120 million ethnic minorities."

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5. Big Bad Wolf: Masculinity and Heroes in Modern Uyghur Literature

Michal Zelcer–Lavid

Abstract: Men were the cornerstone of the Uyghur family and society and the core of the cultural and economic system in Xinjiang. Shifting power dynamics within Uygur society and the rise of Uyghur women have weakened the traditional role of Uyghur men. In the daily reality, Uyghur men are discriminated against in employment, education, housing, and political representation by the Han. This inferiority has led to the emphasis on physical masculine traits as an ethnonational symbol aiming to represent Han man as "feminine" and "weak" compared with the "masculine" Uyghur man. This chapter defines the representation of Uyghur masculinity through contemporary Uyghur literature. The literary space is an oasis of manhood in which the authors, mostly men, can, on the one hand, debate their decreasing status and, on the other, create an "imagined hegemony" in order to secure and preserve their culture.

Keywords: Xinjiang, masculinity, Uyghur, China, literature

> *"One cannot always be a hero, but one can always be a man."*
> (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe)

Every culture presents its model of masculinity, stylized according to its local history, religion, and customs. Although masculinity is an inseparable part of the patriarchy typical of some Muslim cultures in general, and a central component of Uyghur identity in particular, Uyghur masculinity has not been deeply researched.[1] Masculinity comes into play in the earliest stages

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1   For research on Uyghur masculinity, see Bellér-Hann 1998; Byler, 2021; Dautcher 2009; Smith Finley 2013; Zang 2012.

of a Uyghur boy's life. His "masculinity" and maleness are constantly related to by the women in his environment: mother, grandmothers, aunts, sisters. The Uyghur boy spends his childhood in games meant to determine his "masculine" status among his peers. Masculinity is reinforced through games and competitions which continue throughout the adolescent's and young man's life and are an essential aspect of the way male socializing functions in the *meshrep*,[2] a traditional male gathering that usually occurs during celebrations and includes music, dancing, and customary performances, and in the drinking binges that mark family and community events (see Dautcher 2009; Thwaites 2005).

Muslim masculinity takes various forms. Like any other identity, male identities are changed and shaped by the economy, politics, culture, and demography (see Ouzgane 2013; De Sondy 2013). At the same time, there is a religious context that underpins Muslim masculinity, which is also manifested in the Uyghur case. Uyghur masculinity draws its status from traditional values and customs which conventionally delineate the man's function as head of the family and provider of its livelihood (Byler 2021, 23) in contrast to women, who manage household tasks and care for their children and their elderly parents (Bellér-Hann 1998). The Uyghur man was traditionally perceived by Uyghur society as independent and dominant, and was supposed to be able to demonstrate strength and resilience in times of pressure and distress (Zang 2012, 21–23). As Byler has mentioned in his recent book, in contemporary Xinjiang, young Uyghur men demonstrate their masculinity not by dominating women, as was customary among the older generation, but by protecting each other from government discrimination and persecution. These changes preserve the significant role of men as resilient protectors. In Zang's (2021, 25) study on the perception of masculinity and femininity among the Uyghurs, men and women both defined the trait of self–sufficiency as most important in a man, and these findings are in line with the patriarchal hegemony of many Muslim societies. There are hierarchical norms of obedience to the older generation, but men are required to demonstrate more self-reliance than women. This is interesting not just in the context of gender but also in a political-economic context, because the Uyghur man of today is neither self-sufficient nor independent. Perhaps this reality is what accounts for Uyghur society assigning this trait prime importance in the perception of Uyghur masculinity, yet it demonstrates the disparity between the masculine image and the actual status of Uyghur men.

2   Unless otherwise stated, all terms in italics in this chapter are in Uyghur.

I propose viewing Uyghur masculinity, as it is portrayed in Uyghur literature, as an "imagined hegemony" in which Uyghur males experience superiority over Han males. The former draw their hegemony from an implied representation of Han men as "effeminate" and therefore fearful of Uyghur men.[3] In this way, the Uyghur preserve a stereotype of thuggery and violence. Uyghur masculinity is "imagined hegemony" since it is currently based primarily on external manly characteristics, such as a large physique and facial hair. In the everyday reality of Xinjiang, the status of Uyghur men is weakening under Han majority hegemony. Uyghur men feel inferior to their Han counterparts who, in addition to being the dominant group are also given preference in employment, studies, residential options, and political representation in Xinjiang (Pannell and Schmidt 2006; Bovingdon 2011; Roberts 2016).

Uyghur men's sense of inferiority has led them to preserve, and even reinforce, physical markers of masculinity to strengthen their status and eclipse Han men, at least in this respect. The external traits emphasize the potency of Uyghur masculinity relative to Han masculinity, the latter traditionally presenting a more "feminine" male model in external appearance (Baranovitch 2007, 73–74). This representation can also be interpreted as defiance in light of attempts to present minorities in China as effeminate and thus inferior, whether in works of art, literature, or popular culture. By presenting minorities as sexual, primitive, feminine, and exotic, those works accentuate that the Han are superior, modern, and dominant by comparison (see Dautcher 2000; Friederich 2007).

This chapter deals with the struggle over the Uyghur male's status as manifest in Uyghur literature during the current period of reforms, which began in 1978. The most popular genre in modern Uyghur literature, which rose in the 1980s, was realism. It dealt with the changes in the cities and villages in Xinjiang during the reform era or depicted significant historical events. At the same time, there was also a return to more traditional genres, and even avant-garde literature began to develop during this period (Friederich 2007, 103–5; Zelcer–Lavid 2018, 568–69). The new literary style was not accepted by readers, who could not identify with it, or by critics, who opposed its rawness (Sulitan 2003, 84; Chao 2005, 73).

The political policies of the region have influenced the literary climate in Xinjiang. During the 1980s it was more acceptable to engage in sensitive issues, such as Uyghur history, as long as there were no direct nationalist

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3   For Han Chinese "soft" masculinity and attitudes toward minority masculinities, see Hillman and Henfrey 2006, 254–56.

manifestations. The situation changed in the mid-1990s with the Strike Hard against Violent Terrorist Activities (*yanli daji baoli kongbu huodong*) campaign the government launched in response to the unrest in the region (Dillon 2004, 84–92). This campaign and those which followed it were officially declared a struggle against terrorism and religious extremism. The Uyghurs perceived them as assimilation attempts. The tight governmental control affected the literary scene, as authors were persecuted for expressing nationalistic or religious sentiments (Zelcer-Lavid 2021, 5).

The notable change occurred in 2017, when massive oppression began in Xinjiang (see Roberts 2018; Zenz 2019). Many Uyghur intellectuals, including writers, were arrested and sent to detention camps. This situation influenced Uyghur culture and led to an inevitable decline in literary production in contemporary Xinjiang. The widespread wave of arrests endangers the status and image of Uyghur men and, to a large degree, excludes them from the public space. However, in the absence of a literary discourse on the subject, it is impossible to discuss literary expressions reflecting the current dilemmas of gender and masculinity.

Through analysis of literary works written mainly in the 1990s and early 2000s and interviews with authors, this chapter proposes a definition of how masculinity is represented in Uyghur literature.[4] Uyghur masculinity can be approached from various perspectives and is a vital part of the Uyghur cultural identity. This cultural identity is under constant threat from the ruling Han culture. The regime has an interest in changing the social dynamics associated with Islamic values, and men's high status is seen as a tangible threat to loyalty to the government. In this context, Uyghur masculinity faces several challenges. Some stem from the forced adoption of Han culture via the education system, the media, and local government. Others are the result of economic policies and modernization, which have changed various aspects of the traditional way of life, men's role in society among them. This has led to a loss of status among Uyghur men, which is considered by many Uyghur authors to endanger local cultural values and prevailing family traditions.

The various literary works selected for this chapter demonstrate how these challenges are seen through the eyes of Uyghur authors and portrayed by their protagonists within the limits of politically permissible discourse in China. These works are representative examples of various aspects related to the status of the Uyghur men in Uyghur popular literature published in

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4   This chapter is partly based on fieldwork conducted in Xinjiang in autumn 2006, during which I interviewed Uyghur authors and poets for my doctoral dissertation exploring ethno-national identity in contemporary Uyghur and Tibetan literature.

recent decades. Muhemmed Baghrash's story depicts issues related to family, livelihood, and the place of religion in contemporary culture. The poem of Abdulehed Abdurishit Berqi deals with the continuity and preservation of the past. Memtimin Hoshur's story describes the prevailing view of the government that Uyghur men pose a threat to public peace. The literary discussion around male roles and status is a type of indicator vis-à-vis the state of Uyghur society in general. The diminution in men's status is an inevitable process, and it is not singular to Xinjiang, but is undoubtedly of significance due to the Han male hegemony over Uyghur males. The gender discourse thus becomes a national discourse on the place of traditional Uyghur culture under the dominant regime.

The link between masculinity and nationalism is based on control and power balances which began towards the end of the nineteenth century in the West simultaneous to the definition of both terms (Mosse 1996, 7). Both masculinity and nationalism are based on hegemony, whether that is the hegemony of a nation over its own country, the hegemony of men over women, or the hegemony of men over other men viewed as inferior (Nagel 1998, 251). In the colonialist era, native men were represented in a way that was meant to justify their suppression by white men. As such, their representation accentuated their "violent and explosive" masculinity, which was perceived as a threat to white women and was positioned as oppositional to the refined masculinity of the white man, the ruling class (Dasgupta and Gokulsing 2013, 8). The cultural representation of Uyghur males, which mostly emphasizes physical, macho characteristics, was not generated by the state (which does, however, represent their masculinity as "dangerous")[5] but by Uyghurs themselves. This is the space in which they preserve a certain kind of control, even if it is only imagined.

Another focus of this chapter is the gap between traditional patriarchal values and socialist values that promote, if only rhetorically, gender equality. One of the reasons for the significance of masculinity in Uyghur literature is that most of the popular authors are men. These authors, among them men born in the 1940s and 1950s, saw how their parents preserved the patriarchal model in their homes while having to take part in political campaigns of the Mao period which, inter alia, called for gender equality and promoted the concept that "women hold up half the sky" (see Yang and Yan 2017). This contradiction became more acute with the start of the reforms in 1978 when, while traditions and culture were being restored, far-reaching social and economic changes were simultaneously taking place which weakened the

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5   For Han/Uyghur stereotypes, see Smith Finley 2013, 125–29.

status of men as the providers and heads of families. The more modernized and independent Uyghur women became, the more Uyghur men felt a need to reinforce their masculine image in order to maintain the traditional ethnic traits of Uyghur society and the status of men in that society.

Moustaches, Knives, and Wolves: Literary Representations of Masculinity

The predominant model of masculinity in Xinjiang was influenced by Turkic Muslim culture, which considers the hair of the head and body a simultaneously religious and sexual symbol (Delaney 1994, 161). In Muslim culture, women were obligated to cover their hair once they had reached sexual maturity as a sign of sexual restraint and of being under the patronage of their fathers and, later, their husbands. Men, by contrast, nurtured their hair as one of the signs that they belonged to society (Alimen 2018, 116). Many young men groom moustaches to display their vitality and virility (Bromberger 2008, 381). Adult men who have made the pilgrimage to Mecca grow a beard on their return from *hajj*, since a beard constitutes an important status symbol which not everyone is worthy of bearing. Young men with beards are therefore viewed as rebellious, heretics, and harming the status of adults (Delaney 1994, 168). Uyghur tradition is similarly replete with myths and customs related to hair. Women's hair was known to be alluring and was a symbol of sexuality and fertility, while men's hair was religious, political, and a status symbol (Bellér-Hann 2004, 26–29).

   With the revival of Uyghur culture following the destructive outcome of the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) and the relative liberalization of the 1980s, a return to traditional customs began to take place.[6] Growing a beard was identified with Islam. The PRC authorities considered this a marker of religious loyalty which threatened loyalty to China. For this reason, people in positions of public service or education were prohibited from having a beard (Leibold and Grose 2016, 95). As part of the current cultural and religious oppression in Xinjiang, in 2015 the government announced religious restrictions that included, among other things, a ban on "abnormal beard" growth.[7] A long beard was seen as a sign of religious extremism,

6   One such tradition is the pilgrimage to Mecca, which has become more popular since the late 1990s (Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China 2000, 257).
7   Women were also subject to restrictions regarding dress and fashion as part of "Project Beauty," launched in 2011. The project aimed to change the look of traditional Uyghur woman to

and already in 2013–14 was a cause for "re-education" in certain areas in southern Xinjiang (Zenz 2019, 105).

Since growing a beard placed severe limitations on employment options, nurturing a moustache became an even more important symbol of masculinity, eventually becoming the most popular external symbol of masculinity among the Uyghur (Bellér-Hann 2002, 69). The moustache signifies cultural affiliation while also distinguishing Uyghur men from Han men. The story *Burut Majirasi* (The Moustache Dispute) by Memtimin Hoshur (1944–) is instructive vis-à-vis the importance of the moustache as a symbol of masculinity while simultaneously exposing the "imagined hegemony" of Uyghur masculinity.

This story from the 1990s is written in the first person with Hoshur's characteristic blend of humor and cynicism. The author was born in Ghulja and completed his studies at the Department of Literature and Language at Xinjiang University in 1967. In the 1970s, he served as a clerk in the government of the Ili region. From 1979 to 1995, he was involved in the world of creative writing and edited the literary journal, *Ili Deryasi* (The Ili River). After becoming known as an author, he served as the chair of the Xinjiang Writers Association from 1995 to 2006 and as a member of the China Writers Association. He is one of the most renowned Uyghur authors in China, and his stories have been translated into Chinese, publicized in important journals, and earned prestigious literary awards. It is important to note, however, that Uyghur authors are not overly popular in China, and most are unfamiliar to Han readers.

As in other stories by Hoshur, right at the outset the narrator encounters the story's protagonist, who gives him a manuscript that details the events of his life. The anonymous protagonist asks that the narrator publish the story in his name. This allows Hoshur to write in the first person without the narrative being tied to him. It is a style which provides relative freedom due to the author's senior status and familiarity in Uyghur society. The technique adds to the narrative's authenticity, which in retrospect reflects the life of a regular person, someone with whom the reader can easily identify.

At the center of the plot conveyed by the anonymous storyteller is a knife battle whose nature becomes clearer as the narrative progresses. The speaker, who is the plot's hero, hears about the incident from the local police officer, who asks the protagonist to make a list of everyone with a moustache. This is because a large-bodied man with a handlebar moustache committed murder in broad daylight in the city market. The speaker is so pressured by

that of a "modern woman." All veiling styles have been banned since 2015, and there is constant pressure on Uyghur women to adopt Chinese fashion norms (see Grose 2020).

this instruction that he quickly shaves off his own moustache, and demands that his firstborn, Ahmetjan, who has a resplendent moustache, do likewise, out of fear that they will be accused of a crime that not only they did not commit but eventually has never occurred:

> I fingered my moustache, short, sparse; it could hardly really be called a moustache. I calmed down and returned to my yard. My son sat beneath the awning polishing his shoes. When I saw him, I could hardly prevent myself from seething with rage: how had I not noticed that he had grown a moustache, thick and large?
> "Ahmetjan, look at me!"
> "What?" he glanced, distracted.
> Allah in heaven! Beneath my son's nose a small collar wiggled, a thick black moustache. If he didn't shave it, within four days it would reach his ears.
> "Today you're going to get rid of that!"
> "What did you say?"
> "I said, 'That's your moustache.'"
> "Why does my moustache bother you, father? Don't you have a moustache too? Not all men these days …"
> "Better you should shut up! Listen, both of us are going right away to the barber to shave our moustaches."
> Actually, I don't care, but for my son to shave his moustache is like chopping off his head. This time I am implementing all my authority as a father. I never even allowed him, when he begged, to take a photo as a keepsake. I pushed him into the barber to shave that "collar" beneath his nose. (Maimaitiming Wushou'er 2001, 170–71)[8]

As the father suspected, the barber squealed on everyone who chose to shave their moustaches that day, and the father was summoned to an investigation in the new mayor's offices. Upset by the investigation, that night he shouts in his sleep, signaling a nightmare. His wife is disturbed and wakes him, and he relates the following dream:

> I dreamt that we were both seated on the *supa*.[9] You were preparing the wool. I asked what you were making, and you said you were unravelling

8   The story was translated from Chinese. An excerpt from the story was translated from Uyghur by Darren Byler and Mutellip Enwer (2014, 1697–1771). Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.
9   A raised plank which in China is called *kang* and serves as a bed. In traditional Uyghur homes this plank is an inseparable part of the *dalan*, the family living area (see Dautcher 2009).

old clothes in order to make new ones for the children. I thought for a moment and said, happily, "Can you unravel me and reknit me?" Don't laugh, now; that's exactly what I said. And you said, "I can unravel you, but when I reknit you, there'll be remnants and you'll be smaller." "It's better if I'm smaller, so I beg of you, unravel me, and reknit me, before the light of day rises." After you promised, you undressed me, placed me on the *kang*, and began to unravel the soles of my feet. I felt a tingling in the area you worked on, but no pain. I lay comfortably and when you reached my neck, the thread became a tie. You didn't hear me scream and continued to pull on the thread. I felt myself choking, I waved my arms every which way. I opened my eyes, aggravated, and realized it was a nightmare and you were standing facing the *kang*. (Maimaitiming Wushou'er 2001, 173)

In Uyghur tradition, dreams about hair carry symbolic significance. A dream about cutting the hair of the head foretells good fortune and anticipated wealth. By contrast, a dream about cutting the beard is a bad sign portending loss of social status (Bellér-Hann 2004, 29). In his dream, the hero is not shorn; rather, his entire body is unraveled into threads which are meant to be reshaped into a new man. The dream describes the difficulty that the speaker feels when he must rid himself of the markers of his masculinity: his moustache and physical size, which are comparable to those of the murder suspect. Before shaving his moustache, the hero tells the policeman that he grew a moustache only because he felt ashamed of his oldest son growing one while he himself had not. After shaving his moustache, he began to sense its importance, and blamed himself for being so hasty because he felt persecuted for having a moustache and a large body.

His masculine characteristics become, in the dream, a tie that chokes him, threatening his very life. The fact that it is his wife who is unravelling the threads for the purpose of knitting a new, small-bodied man contributes to the dream's symbolism. The narrator feels threatened by the mayor, who represents the government, and by his wife, who represents changes in Uyghur society. The narrator feels he is losing his masculine identity and, as later becomes apparent, his Uyghur identity as well, but his cries are not heard.

In the mayor's office, the nature of the market incident is clarified. Several youngsters attacked a man who, in reaction, drew his knife. After they got control of that knife, he drew another, which they also took from him. He drew a third, larger blade. The vegetable seller from the adjacent stall began screaming and everyone fled. No one was hurt, and no murder was committed. In a bag discovered near the scene of the event, fourteen large

knives and several sharpening tools were found, which roused the mayor's concern and fury:

> The mayor slammed his fist down on the table, shoved his chair back as he stood, and said to me, "Know what? People who grow moustaches always have a knife on them. Just when we wanted to list all the men with moustaches you go and shave yours! It's not such a simple matter. Do you think that what happened in the street on Sunday is just regular bedlam? No! […] These days several knife wielders are out there trying once more to do something stupid. Who can be sure that they aren't doing bad things?" (Maimaitiming Wushou'er 2001, 175)

The mayor presents stereotypical mustachioed Uyghur males as "troublemakers." This stereotype derives from the Han image of the Uyghurs as criminals, thieves, and drug dealers (Kaltman 2007, 75). The image of young Uyghur adults with evident facial hair, hatted, their shirts open halfway down their chests and long knives in sheaths hung in the back of their belts, would also have aroused the indignation of the Uyghur by reinforcing the prevalent stereotype in China vis-à-vis "uncultured" minorities (Bellér-Hann 2002, 69). For many Uyghurs, however, this image of danger is a source of ethnic pride.

The image manifests in the Chinese paraphrasing of the Uyghur word *bala*, meaning "boy." Han call young Uyghurs *balangzi*, which contains the Chinese word *lang*, meaning "wolf." Dautcher has explained that this is a demeaning epithet which paints Uyghur youth as wild animals waiting for their innocent prey. Han parents use the concept *balangzi* to scare their children into obedience (2009, 64).[10] The term is not linked specifically to the Uyghur people but to a type of wolfman which will punish children who do not behave properly, yet it promotes the embedding of the stereotype of Uyghurs as dangerous people.

Uyghur masculinity is empowered by the image of the dangerous Uyghur male. The national symbol of the wolf additionally contributes to reinforcing the male image. In various legends, the grey wolf is considered the savior of ancient Uyghurs; in some legends, it is even the Uyghur people's ancient father (Wei and Luckert 1998, 70–71). In Hoshur's story, this masculinity threatens the mayor, who demonstrates how it is rooted in the Uyghur people's history

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10   The term *balangzi* can be written in several ways in Chinese. Dautcher notes this version in his study of the use of the word "wolf" 巴狼子 (2009, 64). My Uyghur informants emphasized that it can also be written 巴郎子 or even 巴浪子 and the meaning remains identical (see also Giulia Cabras' chapter in this volume).

when he describes how Alexander the Great (Iskandar), passing through the region with his army, encountered a band of Uyghur knifemen who "without intending to, could let a knife fly and hit you right between the eyes, and your guts would spill out" (Maimaitiming Wushou'er 2001, 175). The mayor goes on to note that the gang joined Chinggis Khan on his travels westward, thereby alluding to the importance of Uyghur involvement in the creation of the Mongolian Empire (see Millward 2007, 64). His suspicions and criticism of the mustachioed knife wielders strengthen the image of Uyghur males for the reader. These historic references glorify Uyghur warriors and explain why they are perceived as a threat by the government.

In "The Moustache Dispute," Hoshur establishes the reader's impression of Uyghur masculinity only to shatter that image and disclose Uyghur men's weakness. The story's protagonist withdraws into his home for two months, fearing the regime. Eventually plucking up some courage, he decides to go out. In the street, he is shocked to encounter the mayor sporting a moustache in full view. The mayor updates the protagonist on the real nature of the knife battle:

> "Oh, we were so stupid then. We scared a great many people—you were also one of them!?! That stutterer hit us hard."
> "What stutterer are you talking about?"
> "Didn't you hear? The man with the large moustache who held the knives, in the street. Well, it turns out he worked in the butcher's shop. That day, the electronic sharpener broke down, so he collected all the butchers' knives and went to sharpen them. Three pickpockets surrounded him on the bus and stole his money. The stutterer discovered that his wallet had been stolen, got off the bus, chased after them and caught one. Because he couldn't explain clearly to passers-by what was happening, he held onto the fellow and didn't let him go. The pickpockets hit him and wanted to flee. The stutterer drew a knife, he was so nervous … and that's all there is to the story." (Maimaitiming Wushou'er 2001, 177–78)

The man who the mayor thought was the murderer is actually revealed to have been the victim and, despite his threatening external appearance, to have had no connection with the Uyghur male image and the knife handlers of long ago who could easily overpower Alexander the Great. Thus, the author exposes the disparity between the heroes of the past and the current Uyghur male.

The image of a stuttering Uyghur man can be interpreted as a metaphor for the state of the Uyghur in China. The stuttering Uyghur man could not

explain the injustice done to him and was forced to protect himself from the pickpockets, but as soon as he did, he became a murder suspect. Like the stutterer, the Uyghurs are prevented from voicing the injustices they feel are done to them by the regime and the Han. They are often perceived as "troublemakers" and "dangerous" despite the fact that according to them, they are fighting for their basic rights (Clarke 2010). Neither the narrator's image nor that of the "murderer" is a model of masculinity. To top it all off, the mayor is revealed to be a "fake male."

The mayor explains that he grew a moustache because he was criticized for persecuting moustache wearers. Like other Uyghur leaders, up until then the mayor avoided growing a moustache as a way of demonstrating his loyalty to the regime. After coming across the mayor, the narrator sees the policeman, who explains that the mayor, unable to grow a moustache, took a false one from the culture department and glued it on, hoping thereby to counter the criticism levelled at him. The narrator ends the story by expressing great wonder at all this. The significance of the events in the marketplace increases when the mayor is revealed as unable to grow a moustache. The reader is left wondering if the mayor went after men with moustaches out of envy and a sense of inferiority over not being a real man like them.

External and internal criticism are both expressed in this story, which is made possible by the author's particular writing style. Hoshur's skill enables him to level criticism at the social, economic, political, and cultural reality in a way that can be interpreted as merely humorous rather than political. According to Arzugül, a Uyghur literary reviewer, Memtimin Hoshur's humor reflects Uyghur culture. Thus, she signals that anyone not fully conversant with this culture in general, and Ili's local culture in particular, may not understand the satire, the absurdity, the wit in these stories (Aiziguli 2000, 48).

Hoshur's humor, however, is presented to the Chinese reader in a non-threatening light. It is reasonable to assume that once translated into Chinese, the story might lose some of its original style (as is customary in the process of any translation). The political criticism, however, is clear and integrated into the story's cynical style. At the outset, the anonymous author expresses his surprise and puzzlement at the instruction to register all moustache wearers. The story presents this instruction as bizarre and intended to persecute the Uyghur people, just like the prohibition against beards. Little did he know that this satire would become a reality and that growing a long beard would be banned entirely in Xinjiang from 2015.

The moustache becomes, for the Uyghur people and the regime, a political tool. The moustache serves as a form of political defiance which threatens

not only Han masculinity but also the public agenda.[11] Registering moustache wearers weakens the moustache's importance as an ethnic symbol since the act of growing a moustache is thereby placed under the regime's supervision. The decision to grow a moustache is wrested from the Uyghur male and integrated into the hegemony, which clarifies how Uyghur masculinity, seemingly presented as dangerous, is no more than "imagined hegemony."

Memtimin Hoshur cynically links the legendary band of warriors who attacked Alexander the Great's army, fighting alongside Chinggis Khan, to modern, stuttering men with thick moustaches and blunt knives meant for slaughtering sheep rather than courageous fighting. The author's criticism becomes even sharper when it is directed towards the mayor, whose senior political role is understood as being no more than that of a collaborator. Thus, even if the mayor does not belong to the Han hegemony, he has aligned himself with it, at least externally. This perception becomes clearer at the story's close, when it becomes apparent that the mayor is unable to grow a moustache and is therefore not a "man" of equivalent stature to mustachioed Uyghur men.

Between Tradition and Modernity: Masculinity and Family Values

Uyghur men are represented in literature not only by physical traits but also by values such as patriarchy and morality. A Uyghur man should act as a family man, a religious adherent, and culturally loyal, as opposed to the implied typical Han man. Often, this expectation is the pivot of a dispute concerning the place of tradition in current material reality. The rapid economic changes in Xinjiang have triggered constant conflict among Uyghur men, who have to balance their place in the family against the need to establish their status in society.

Uyghur literature written since the 1980s describes Uyghur society's difficulty in adapting to modernization in the current period of reforms. This is one of the central topics of work by Muhemmed Baghrash (1952–2013).[12] As a youngster, the Qarasheher-born Baghrash worked as an actor and dancer in a local theatre, and a truck driver on the Xinjiang–Tibet line. He reached Ürümchi in 1981 and began writing stories while simultaneously working at the local newspaper (Baghrash, personal communication, October 7,

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11   On the historical link between the moustache and Turkic politics, see Delaney 1994, 168.
12   Muhemmed Baghrash is the pseudonym of the author Muhemmed Osman.

2006). Initially employing the social realist style popular during Mao's rule, Baghrash's early stories realistically describe Uyghur society, focusing primarily on farmers and laborers. These stories won him awards, were translated into Chinese, and were published in leading Chinese literary journals.

Baghrash's story *Kamalidin*[13] describes modernization's penetration into the Uyghur village in the 1980s and the consequences of economic policy for the morals and values of traditional society. The plot occurs in a village situated on a riverbank. Despite being underdeveloped, without flowing water and electricity, the village is described as appealingly pastoral. Residents care for each other, and everyone is happy with the little they have. One day, Adi, an entrepreneur born in the village many years ago, returns to open a restaurant there. Now in his mid-forties, his departure during the communist period was a result of his recruitment to help other men build a dam. At the outset of the economic reforms, he returns together with his foreign wife, who is not conversant with local customs. She uses heavy make-up and flirts with other men.

The restaurant quickly becomes the village's central meeting spot. Adi purposely shocks the village elders with various stories and actions, hoping they will not return to the restaurant, where they had been hanging around all day without ordering anything. Nevertheless, the village elders return and young folk love to listen to his tales too. One of them, a frequent visitor, is the protagonist, Kamalidin, the younger son of a highly respected villager. Kamalidin is described as a serious, obedient young man who respects the old customs and is greatly esteemed in the village. He is drawn to Adi's bold anecdotes about life in the metropolis:

> In Ürümchi's craze of smoking and drinking, men and women spend time together at parties, dancing and embracing. If you're willing to spend some forty to fifty yuan, you can spend the night with an educated whore [...] If you've got money, no one can call you a hillbilly. If you've got money, you can meet the prettiest, most modern girls. (Bagelaxi 2006, 40)

Some time later, Kamalidin begins to re-evaluate his own life. The small gloomy room he shares with his wife, his children, and his parents feels like a prison. He has trouble leaving the restaurant and heading back home. He begins to aspire to become wealthy:

13   The story was translated into Chinese and published in the *Nationalities Literature* journal (Chinese: *Minzu wenxue*) in 2006. It is based on the novella *Kelkün* [The Flood], written in the 1990s.

> But not for a corrupt life; rather, in order to live. Money can get you everything. People without money aren't considered people. Money is the omnipotent god. If it can give us a little grace, the whole village would have everything: TVs, movies, electricity, cars, new homes, new boots. (Bagelaxi 2006, 41)

The village's opportunity arrives in the form of a city entrepreneur who expresses a wish to buy it. The entrepreneur is described as corrupt and rich, and Kamalidin is happy he's a farmer rather than a city dweller. The message is that farmers have purer morals, authenticity, and integrity than city folk. But the tale quickly takes an unexpected turn. Although the entrepreneur has been pursuing Adi's wife, Adi invites him to a drinking session during which he closes a deal. Thereafter, Adi invites all the village's residents to work for him, offering them a chance to earn money by producing mats from the reeds growing on the river bank.

Adi's proposal is viewed with mixed feelings by the villagers. Kamalidin is torn between his wish to earn money and his wish to obey his father, who is suspicious of Adi's economic initiative. If he chooses to work for Adi, it will be against the wishes of his father, who is afraid of the government's reaction to this questionable private initiative. It may lead to a rift in his family. The dilemma Kamalidin finds himself in is analogous to that of all Uyghur men: he can uphold traditional values or pursue the promise of a better life at the price of adopting modern values.

> At worst, my wife and I will live separately. What? How will we live separately? My parents are still alive. To live separately and betray them? Even an animal wouldn't do such a thing. It's a sin [...] If father only knew, he'd die of fury [...] No, I'll do it, nonetheless. A real man must take the chance. Why behave like a woman? I want to earn money, money! (Bagelaxi 2006, 49)

Kamalidin fears that if he opposes his father's views, it will lead to a split in the family. The traditional custom of living with the husband's parents remained common into the 1990s among the rural population of Xinjiang (as in other rural areas of China). Breaking the custom is considered a stain on the family's honor and leads to social ostracism. As the plot develops, Kamalidin is not required to choose between his parents and the chance to improve his financial state since the regime permits the villagers to harvest the reeds. The father, therefore, no longer objects to the new deal.

The farmers are surprised by the regime's decision to allow reed reaping. On the one hand, the need to receive permission rouses their ire, but on the other, they fear acting without permission. The celebration of the village's pastoral atmosphere gives way to a critical description of the villagers. The author sensitively relates how their passivity led to their weak economic status. In fact, the entrepreneurs, described as greedy and lacking morals, are the ones who dare to take on the regime and demand their rights. Furthermore, Baghrash shows how the regime actually encourages farmers to take the initiative and improve their situation. The government allows farmers to harvest the reeds, if only in the places it has designated—a move which preserves its monopoly on the land. The farmers, shedding tears of gratitude, enthusiastically sign on for loans with low interest rates provided by the local bank for the purpose of funding the purchase of a donkey and wagon to cart the reeds away from the river bank.

The whole village comes to life. Kamalidin describes the village as an infant that has been sleeping for centuries and is suddenly waking. In other words, the farmers' difficult lives and sense of despair over their financial struggles and tough physical work is not the fault of the current regime, according to Kamalidin's description, but a reality which has prevailed for several centuries. The image of the village as an infant also testifies to its immaturity; it is far from reaching adulthood. It would seem that the historiography offered by Baghrash in this story is similar to the official narrative provided by the communist party, which claims that the Uyghur were released from feudalism, poverty, and ignorance, but with one primary difference: Baghrash emphasizes that the key factor that released the Uyghur farmers was money and not communism or nationalism.

According to the story, modernization is welcomed by the village with open arms and leads to materialism and greed, which are responsible for the ruin of traditional values and culture:

> Now no one has time to hang around, to chatter and play cards in the restaurant. Everyone's urging everyone else on [...] Money accelerates their actions. Is that greed? Dear Allah, we used to have so much time in the past, and we did nothing. In the period of communes, the work team leader knocked on every family's door, ruining his throat calling people out to work. And they didn't work hard, the way they do today. (Bagelaxi 2006, 52)

Money awakens the villagers, leading them to take their destiny into their own hands. Kamalidin is no longer interested in selling Adi his mats in

return for the pitiful sum he pays the farmers. Instead, Kamalidin approaches the fishermen and arranges for them to transport and sell his mats. Very quickly, most of the villagers sell their mats to Kamalidin, who pays them several pennies more than Adi does. Other farmers decide to distribute their mats independently, and the village begins to split among dealers. Now the village has electricity, TVs, movies every Friday, and a thriving restaurant. The villagers renovate their homes. Alcohol also settles in like a local son, and many villagers are quickly addicted.

Alcohol leads to fights among drunken young men and fishermen, and the fights sometimes end in stabbings. Several young men are arrested and incarcerated for years. Gambling also becomes popular. City folk coming to do business with the villagers teach them to gamble, and the drunk villagers begin losing their money. One night, after leaving in the middle of a game of dice, Kamalidin fumes over the money Adi is making. Kamalidin tosses a cigarette butt onto a pile of reeds in anger, thinking it would be preferable to be rid of the reeds which have brought so much trouble, and the reeds go up in flames, costing the farmer they belong to several hundred yuan. The story describes how the farmer's mother and wife mourn as though having lost a son, whereas the farmer himself is too drunk to comprehend the significance of these events.

Further on in the narrative, Kamalidin is invited to a game of dice. Intoxicated for the first time in his life, he loses all his money. Having lost everything, he seeks a loan from one of the city entrepreneurs to allow him to continue gambling. In return for one thousand yuan, he is required to bring his young wife's braids to the lender. The entrepreneur had hoped to remove Kamalidin from the game with this outrageous request, but suddenly Kamalidin turns up, braids in hand, together with his father's shorn beard. Since hair is a religious and gender symbol in Uyghur culture, cutting his wife's and his father's hair and presenting it publicly is an insult to his wife's modesty and his father's trust. The severe insult is further reinforced by the fact that their hair was cut in order to gamble. The horrified farmers attack Kamalidin for his greed and humiliation of his family:

> Kamalidin is not a man. Kamalidin is not Uyghur. Kamalidin is not a human! He is not a man. He is a beast, and not human! (Bagelaxi 2006, 75)

The narrative comes to an end with the sound of his children's cries. Kamalidin ends up bereft of honor and status. He loses his family, friends, possessions, and respect. The villagers view his breach of traditional values as inflicting harm on the Uyghur identity and air their grievances in the

form of accusations against him, in which he is described as not being a Uyghur man.

At the start of the story, Kamalidin represented Uyghur traditions. His name means "perfection of religion" (Kamal al–Din), and as this name indicates, he was a model of the ethical Muslim man. His encounter with Adi changed him, and he began longing for money and status. This longing led him to doubt traditional Uyghur values, and the possibility of becoming rich caused him to demean his religion and his family.

Baghrash sympathizes with the farmers, and frequently writes about their lives. In an interview, he once noted that "In order to understand the Uyghur's real issues, you must travel to southern Xinjiang and meet them. In those regions, there are numerous problems, but people are afraid to speak up."[14] Why, then, does Baghrash, who is so familiar with farmers' lives from his frequent travels to rural regions where he collects material for his work, choose to present them so negatively? It would appear that he wants to exaggerate the corrupting influences of modernization. In an interview, he related this idea to the story by saying that "the farmers profited somewhat but lost a great deal more; part of that loss is their ethnic culture."[15] In demonstrating the scope of the loss, Baghrash describes the farmers as innocents who fall into the trap of materialism.

When I discussed the story's significance with a Uyghur poet, he reinforced the message Baghrash conveys by saying that "There are many stupid Uyghur. They're only interested in money, and we call them spies."[16] Uyghur who choose to abandon their culture are perceived, then, as traitors to their heritage, and are in fact identified with Han culture. The Uyghur male is required to be a responsible provider, a concerned husband, and a loving father (Zang 2012, 31) but no less so, as the story emphasizes, a protector of the values identified with Uyghur tradition.

The Historical Hero: Masculinity as a National Symbol

Historical heroes are national symbols who facilitate the coherence of Uyghur society by virtue of the myths, legends, tales, and other cultural manifestations which develop around them. This legacy of heroes is a male legacy and constitutes a source of national pride. Not wanting to rouse the

14   Interview, Ürümchi, October 2006.
15   Interview, Ürümchi, October 2006.
16   Interview, Ürümchi, October 2006.

regime's suspicion, many Uyghur choose to address historical and national issues through folklore (Friederich 2007, 95). This tendency is manifested in current Uyghur song and literature as a longing for the heroes of the past, and comparisons between them and Uyghur men's current situation. The state of the modern Uyghur man is described in these terms by the author and poet Abdulehed Abdurishit Berqi (1972–) in his poem "Uyghur":

> **Uyghur**
> Oghuzhan is coming?
> Not yet!
> He is an ordinary Uyghur man
> That couldn't have bought a house
> That has been wandering in the city
> For his life.
> He is not riding a horse
> With golden horses' horns
> But he is wearing jeans
> Not iron armour.
> He is not holding a sword
> But a brochure
> About curing impotence.
> No! No!
> In the road a Uyghur man is coming
> He is a blood drop of Oghuzhan.
> He is rolling into the future
> Got dust all over the body
> So humbly. (Berqi 1999)[17]

Berqi was detained in 2017 after returning to Xinjiang from a two-year postdoc studying modern Uyghur literature in Israel (Gerin 2022). His poems and novels were not officially banned as of 2021, yet it is unclear if this situation will persist in light of the government's growing restrictions on books in Xinjiang (Kuo 2019). Berqi composed this poem in Ürümchi in 1999. Having grown up in a village in Hotan (Hetian) Prefecture and arrived in Ürümchi in the 1990s, he witnessed the many changes the city underwent in the years following his arrival.[18] Once fully assimilated into metropolitan

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17   The poem was translated by Berqi and published on a Uyghur website which is currently unavailable.
18   Interview, Ürümchi, October 2006.

life, Berqi became the epitome of the Uyghur urban intellectual. Most of his poems and stories deal with love and issues of concern to young city people:

> This poem is about the future of Uyghur people and city life. 20 percent of Uyghurs now live in cities. Metropolitan culture is not unfamiliar to the Uyghur: two thousand years ago, the Uyghur built cities and enjoyed an urban culture. Currently, we are forced to be strangers to urban life [...] the common urban culture is Chinese, since most of Xinjiang's urban residents are Chinese rather than Uyghurs. Uyghur culture has difficulty in surviving in the city. Uyghur men must cope with increasing issues, the main one being how to survive.

In this poem, Berqi challenges the image of Uyghur masculinity, which is based on the model of male fighters. He acknowledges the impact of American cinema on his development as a youngster, particularly action films starring Sylvester Stallone and Jean-Claude van Damme,[19] actors renowned for their strongly macho combat roles in which they defeat their enemies against all odds. The American macho male image was a source of inspiration for Berqi, as it was for many other young Uyghurs. American film stars were the most convincing and readily available option for Uyghurs seeking an alternative to popular Han culture: "Up until some years ago an American film was shown each day, and later, once every ten days. Until September [2006] they showed American and Japanese animated movies but stopped because they claim it leads to Americanization. Instead, they show movies from China and Singapore" (Berqi, personal communication, October 5, 2006). Despite attempts by the regime to block Western cultural influences, the American macho model achieved great popularity in the 1990s and 2000s due to the internet and the flourishing market for illegal DVD and VCD copies of American films.[20] American machismo echoed the traditional model of Uyghur masculinity but offered a modern, Western alternative that fascinated Uyghur youth.

Berqi links the state of Uyghur males to nationalism. Uyghur men's struggle for status is a struggle to preserve Uyghur culture and traditions. Berqi represents modern urban culture, and in his view, the tough situation faced by Uyghur men in the urban environment does not derive

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19   Interview, Ürümchi, October 2006.

20   In addition to American movies, Turkic films are also popular among the Uyghurs of Ürümchi, who prefer to avoid watching Chinese TV or listening to Han music (Kaltman 2007, 54–57).

from clashes between tradition and modernization but from the clash between Han and Uyghur cultures. Han culture dominates urban life, leaving no room for Uyghur culture from a social, economic, or ethical perspective.

The man in Berqi's poem is very different from the accompanying image of the mythical Uyghur hero. *Oghuz Khan*, hero of the *Oghuzname* mythology, is a model of masculinity and courage, considered the forefather of the Uyghur and Turkic peoples. Although the epic describing Oghuz Khan's deeds can be traced back to the thirteenth century, no written version of his story remains from this time. Folklore researchers were forced to translate the epic into the modern Uyghur language, and it was only published in 1980 (Wei and Luckert 1998, 90). During this period the myth around Oghuz Khan established itself more strongly, and many authors began expansive studies of Uyghur history. Some of them, including Turghun Almas (1924–2001), tried to prove that Oghuz Khan was identical to a historical figure, one of the region's kings (Wei and Luckert 1998, 90).[21]

For modern-day Uyghurs, Oghuz Khan represents their own origins, distinct from those of the Chinese; it also represents their affiliation with the Turkic peoples. Nevertheless, Uyghur historians attempt to prove Oghuz Khan's Uyghur identity, rather than his identity as the forefather of all Turkic peoples. Berqi notes that from his point of view, Oghuz Khan is "a symbol of Uyghur nationalism."[22] This is an important statement since other historical heroes have been more strongly identified as representing Uyghur nationalism, such as Abduxaliq Uyghur.[23] Perhaps because he is central to a myth, the latter became a national symbol, based on a mythical warrior and conqueror with whom the Uyghur can identify without being viewed by the government as nationalistic.

The mythical figure of Oghuz Khan is the ideal of the brave, unrestrained warrior, identified with the wolf.[24] According to the legend of his birth:

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21   Turghun Almas suggests that the image of Oghuz Khan is based on the Hun king of 209–174 BCE. Other researchers identify Oghuz Khan as Satuk Bughra Khan, the famous ruler of the tenth-century Karakhan dynasty, or one of this dynasty's earlier rulers. The name "Oghuz" relates to tribes from the eighth to the twelfth century who lived in Mongolia and from whom the Turkic tribes (including the Uyghur) splintered off (Wei and Luckert 1998, 90).

22   Interview, Ürümchi, January 2009.

23   On Abduxaliq Uyghur as a national symbol, see Klimeš 2015, 98–108; Zelcer-Lavid 2018, 568–69.

24   The legend does not specifically relate to the grey wolf. However, the common wolf is the grey wolf *Canis lupus*, thus the legend likely indicates this creature. On the role of the wolf in these legends, see Golden 1992, 117–20.

[...] the baby boy had sucked his mother's breast only once before he began asking for meat and meal, and with that he began to speak. Within forty days he was completely grown, able to walk and play. His feet were like a bull's, his waist was like a wolf's, his shoulders were like a black marten's, and his chest was like that of a bear. His entire body was covered with thick hair. He often herded horses, rode them, and went hunting. (Wei and Luckert 1998, 63)

Oghuz Khan skipped the stages of infanthood and childhood. Right after birth, he entered the stage of mature masculinity, which is described as being analogous to the state of various wild animals, reinforcing his status as mythological rather than merely human. Other legends about his life reveal his wisdom and skills as a military leader, a conqueror, a father, and a loving husband (see Wei and Luckert 1998). This figure directly contrasts with the modern Uyghur man of Berqi's poem. Although viewed as Oghuz Khan's progeny, the modern Uyghur male walks about the city like a homeless individual. He cannot pay for a roof over his head due to his deficient finances. He wears Western clothes that contrast with the armor and sword which signify traditional warrior garb, and the brochures he hands out discuss impotence. This man represents urban males who have lost not only their home and homeland but their masculinity as well. Thus, today's Uyghur can only relate to Oghuz Khan and other historical and mythical figures as sources of inspiration.

Conclusion

This chapter attempts to define the struggles and dilemmas of Uyghur men in the modern literary domain. In literature, there is often no separation between the private and the public, thus the fate of an individual can serve as an allegory for the fate of an entire society and culture (Jameson 2013, 56). Literature, therefore, establishes a collective identity which, in the process of its formation, is of importance not only to the literary work but also to the discourse accompanying it. Literature not only reflects the state of Uyghur men but also indicates that their struggle to preserve their status is a collective struggle to preserve Uyghur identity and culture. The literary depiction of this struggle is a cultural means of reflecting collective insecurity in Uyghur society. One definition of cultural security is as follows: "A culturally safe and secure environment is one where our people feel safe and draw strength in their identity, culture and community" (Australian

Human Rights Commission 2012, 122). A "culturally safe environment" cannot exist when the government officially representing that culture is perceived as oppositional to the local culture, as is true for Uyghur culture in China. The portrayal of masculinity in Uyghur literature not only contrasts utterly with the ruling Han culture but also, to a great degree, contradicts the changes occurring within Uyghur culture itself.

Demographic changes in Xinjiang's large cities and lifestyle changes due to accelerated economic development have aroused suspicion among the Uyghurs over the adoption of Han culture and corresponding repression of Uyghur culture. The Uyghur man is frequently forced to maneuver between the two cultures, battling to preserve his traditional values while adjusting to a changing society. The stories penned by Muhemmed Baghrash and Memtimin Hoshur reflect the drop in status among Uyghur men and indicate that current Uyghur masculinity is an image alone, a situation I have chosen to term "imagined hegemony." In fact, as this chapter shows, it is the outcome of the need to rise above the Han male—at least in the literary field. This is an intermediate stage in the process of creating the new Uyghur male, who continues to seek out the heroes of the past. It might be too soon to assess whether this process has come to a halt with the mass incarcerations since 2017 or whether the current tragedy will actually strengthen the reliance on historical heroes.

These historical heroes empower Uyghur society and contribute to a sense of national cohesion. Uyghur history tells of a golden age in which the Uyghur people controlled their own homeland, an age at the very core of Uyghur identity. The Uyghur people choose to perpetuate their rich past and reinforce their roots through the historical and mythical narratives represented by Oghuz Khan and others. These literary works reference heroes of the past from myths and folklore, around which Uyghur men and the whole nation can unite. Yet, as Berqi's poem indicates, they offer no relief to the contemporary Uyghur men struggling to preserve their status in Xinjiang.

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6.   Language Ideologies and Cultural Security: The Status and Meanings of the Uyghur Language[1]

Giulia Cabras

Abstract: As one of the official languages of Xinjiang and the official language of the Uyghurs, Uyghur has spread across various domains of the public sphere and has become a symbol of cultural autonomy. While China guarantees the legal status and freedom of officially recognized ethnic minority languages to be developed and used in the public sphere, government language policy has intensely promoted Standard Chinese, particularly in the education sector. This chapter covers the years from mid-2000 to 2017 and addresses how language ideologies of an "authentic" and "pure" Uyghur have been seen as a tool to protect the language and how the discourse on bilingualism has been used as a way to guarantee social and economic integration for the group. Finally, it assesses the extent to which the language is an important element in defining group consciousness among Uyghurs in light of the current policies of re-education and assimilation.

Keywords: Uyghur language, language policy, language ideologies, purism, bilingualism

As Jarmila Ptáčková and Ondřej Klimeš state in the introductory chapter to this volume, language is one of the cultural markers that can contribute to a sense of common affiliation for a certain group, and therefore, a significant element in the study of cultural security. In this chapter, I look at language

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as a tool that, with its different symbolic meanings, has the power to stress diversity. I will discuss the role of the Uyghur language and its implications for language and cultural maintenance as a code independent of the national language, Standard Chinese,[2] and as a resource to be protected and used for the development of the group.

In discussing the relationship between the Uyghur language and cultural security, I draw upon the notion of cultural security that arises in the thematic volume edited by Carbonneau, Jacobs and Keller (2021, 35–58): the need for groups to counteract asymmetric power dynamics and to build self-consciousness and autonomy within the political and social system in which they live through different institutional and territorial means and collective and resilience practices. Research in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology demonstrates that language plays a central role in group identification and in the process of gaining cultural, social, and political recognition (Irvine and Gal 2000; Woolard and Sheffelin 2004; Cru 2015).

Language ideologies, described as beliefs and attitudes towards a language (Irvine 1989), constitute a useful theoretical framework to analyze the role of language in the definition of cultural security for a given community. Language ideologies can be a catalyst to claim educational autonomy (Jaffe 1999), to organize resistance against colonization (Blommaert 1999), to assure resilience in periods of political crisis and provide a basis for self-determination (Clua I Fainé 2017, 42) and to challenge social structures and norms of monolingualism (Heller 1995).

In this context, language ideologies have an impact on the structure of language and language practices: common phenomena are the devaluation of the non-standard and the search for authenticity (Milroy 2001; Yang 2018), language purism (Thomas 1991), the support of a variety of the language spoken in the past as a form of respect (Hill 1992), and the creation of bilingual elites (Heller 1995). In general, these choices are made in opposition to the dominant language(s) and group(s), which are seen as a threat to the minoritized language and community. Ideas of authenticity and language purism are, at the same time, often rejected or contested. In the context of minority languages, these ideologies might not accommodate different language practices or varieties and are often partly or fully imposed (Gill 2007; Hornsby

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2   In this chapter I refer to China's national language as Standard Chinese, also called in the literature *Putonghua* "common language" or Standard Mandarin. In some cases, I refer simply to "Chinese," since I refer to a language continuum that include Standard Chinese and other varieties that are part of the linguistic repertoire of the Uyghurs, such as varieties of Northwest Mandarin spoken in the region.

2022). In other cases, ethnolinguistic groups negotiate some of their traits to accommodate social and economic changes brought about by state-building and globalization. They might give up some features of their language, their entire language, or some cultural traits (Mufwene 2003; Ehala 2014).

The Uyghur language is one of the official languages in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) and a lingua franca among Turkic and other ethno-linguistic groups in the region. From a demographic point of view, the region is inhabited primarily by Uyghurs, one of the officially recognized ethnic groups (*shaoshu minzu*, "minority nationality"), and Han. Other smaller ethno-linguistic groups, such as Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Mongols, and Hui, also live in the region. This multi-ethnic composition corresponds to a high level of linguistic diversity. Languages spoken in the area belong to the Turkic (e.g., Kazakh, Kirghiz), Mongol (e.g., Daur), Indo-European (e.g., East Iranian languages such as Sarikoli), and Sinitic groups (varieties of Northwest Mandarin). Many of these languages are considered endangered because they only have a small number of speakers.

According to the 2020 census, there are approximately 11.6 million Uyghurs in Xinjiang (Tianshan 2021), and they are generally described as a Turkic-speaking group which follows Turkic and Central Asiatic cultural traditions and Islamic heritage practices. However, as in many contemporary communities, differences regarding education, class, faith, rural-urban environments, north-south origins, and social and political aspirations make Uyghurs a heterogeneous group (see Smith Finley 2013; Grose 2019).

During the 1980s and 1990s, in particular, the use of Uyghur spread in different domains of the public sphere (Zhou 2004, 89). However, since the early 2000s, PRC language policies downgrading the status of Uyghur in education, the growing Han population, and the importance of Standard Chinese for employment and social mobility have led to the development of a diglossic situation in which Standard Chinese has become the high-status language, and to language contact phenomena such as code switching and borrowing (Abulimiti 2009; Mijiti 2012; Cabras 2018). These changes in language status and language practices have resulted in discussions among Uyghurs on the importance of not abandoning the language and speaking it properly, as this chapter shows. The chapter focuses on the discourse about the protection of the Uyghur language as it emerges from intellectual and academic production, artistic pursuits, and the language attitudes of speakers. I will discuss how language ideologies about an "authentic" and "pure" Uyghur have been seen as a tool to protect the language from assimilation to Chinese, the discourse on bilingualism as a way to guarantee social and economic integration for the group, and the reality of language

practices in which Chinese is often present in Uyghurs' speech for different social, educational, professional, and personal reasons.

The discussion approximately covers the years from mid-2000 to 2017. In August 2016, Chen Quanguo was appointed as the CCP secretary of the XUAR, leading the consolidation of the political and social situation in Xinjiang.[3] Since 2017, the region has established a high-tech system of cyber control of the population and set up a system of detention and re-education for those Uyghurs who are deemed too religious or conservative, or unsuitable for the modernization and development of the state. Moreover, members of the Uyghur elite have been detained or silenced (Smith Finley 2019). Besides incarceration and securitization, this policy has led to the destruction or closure of mosques and shrines (Thum 2022), regulations targeting traditional domestic spaces (Grose 2020) and cultural "engineering" establishing permitted and forbidden cultural differences and forms of Uyghur piety (Byler 2017a).

The years from mid-2000 to 2017, characterized by intellectual and artistic pursuits dealing with the use and survival of the Uyghur language, are particularly suitable for the study of language ideologies and the role of language in the perception of cultural security. This is also a period in which many scholars, including the author, conducted fieldwork in the region and had the opportunity to conduct ethnographic studies and investigate language practices and attitudes. As documented in 2018, the atmosphere of surveillance, the feeling of fear, and the risk of imprisonment for Uyghurs who have had contact with foreigners have made it impossible to build friendship and trust relationships (Ernst 2019). Moreover, the pandemic has prevented access to China and further endangered friendships and academic relationships that were already fragile.

The end of the chapter features a discussion of the latest developments related to the status of Uyghur, which are possible to grasp thanks to information available in researchers' reports, preliminary studies, news published by Chinese media, and posts on Chinese social media. Finally, it assesses the extent to which the language is, and could be in the future, an important element in the definition of group consciousness among Uyghurs.

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3   Discontent with various state policies implemented in the region (state-orchestrated Han migration, economic measures, social and ethnic inequalities, and restrictions on religious practices) have led to both violence (from clashes between protesters and police to premeditated attacks against civilians) and non-violent conflicts in the last decades. Since the start of the Global War on Terrorism in 2001, the PRC government has framed these responses as acts of terrorism or religious extremism, marginalizing the social and cultural factors that have led to discontent (Bellér-Hann 2002; Millward 2004; Rodríguez-Merino 2019).

The Context: PRC Language Policies

In the PRC legal system, the use and development of ethnic minority languages is protected by the Constitution (Moneyhon 2002, 136; Kaup 2000, 79) and other national legislation, such as the 1984 Law on Regional National Autonomy, amended in 2001 (*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo minzu quyu zizhifa*; Central government of the PRC 2001), and various local regulations. Indeed, the state grants a system of "autonomy of nationality regions" (*minzu quyu zizhi*) for the fifty-five officially recognized minority groups, which also includes linguistic rights. Inspired in part by the Soviet Union, this system was adopted to ensure territorial integrity and national unity (Dreyer 1976, 261–63; Bergère 1979; Kaup 2000; Harrell 2001).

Legal provisions affirm the premier status of Standard Chinese and support its diffusion in the public sphere, while guaranteeing the officially recognized ethnic minority languages legal status and the freedom to be developed and used in administration, media, and education. However, the notion of "freedom" (*ziyou*) instead of a "right" (*quanli*) to use and develop minority languages, which does not require state action, the absence of legal procedure to enforce this "freedom," and stronger rights and support for Standard Chinese constitute an obstacle to the implementation of language rights (Grey 2021, 67–82). Moreover, the support for minority languages is exclusively directed to officially recognized languages, leading to a relationship of inequality between the standard and non-standard varieties of a language (Dwyer 1998; Roche and Suzuki 2018).

The relationship between the national and the minority languages since 1949 has been influenced by political, demographic, social, and economic changes. In some periods, language rights were reduced or repressed, as during the Cultural Revolution; in other phases, as in the 1980s and 1990s, they were largely upheld—for example, in the media industry and education (Zhou 2004).

Since the end of the 1990s, and in particular since 2000, language policies have increasingly focused on issues such as the improper and non-standardized use of spoken and written Chinese, and the establishment of formal criteria to test the level of Standard Chinese of employees working in the media and education. While acknowledging minority language rights and the need for flexible measures, the Law of the National Commonly Used Language and Scripts of the PRC (*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tongyong yuyan wenzifa*), passed in 2000 (Ministry of Education of the PRC 2000), highlights the leading role of Standard Chinese as the national language and the importance of its standardization and diffusion (Rohsenow 2004).

Furthermore, the 2000 national law provided the basis for the promulgation of new local language regulations. In Xinjiang, the 2002 Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Language and Script Work Regulations (*2002 Xinjiang Weiwuer'zu zizhiqu yuyan wenzi gongzuo tiaoli*) recognized the legal status and use of Standard Chinese and Uyghur. This regulation is not different from the previous legislation, which dates back to 1993: it provides for the equality of languages, the use of bilingual and dual writing systems in autonomous organs and the public sphere, and the personal right to use and choose a language in the fields of education and administrative duties (Zhou 2020, 253–54). However, there was a change in the political context in which these regulations were issued: linguistic and cultural integration were by then (and still are) seen as solutions to solve problems related to social stability, preservation of the unity of the state, and separatism (Dwyer 2005; Zhou 2020, 252). In these years, Xinjiang University, which offered programs in Uyghur in social, natural, and formal sciences, switched to monolingual education and allowed the use of Uyghur as a teaching language only for some courses (Dwyer 2005, 40).

Moreover, a crucial change in the language policies of Xinjiang was the reform of the education system in 2000, with the switch towards the system of "bilingual education" (*shuangyu jiaoyu*). Before 2000, the system was based on education in Chinese or the minority language, with the so-called division between *minkaohan* and *minkaomin* students. *Minkaohan* refers to minority students who studied in Chinese-medium schools; *minkaomin* refers to minority students who studied in Uyghur-medium schools. In Uyghur-medium schools, children began learning Standard Chinese in the third grade. Although Standard Chinese enjoyed a higher status as the national language and a tool of educational and economic advancement, the system guaranteed the development of generations educated in the Uyghur language.

The reform dismisses the *minkaohan/minkaomin* system and supports two different modes of education for primary schools, both marginalizing the status of Uyghur in education: "type two bilingual education" and "type three bilingual education." In the former, Standard Chinese is used for scientific subjects, with limited explanations in Uyghur; in the latter, all subjects are taught in Standard Chinese, with Uyghur used to supplement the teaching (Simayi 2013).

The reform of "bilingual education" has been presented by the authorities and some experts as a way to improve Standard Chinese competence and to facilitate the modernization of Uyghur society and its integration into the Chinese state (Schluessel 2009; Ma Rong 2014). However, policy formulations

often clash with their implementation, and the reform has led to different responses and developments because of a lack of teacher training, inadequate teaching material, the gap between rural and urban environments, and Han-Uyghur segregation (Simayi 2013; Tsung 2014).

From 2017, the shift towards monolingual education in Standard Chinese is more evident. Government policy documents exhibit less frequent use of the term "bilingual education" to stress the importance of spreading the National Common Language and Script (*guojia tongyong yuyan wenzi*) and set forth the implementation of a Chinese-only policy for primary schools (Burdorf 2020). Although this policy seems to have been enforced in a large number of schools across the region, differences between policy formulation and implementation persist: there are accounts of some schools in south Xinjiang using Uyghur to supplement teaching, and some schools in Ürümchi reintroduced Uyghur language classes in 2020 (Burdorf 2020).

Standard Modern Uyghur, Spoken Uyghur, "Pure" Uyghur, "Messy" Uyghur: The Search for Purity and Authenticity

Standard Uyghur, officially called "Modern Uyghur" (*Uyghur hazirqi zaman tili*), mirrors a long history of cultural encounters and political developments. It derives from Chaghatay, and the majority of Uyghur loans display Arabic and Persian origins. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the lexicon incorporated loanwords from Russian and, from the mid-nineteenth century (particularly after the 1950s) from Chinese (Nadzhip 1971, 31; Memtimim 2016).[4]

As a standardized variety, Modern Uyghur is highly codified: it is based on the Ghulja and Ürümchi dialects, with elements from Central dialects such as the Qumul and Yarkand dialects. Its diffusion in the public sphere has been the result of collaboration between the state's institutions on language planning and the local Uyghur elite, such as the Language and Script Work Committee of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (*Shinjang Uyghur aptonom rayonning milletler til-yëziq xizmiti komitëti*) and the various translating and editing departments (*terjime-tehrir bölümi*) of state-owned media (e.g., the Xinjiang Television Station and the Xinjiang Education Press). The state support for the use of Uyghur in media and education performs a double function: it makes possible the expression in

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4   Some examples are "meat" (*gösh*) from Persian, "political" (*siyasiy*) from Arabic and "cake" (*tort*) from Russian.

Modern Uyghur of various technical and professional domains, but also
the translation of political terms aimed at spreading political propaganda,
thereby including the ethnic language in the PRC's state-building.[5]

Despite the increasing contact with Chinese, Modern Uyghur can be
seen as resistant to extensive borrowing from Chinese in formal language
(Baki 2005, 11–12). An exception to this was the introduction of neologisms
in the form of phonetic borrowings from Chinese in the 1960s—for example,
"inch" (*sung*), "ability" (*bengsi*), and "instructor" (*jolian*; Baki 2005, 11–12).
While Chinese terms are not common in formal language, they are on
the contrary abundant in the informal spoken language. Reasons can be
found in cultural influences and the increased presence of Chinese in the
linguistic environment (Dwyer 2005); speakers proficient in both Chinese
and Uyghur may alternate between Chinese and Uyghur in the same utter-
ance or conversation (Ablimit 2009; Mijiti 2012; Cabras 2018).

The increasing use of Chinese insertions in the informal spoken lan-
guage has prompted the growth of purist attitudes aimed at eliminating
the presence of Chinese in so-called "messy" (*qalaymiqan*) Uyghur and
spreading a "pure" (*sap*) Uyghur (Thompson 2013). The table below shows
some Standard Chinese terms often used in Uyghur conversations and their
"pure" counterparts.

Loanword in Spoken Uyghur	"Pure" Uyghur	English
wangba	*torxana*	cybercafé
wangzhan	tor bëkiti	internet site
Weixin	ün didar	WeChat
U pan	USB eghizi	USB
shenfen zheng	kimlik	identity card
Xinjiang shifan daxue	Pëdagogika uniwërsiteti	Xinjiang Normal University

Figure 6.1: Standard Chinese insertions and "pure" Uyghur. Based on Mijiti 2012; Thompson 2013;
Cabras 2018, 113–16

The examples above show that purism aims to reduce the presence of
Chinese, which is the current source used to substitute existing words and
create new loanwords in spoken Uyghur. The "pure" vocabulary is formed
from Perso-Arabic and Russian loanwords, as can be noted, for example, in
the words "place" (*xana*), "encounter" (*didar*), and "university" (*uniwërsitët*).
These terms are established in the Uyghur vocabulary and are considered

5   On the official support for minority languages and its implications for state-building, see
also Thurston (2018, 203–4) regarding Tibetan.

part of the language. Although Russian could be considered a "colonial" language due to its role in the Russian Empire and Soviet assimilatory policies in western Central Asia, it is considered in this case a language that does not threaten the status of the Uyghur language. This is probably related to the fact that Russian terms are well established in the vocabulary and that the language is not felt, as in the case of Chinese, to be a threat to the maintenance of Uyghur language.

Purist attitudes are directed at words that have recently been substituted by Chinese loanwords, as some old Chinese loanwords—for example, "potatoes" (*yanyü*)—are accepted.[6] As in many purist movements, purification occurs at the lexical level and is based on the avoidance of loanwords (Thomas 1991, 189). In the case of Uyghur, the phonetic presence of Chinese is avoided. However, Chinese is present in the semantic criteria of word-formation. Some neologisms may be considered calques from Standard Chinese terms—for example, the Uyghur "internet bar" (*torxana*, literally net space/place) and "website" (*tor bëkiti*, literally internet station). These terms reproduce the same pattern found in the Standard Chinese terms, respectively "cybercafé" (*wangba*, literally net café) and "website" (*wangzhan*, literally internet station). Hence, Standard Chinese still plays a hidden role, not as a source of phonetic borrowings but as a source for constructing meanings.

Often, ideologies of language purism emerge in periods of crisis and subordination for a given linguistic community and are directed at the language and group whose survival is considered to be at risk (Thomas 1991, 188–90). In the context of the increased presence of Chinese in education and the language habits of the Uyghurs, the erasure of Chinese elements is seen as a way to make the language authentic and independent. The discourse is based on the opposition between homogeneous Uyghur and Chinese languages: it considers neither the diversity within the Uyghur system nor the local varieties of Chinese spoken in the region.[7]

6   Interview with a linguist teaching at Xinjiang Normal University, Ürümchi, March 2015.

7   The Uyghur language exhibits significant dialectal variation, but the official dialect division theory has hindered research on the topic (Hahn 1998). Current dialectology divides the Uyghur language according to a South–North division, with the dialect of Kashgar sharing northern and southern features. According to Dwyer, the classification seems to be guided by the ideological need to include all the sedentary Turkic speakers of Xinjiang among Uyghur speakers (2016, 10). For this reason, groups whose status as Uyghur speakers could be questioned, such as the Lops and Dolan, are included in this grouping (Dwyer 2016, 10).

Regarding Chinese, the varieties of Mandarin spoken in Xinjiang can be summarized as Lan-Yin Mandarin (areas of Gansu and Ningxia), Zhongyang Mandarin (Central regions), and Beijing Mandarin (Baki 2012). These varieties have been influenced by contact with Uyghur, resulting

Moreover, Uyghur purism entails terms related to modernity: the aim is to raise the status of the language as a code able to express meanings and content in different fields of knowledge and daily life without drawing from Standard Chinese. This is a common strategy among minoritized languages, often associated with tradition and obsolescence (May 2012, 6).

The Actors Calling for the Protection of the Uyghur Language

Ideas about purity and calls for language maintenance are often developed within a given part of society and then spread within the general public and civil society (Thomas 1991, 100–114). This section provides examples of language ideologies emerging from a journal on Uyghur linguistics, "Language and Translation" (*Til we terjime*, Uyghur version of the Chinese-language journal *Yuyan yu fanyi*), managed by the Language and Script Work Committee, and from artistic and entertainment pursuits.[8]

The journal "Language and Translation," which publishes contributions from Uyghur elites studying linguistics, offers insights into the discussion regarding the standardization and empowerment of the Uyghur language, as shown in some issues published between 2006 and 2014. Besides topics related to linguistic research, such as historical linguistics and Turkology, the journal discusses the translation of Chinese words into Uyghur and ways to create meaning from internal resources, language standardization, and rules for translation.

According to the articles analyzed, language is fundamental for the economic and social development and well-being of the "states" (*döletler*) and "ethnic groups" (*milletler*; Abduxaliq 2010) and for building a "harmonious" (*inaq*) society (Yiltizliq 2014). Moreover, Uyghur connects the ethnic group to its past, elucidates cultural connections with other civilizations (Abdurëhim 2006; Abduxaliq 2010), and is the source of the historical cultural achievements of the Uyghurs (Yiltizliq 2014).

As far as the lexicon is concerned, some scholars argue that the Uyghur language must not display Chinese elements and needs to retain an accurate

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in phonetic, grammatical, and lexical changes. For example, Xinjiang Mandarin is characterized by the dropping of tones, the extensive use of the plural suffix *–men*, changing word order from SVO to SOV, and Uyghur borrowings such as "onion" (*piyazi*), "young boy" (*balangzi*; see also Michal Zelcer-Lavid's chapter), and "almond" (*badamu*; Baki 2012; Gao 2018).

8   For this purpose, I have consulted articles in the journal published in 2003, 2004, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017. A discussion on Abdurëhim (2006) and Abduxaliq (2010) can also be found in Cabras (2018, 272–76).

technical vocabulary. The mix of the two languages is connected to the lack of purity in the ethnic group, which could develop into a "mixed race" (*shalghutlashqan sortluq*) and is one of the "bad habits" (*nachar adetler*) practiced by people who do not care about linguistic and cultural integrity (Abdurëhim 2006, 36–37).

These statements express different language ideologies: Uyghur gives the group a sense of continuity, it is used as a marker of demarcation and ethnic purity, and it is instrumental for the definition of the Uyghurs. In these articles, the language is addressed in affective and positive terms. It is called "our mother tongue" (*ana tilimiz*; Abdurëhim 2006; Abduxaliq 2010; Yiltizliq 2014), a term frequently used to refer to the Uyghur language.

Moreover, Uyghur is described as pleasant to listen to and easy to understand (Yiltizliq 2014). In the titles of the articles and the texts, the use of the verb "to protect" (*qoghdimaq*) and the verbal form "let's" (the voluntative suffix *ayli~eyli*) indicates an emotional involvement in language issues and the need to involve the speakers.[9]

The discussion among linguists also took place on Chinese social media applications. In 2014–16, linguists and scholars from other disciplines created a WeChat group called "linguists" (*tilshunaslar*). The group discussed neologisms and ways to best reproduce the meaning of words and avoid borrowing from Chinese (Cabras 2018, 113).[10]

In the 2010s, the issues of Chinese insertions in the spoken language and the importance of speaking Uyghur were addressed by artists and performers. The comic sketch "I don't understand" (*Chüshenmidim*) by Abdukërim Abliz (2012)[11] is one of the most praised cultural works based on the theme of language mixing and purism in the Uyghur language, described in this sketch as "our mother tongue." The plot is based on misunderstandings between the protagonists, who are supposed to share the same language but do not understand each other and keep misspelling words in Uyghur and Standard Chinese (Cabras 2017; Searcy 2018).

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9   As shown in the titles "Let's protect the purity of our mother tongue" (*Ana tilimizning sapliqini qoghdayli*; Abduxaliq 2010), "Let's protect the perfection of our language" (*Timilizning mukemmellikini qoghdayli* (Abdurëhim 2006), and "Protect the virtue of the language" (*Til exlaqni qoghdap*; Yiltizliq 2014, 26).

10   In 2016, WeChat groups (made up of no more than one hundred users) were popular in Xinjiang and a forum for people to gather virtually and discuss different topics related to culture, society, and everyday life. These groups gradually disappeared as the control of cultural, religious, and intellectual expression in Xinjiang became more intense from 2017.

11   Abdukërim Abliz, author and lead actor of the sketch, is one of the best-known Uyghur comedians.

Another artistic pursuit that addresses language practices is "The pomegranate is ripe" (*Anar pishti*), an online sketch comedy produced and performed by a group of young Uyghurs. The sketch comedy started airing online in 2016 and quickly became one of the most popular online short-video series. The sketches take place in Ürümchi and take inspiration from the urban daily life of young people. The series addresses current social issues, including the current devaluation of Uyghur. For example, a gag references Chinese as a symbol of coolness and power, equivalent to physical strength (Frangville 2020, 121). Moreover, although the series reproduces young urban Uyghurs' life, code switching or Chinese borrowings are avoided, or just reserved for particular gags.

Regarding Uyghur songs, "Alphabet" (*Ëlipbe*) by Berna and Gülmire Tugun and "Dear Teacher" (*Söyümlük mu'ellim*) by Ablajan Awut are the most representative. "Alphabet," sung by a young child from the urban upper class, introduces the Uyghur alphabet (Byler 2013).[12] The lyrics connect words with the letters in alphabetical order and elements of Uyghur heritage. The song "Dear Teacher" addresses education at school; the singer Ablajan Awut plays a teacher who encourages his students to study hard and with enthusiasm (Byler 2017b).[13] The song refers to elements of the Chinese school curriculum and political discourse, such as the hard sciences, mathematics, physical education, and Xinjiang's economic development due to its natural resources. The singer dedicates the initial verses of the song to learning Uyghur: it is the first subject mentioned, encouraging the students to learn the grammar and study it with passion. I will further discuss this song in the next section, particularly its message supporting speaking Uyghur and, at the same time, learning the national language.

In the video clips, the heritage language is interwoven with traditional Uyghur elements: the child Berna and Gülmire Tugun wear a *doppa*, the Uyghur skullcap, and embroidered blouses; Ablajan, who is represented in most parts of the video as a modern and secular teacher, is disguised in one scene as an elderly man with a beard and a *doppa*, who teaches his children (males wearing the *doppa* and embroidered clothes; young women in braids) how to be polite and wise. Both songs refer to well-known characters from the Uyghur historical and cultural heritage, such as Amannisa Xan and Yusuf Xass Hajib Balasaguni.[14]

12   Available on the YouTube channel of the London Uyghur Ensemble (2014). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TGIBTeqKUY.
13   Available on the YouTube channel of the *Art of Life in Central Asia* (2017). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yPmdkB8Ww3Y.
14   Amannisa Xan was the concubine of Abdurashid Xan of the Yarkand khanate (1533–60). She is considered an icon of Uyghur cultural heritage, credited with the collection of the Twelve

The examples above show an engagement in language issues, materialized in discussions on the beauty and the importance of the Uyghur language for the cultural continuity and well-being of the group. Such statements in articles, social media, and cultural and music productions make these actors representative of a sort of "cultural nationalism" (Fishman 1973), aiming to bring self-representation and the protection of cultural markers within the political system of the state where they live. Moreover, they show an attempt to raise the status of the language, and evoke an "imagined hegemony," as found by Michal Zelcer-Lavid in her chapter about the representation of Uyghur masculinity in the modern literary domain. Notably, the discussion on the importance of learning the Uyghur language does not hide criticism of the policy of "bilingual education," parts of the Uyghur elite and officials that support it, and Uyghurs who have abandoned their interest in the heritage language in order to learn Chinese and embrace more opportunities for social mobility (Baranovich 2020). Moreover, despite the existence of public and open concern regarding the status of Uyghur, these years witnessed the imprisonment of several intellectuals engaged in the Uyghur language cause.

Actions to preserve the language found in intellectual and artistic pursuits among the Uyghurs are not so different from those existing in other ethnic groups in China. For example, works on Tibetan (Thurston 2018; Tunzhi et al. 2018), the Yi language (Kraef 2012) and Mongol (Baioud 2017) show similar concerns and reactions. First, the discourse on these languages is characterized by an emotional approach towards the mother tongue, which is seen as beautiful and in need of protection and a central element for the maintenance of the ethnic culture. Secondly, awareness-building involves different actors that play a central role in society. Intellectuals, artists and, in the case of Tibetan, lamas (Thurston 2018) lead the discussion on language maintenance. In spreading their ideas, they use traditional means of communication, such as essays, or more modern ones, such as WeChat groups and video channels. Third, in order to be protected, the mother tongue is set in opposition to the language that endangers it. Uyghur, Tibetan, and Mongol language ideologies see the Chinese language as the main threat to the survival of the ethnic language and overlook internal linguistic diversity and non-standard varieties. The debate about the representativeness of the standard form of the Yi language, as described in Kraef (2013, 228) and in Jan Karlach's chapter, is an exception in this respect.

Muqam. Yusuf Xass Hajib Balasaguni is the writer of the famous eleventh-century Kutadgu Bilig "The Wisdom of Royal Glory."

The Usefulness of Bilingualism

In the years from 2010 to 2017, articles and artistic output raising awareness of the importance of speaking Uyghur did not imply a refusal to learn and use Chinese, as long as it was used as a separate code. The importance of bilingualism is addressed in the comic sketch "I don't understand" by Abdukërim Abliz and Ablajan Awut's song "Dear teacher," both mentioned in the previous section.

In "I don't understand," Abdukërim Abliz affirms that "Chinese is the language of our country, Uyghur is our mother tongue, knowing how to speak both is good for our work, for our life, for our production, to make business between us." In this statement, the rhetoric on the Uyghur language as mother tongue and marker of Uyghurness goes hand in hand with the unifying rhetoric of Chinese as the national language. Following a utilitarian vision, the knowledge of Chinese and Uyghur is deemed fundamental for communication and business. This pragmatic statement is followed by an emotional one: "Go back home immediately, this means studying Chinese and Uyghur, do you understand? It means that you don't have to forget your language!!" This emotional gag emphasizes two crucial points in the discourse on the Uyghur language: the invitation to be bilingual and separate Chinese and Uyghur in conversation (Cabras 2018) and the expression of an act of resistance against the current language policy (Searcy 2018).

Ablajan Awut's song does not mention a particular language in its verses, affirming instead the benefits of learning languages in general: "You have to learn a lot of languages, they are like a tool and a mirror." However, in the video clip, the blackboard behind him shows sentences in Chinese and English. Therefore, Ablajan's verse addresses the importance not only of learning Chinese but also of learning global languages, such as English. English is indeed seen as linguistic capital by young Uyghurs and their families—as something that may possibly help them to avoid marginalization and become competitive in Chinese and global society (Sunuodula 2015).

Similar ideologies framing Uyghur as the language of cultural identification and Chinese as the language of social mobility are found in educational choices. During the author's fieldwork in 2013–14, educated families in Ürümchi, left without much choice in the language of instruction at school, and seeing education in Chinese as a better option, planned to teach the heritage language within the family context (Cabras 2018, 26–27). The rejection of total assimilation is also found in research conducted on families from other areas of Xinjiang, such as Aksu and Kashgar, whose children

have received education in Chinese (Han and Johnson 2021, 192–94). In this way, families negotiate between social interests (increased possibilities of economic advancement), political imperatives (supporting the promotion of the Chinese language as a state project) and private needs (transmitting an element to build group-consciousness).

Another example of positive language attitudes towards bilingualism comes from the Uyghur graduates of boarding schools in China. Grose (2019) notes that although these students have undergone intense study of Chinese, are proficient in Chinese and live in areas where Chinese is dominant, Uyghur is the language of their conversations with their Uyghur peers. In one account, willingness to speak Uyghur does not exclude knowledge of Chinese, which is also seen as *bilim*, a form of knowledge (Grose 2019, 57–58).

Beyond the interest in learning Chinese, there is often the wish to obtain more socio-economic benefits and enjoy the same opportunities as the Han (Wilson 2012, 143–56). Therefore, this attitude is connected to material aspirations and the desire to overcome issues related to Uyghur society, such as employment pressure. Certainly, the investment in learning Chinese leads to different outcomes according to personal experiences. In personal narratives, scholars observe satisfaction with employment prospects, regret for not having studied Uyghur (Wilson 2012, 143–56), and a sense of disappointment with discriminatory hiring practices (Grose 2019, 92). These accounts show that learning and mastering Chinese is not always the solution to issues of marginalization affecting Uyghurs.

The experiences mentioned above exhibit tendencies towards both demarcation and accommodation: the desire to feel part of a community that shares the same or a similar linguistic and cultural background, which brings inclusion and social advantages within the community, and the need to communicate and participate in the social and economic development of the state. Thus, mastering Uyghur and Chinese is presented as a way to safeguard the heritage language while adopting more opportunities to avoid marginalization. At the same time, it demonstrates acceptance of the state's language policy regarding the diffusion of Standard Chinese.

The Complexity of Language Attitudes and Practices

Another aspect related to the status and meanings of Uyghur and their implications for cultural security is the fluidity of language attitudes, which change according to a combination of different social, educational,

professional, and personal experiences. Language attitudes, ideas of ethnic belonging and language proficiency have often been studied by scholars in terms of educational background, such as the choice of "bilingual education" or the opposition between *minkaohan* and *minkaomin*. *Minkaohan* have often been described as assimilated to the Han population, with insufficient command of Uyghur, and *minkaomin* as reluctant to establish relationships with *minkaohan* (Smith Finley 2000; Taynen 2006; Wilson 2012). However, research also indicates a wide range of different experiences and attitudes, which also change through life. For example, people who studied in Chinese-teaching schools started speaking Uyghur later (in their thirties) as a way to strengthen their political identity and denounce ethnic inequality (Smith Finley 2007); some *minkaohan* students attending Xinjiang classes in inner China do not demonstrate a preference for speaking Chinese (Grose 2019, 57); in the early 2000s, in rural areas, where ethnic conflict was less evident compared to the city, speaking some Chinese was a novelty, not a sign of assimilation (Smith Finley 2013, 139–40).

Moreover, in everyday language practices, the role of Uyghur as the language of ethnic and cultural belonging is put aside for pragmatic and communicative reasons. Studies show that speakers utilize either Chinese or Uyghur according to their daily contacts with Han Chinese (Anaitula 2012; Baki 2015), the linguistic background of their Uyghur interlocutors, or the verbal or written nature of the interaction[15] (Baki 2015). Besides perceptions and values associated with Uyghur, as mentioned previously, Chinese is a code frequently used in the public sphere. It is present to some extent in the everyday informal speech of Uyghurs, especially in urban areas (Anaitula 2012; Baki 2012; Cabras 2018). Taking into account this fluid and unstable role that the language plays in spoken practices, the language ideologies surrounding purism and authenticity define boundaries and memberships within groups and assign examples of language use a level in the continuum of group mixing or impurity. This does not take into consideration the fact that Uyghurness is performed in various ways through life, sometimes also with an imperfect mastery of Uyghur or while using some Chinese words. As remarked by Yang (2018) in her study of language ideologies among Tibetan students, the search for authenticity can reproduce the same dynamics of alterity and hierarchy found in majority (Chinese)-minority language relationships.

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15   According to a survey conducted in 2011 by Baki Elterish (2015), *minkaohan* tend to use Chinese to read and write and accommodate their interlocutors' language preferences. Uyghur and Chinese-Uyghur code switching can be used in verbal interaction with *minkaomin*.

The Current Situation and Its Impact on the Uyghur Language

So far, this chapter has discussed experiences of language maintenance leading up to the years 2016–17. Although the situation is ever-changing and access to information limited, in this section, I discuss some developments related both to the general political situation in Xinjiang and the status and use of the Uyghur language that may be useful for contextualizing past experiences and understanding current changes.

As described in the previous sections, the Uyghur intellectual and artistic elite has played a significant role in sharing positive attitudes about speaking and protecting the Uyghur language. With its actions, it has encouraged the development of a bilingual society in which Uyghur and Chinese are valued languages, albeit with different pragmatic and symbolic values.

In these last four years, many members of the Uyghur elite have been detained, such as the geographer Tashpolat Tëyip and the anthropologist Rahile Dawut, or have stopped appearing on stage and on social networks, such as Ablajan Awut, mentioned earlier in this chapter (Xinjiang Documentation Project 2022; Xinjiang Victims Database 2022). Many of these intellectuals and celebrities were members of the CCP, proficient in Standard Chinese, and praised by the government for their professional achievements and as examples of successful Han-Uyghur relations. They are now often accused of endangering state security, separatism, terrorism, or corruption. As a result, intellectuals and artists have stressed in their pursuits their commitment to political stability and patriotism.

An example comes from two articles from a 2017 issue of the journal *Language and Translation*, both written by the Language and Script Work Committee members. The first article points out the need to maintain "stability" (*muqimliq*) against terrorism and extremist forces that endanger the economic and social achievements made in Xinjiang and to be united under the leadership of the CCP (Musa 2017). The second article (Eli 2017) praises the benefits of "bilingual education" policy and the party's efforts to support linguistic minority rights. Among the reasons for learning Chinese, the author mentions the possibility of studying the advanced knowledge and culture of the Han and using Chinese as a bridge to understand foreign cultures. Although the issue still deals with Turkic and Uyghur linguistics and translation studies, the articles mentioned display the adoption of a "patriotic" tone, the emphasis on the state and regional authority discourse on securitization, and the subordination of Uyghur to Standard Chinese, which is described as an "advanced" (*ilghar*) language. Moreover, references to the role of Uyghur as the language of ethnic well-being and the desire

to raise its status are missing. The domain of education has followed this tendency with the shift towards monolingual education, as mentioned in the presentation of language policies in this chapter (Burdorf 2020).

Artistic pursuits reflect this turn. Some recent Uyghur pop songs address Chinese nationalism and patriotism (Anderson 2020). The series "The Pomegranate Is Ripe," mentioned in this chapter, also made a stark departure in 2018. The 2018 season does not engage with social issues and features several scenes with the Uyghur actors interacting in Chinese (Frangville 2020, 128). However, the status of Uyghur in entertainment is ever-changing. 2020 has seen, for example, the launch of several Uyghur-language TV series and shows (Steenberg and Tenha Seher 2022).

As far as language planning is concerned, the work on the standardization of the language and creation of vocabulary mandated by China's language policies has continued up to the present, probably with some breaks.[16] News published by Chinese media from the years 2017–20 on language planning advertises the development of Uyghur-Chinese/Chinese-Uyghur voice translator software (China Ethnic Language Translation Center 2017; China Ethnic Language Translation Center 2020) and new terminology in Uyghur (Sohu 2020). For example, a list of terms related to the COVID-19 pandemic displays neologisms created using Modern Uyghur words (Sohu 2020). Some examples are: "wear the mask" (Uy. *maska taqash*, Ch. *dai kouzhao*) and "National Health Commission" (Uy. *dölet sehibe-saghlamliq komitëti*, Ch. *guojia weisheng jiankang weiyuanhui*). These translations are no different from those created during recent decades in that they avoid Chinese loanwords and employ words from other languages (Arabic, Persian and Russian) established in Modern Uyghur.

One last observation can be made about the promotion of Standard Chinese, which, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, has been intensively promoted in Xinjiang since 2000. The promotion of the national language emulates other cultural policies aiming to strengthen national values, securitization, civilization, and a sense of national identity (see the chapters by Jarmila Ptáčková and Ondřej Klimeš and Mohammed Alsudairi).

The intensive teaching of Standard Chinese is one of the activities taking place in the system of re-education (Smith Finley 2019, 6). The teaching of the Chinese language is also included in activities organized in the rural areas of south Xinjiang, in public spaces and in Uyghur homes, with officials of

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16   It seems that the work of the Language and Script Work Committee had some discontinuities. However, some Uyghur linguists may still be employed to pursue language standardization projects (online conversations with two Uyghur scholars, September 2021).

the Becoming Family campaign[17] teaching Chinese to adults and children (*Sina* 2017; *Daily Headlines* 2018; Byler 2018; Xinjiang People's Publishing House 2019).[18]

Standard Chinese proficiency is presented by the authorities and state media as one of the skills, together with learning a profession, that will be valued in the marketplace and will therefore open up the future of Uyghurs who are socially and economically marginalized, as well as being a way to contain extremism and backwardness (China live 2019a; 2019b). Social mobility, progress, stability, and national unity have been the main pillars of the campaign to spread the Chinese language and script in Xinjiang. However, some changes have taken place in recent years. So far, the spread of Standard Chinese has mainly concerned the younger generations in the context of education reforms. Now, the campaign to teach Chinese targets also adults (for example, religious people who are suspected of having separatist or extremist thoughts, or those from impoverished, rural backgrounds) in facilities where re-education and learning are coercive.

The developments discussed in this section indicate both continuity and change. On the one hand, it is possible to notice continuity with the main objectives of China's language policy: the work on standardization and development of Uyghur, which coexists with the spread of Standard Chinese in the public sphere. Moreover, from the point of view of language practices, Uyghur is used as a language of communication in daily life and in public and private media.

On the other hand, what is new is the coercive nature of linguistic as-similation experienced in re-education facilities, the established shift to Chinese-based education, and a major emphasis on linguistic assimilation as a way to solve social, political, and economic issues in Xinjiang and build a Chinese national consciousness. Furthermore, we notice the absence of public expression encouraging the use of the Uyghur language, which can be interpreted as a threat to stability and lead to imprisonment, a situation prefigured by the imprisonment of two advocates of the protection of the Uyghur language, Ilham Tohti and Abduweli Ayup. These developments clash with the past experiences described in the previous sections of this chapter.

17   The campaign started in 2014 and consists of party cadres visiting rural areas in Xinjiang. The official aim is to explore people's conditions and establish good relationships. In Xinjiang, this campaign involves teaching Chinese, law, and secular and Han habits, as well as checking extremist behaviours.

18   In the sources cited in this article, the Chinese language is referred to as the "common national language and script" (*guojia tongyong yuyan wenzi*) or "national language" (*guoyu*).

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the status and meanings of Uyghur language and its implications for cultural security. As a response to increased language contact and the sinicization of spoken Uyghur, intellectual and artistic elites have raised concerns about Uyghur language maintenance, seen as an important element in assuring group demarcation and cultural continuity. Language ideologies have addressed the purity of the language and avoidance of Chinese elements, seen as features that can endanger the Uyghur language, its "beauty" and its role as an ethnic marker. Intellectuals and those engaged in artistic pursuits have also highlighted that Uyghur can survive if it is spoken and not mixed with Chinese but accompanied by the mastery of Chinese as a separate code. Moreover, Uyghur has been presented not as a symbol of folklore and tradition but as a tool for constructing modern Uyghur identities in Xinjiang, as a catalyst for the present and future well-being of the group.

As in all groups dealing with language ideologies, ideas of linguistic demarcation collide with the realities of language hierarchies and multilingualism. First, Chinese is the language of social mobility and the language used to assert state loyalty. Secondly, notwithstanding concerns about the status and development of the Uyghur language, the Chinese language is nowadays present in many speakers' daily language practices, in borrowing and code switching, especially in urban areas. Beyond the dimension of linguistic ideologies, speakers use their bilingual resources according to their audience and the context, developing rich linguistic and communicative outcomes. Moreover, as noted for other ethnic groups, the discourse overlooks linguistic diversity: it sees Chinese and Uyghur as opposite systems, closed in their boundaries, and does not address the protection of Uyghur varieties and other languages spoken in the region.

This chapter has presented the involvement of intellectual and artistic elites, as well as the interest among Uyghurs, in the protection of the language before 2017. It is difficult to assess whether the current system of linguistic assimilation will foster or limit, at least in the private realm, a desire for language maintenance, and how much any such desire will be shared among the Uyghurs in their homeland. The engagement of the Uyghur diaspora in speaking Uyghur, transmitting it to their children, and opening Uyghur schools and classes, tells us that this assimilationist push has fostered, rather than discouraged, a desire for language maintenance. The experiences narrated in this chapter on language ideologies and the promotion of the language, together with the current mobilization of the

diaspora, show that Uyghur can be used as a tool to preserve cultural security and develop a sense of belonging.

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7.   Local Cultural Inclusion and Partnership Assistance to Tibet: A Case Study on Lunang Township's Tourism Development Project

Yang Minghong and Zeng Benxiang

Abstract: The large-scale development of tourism projects in ethnic border areas involves the tolerance of local ethnic cultures. Provinces, cities, and related enterprises, as well as individuals in the "Partnership Assistance to Tibet," are involved in local ethnic culture projects. The Lunang International Tourist Town, a project of "Partnership Assistance to Tibet," shows that sponsors and investors face great difficulties in the definition of local ethnic culture. There are significant discrepancies between the perception of "authentic" culture by locals and by enterprises trying to serve the expectations of tourists. The case of Lunang demonstrates that investors are sometimes more inclined to protect local ethnic culture than locals, and high-level government leaders are more inclined to protect local ethnic culture than lower-level leaders.

Keywords: authentic culture, Lunang International Tourist Township, Tibetan culture, tourism development, Nyingchi Prefecture, cultural protection

The Third Tibet Work Forum, held in 1994, specified a program of "two or three provinces providing targeted assistance to one prefecture or city in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR)" (*neidi liangsange shengshi duikouzhiyuan Xizangyige dishi*). The resulting policy, "Partnership Assistance to Tibet" (PAT; Ch. *duikou yuanzang*; Tib. *kha gtad bod skyor*), was characterized by "division of responsibility, partnership assistance, and periodic rotation" (Yang 2019). Three years later, in 1997, the policy of "Partnership Assistance

to Xinjiang" (*duikou yuanjiang*) was implemented with the same approach and methods as PAT. In order to form a nationwide partnership assistance system, the central government partnered relatively developed provinces and municipalities, state-owned enterprises (SOE), and central government agencies with administrative subdivisions in TAR. In the same year, seventeen provinces committed to offering long-term PAT to fifty-seven counties in TAR, and central government agencies started aiding local government departments of TAR at different levels. Since 2001, seventeen central SOEs have been engaged in assisting seventeen counties in the TAR. In terms of development, the PAT policy features a contracting system. In addition to sending personnel to TAR, external partners provide financial and other necessary support. This is no longer mere "moral" assistance but a "material" influx to develop TAR's economy (Yang and Zhang 2016; Xu 2012). After the Fifth Tibet Work Forum, in 2010, some provinces implementing targeted aid to TAR chose areas with good resource development conditions to promote industrial development in the recipient areas. Lunang (Tib. Klu nang; Ch. *Lulang*) was the region selected by Guangdong Province to assist Nyingchi Prefecture (Tib. Nying khri; Ch. *Linzhi*) in developing tourism resources (Yang and Zhang 2016).

Lunang is located in Bayi District of Nyingchi Prefecture and is home to beautiful landscapes including glaciers, high mountains, gorges, meadows, forests, rivers, and lakes. Lunang Township borders the Pagsum Lake Scenic Area (Ch. *Basongcuo*; Tib. Brag gsum mtsho) to the north, and less than one hundred kilometers to the south is the Yarlung Tsangpo Grand Canyon (*Yalongzangbu daxiagu*). Lunang has become accessible for tourism development thanks to a highway running through the township—the national Chengdu-Lhasa-Yadong Highway (*Chuanzangxian*; National Highway 318), built in 1954.

Since 2010, Guangdong Province, one of the most developed provinces in China, has been partner-assisting Lunang to establish itself as a tourist destination (Jinwei 2010). In 2012, a comprehensive development plan, Lunang International Tourist Township (LITT; *Lulang guoji luyou xiaozhen*), was approved by both the TAR government and the Guangdong provincial government, and a large project was initiated in the township covering an area of about 86 hectares (1,296 *mu*). Guangdong Province has invested RMB 1.3 billion from its PAT budget, which is the 1 permille of Guangdong's provincial budget revenue which has to be allotted as stipulated by the central government regulations. Meanwhile, commercial investors, including Poly Real Estate Group, Evergrande Real Estate Group, Guangdong Pearl River Investment, Guangdong Provincial Tourism Holdings, Guangzhou

Pharmaceuticals Corporation, and other enterprises, have been encouraged to invest an additional RMB 2.5 billion collectively. From a capital investment perspective, Lunang follows an unorthodox model where a partner province uses its governmental funds and engagement to attract commercial capital participation in the economic development of TAR. The role of partner provincial government is critical in encouraging, engaging, and supporting provincial SOEs to invest in the Tibetan region, where short-term investment returns are generally lower than in developed regions.

This tourism project has been regarded by Nyingchi local government as a new stimulus for the local economy. Tourism development is based on the utilization of natural and cultural resources in destinations. Some studies have shown that it is not uncommon for development projects to exclude local people's voices and be disrespectful of local culture (Schein 2000; Yang 2008; Li 2010). Therefore, it is very likely that tourism development projects funded and implemented by external stakeholders unfamiliar with local culture would suffer from such shortcomings (Ai and Shen 2018). As a large-scale tourism development project, the LITT project would inevitably have impacts on different aspects of the local community, including its local ethnic culture, social setting, economic structure, and natural environment. It may lead to the loss of some features of local ethnic cultures, undermine competitiveness in existing economic sectors, detract from the social environment through a shift in the principles of social fairness and justice, and cause damage to the natural environment. The balance between economic development and cultural/ecological protection in tourism development has come to the attention of local communities. There are concerns among scholars, government policymakers, and local residents, especially local elites, about how tourism development can effectively protect local culture and engage local participation while also generating economic benefits for local communities. This chapter explores these concerns and demonstrate how the LITT project has addressed them. The findings will provide some lessons and implications for similar projects in the future. The chapter answers the following questions: How is the consideration of local ethnic culture reflected in the LITT project? What are the local perceptions of commodification of culture in tourism development? Who is protecting local ethnic culture? And finally, what factors influence the protection of local ethnic culture?

Some existing research has analyzed the impact of tourism projects in Tibet on local communities. Chen et al. (2017) found that tourism development impacts local livelihoods based on a case study of the Lunang tourism development project and suggested that the most important forms of capital

affecting livelihood strategies and livelihood outcomes are human capital and social capital, followed by material capital and natural capital. Sun and Wang's (2017) research focused on the role of National Highway 318 in tourism resource centralization and revealed that Lunang and the surrounding communities relied on this road to participate in tourism development. Yang et al. (2016) suggested that Lunang's tourism development and the accompanying eco-migration initiative had a significant impact on the local natural ecological, social, and cultural environments, and the economy.

Methodology

Main data used in this chapter were collected during fieldwork in the TAR. Between May 2014 and September 2019, Yang Minghong visited Lunang Township to undertake a series of surveys to track the development of the tourism project. Interviews with project designers and planners, construction teams, and local officials were conducted to understand the history and current situation of tourism project development, the implications for local society and culture, and the local economy and environment (Yang and Liu 2016; Yang et al. 2017). A research group led by Yang Minghong made field visits to PAT program implementation sites in Lhasa, Shannan (Lhoka), Shigatse, Nyingchi, and Chamdo prefectures. This allowed us to communicate with local people, officials at all levels, and other stakeholders including diverse government agencies of TAR so as to obtain firsthand comprehensive information about PAT. Yang Minghong further discussed the findings with scholars and aiding cadres in August 2019 in Lhasa. Through interviews with local villagers, we collected information about their understanding, participation, expectations, proposals, and complaints regarding the LITT, as well as social and economic development in Lunang (the fieldwork was carried out from July 3 to August 1, 2014, from September 1 to 8, 2015, and from April 30 to May 4, 2016). Through consultations with the TAR government (during workshops held on August 12, 2017, July 8, 2014, and September 9, 2015 in Lhasa, Nyingchi and Lunang, respectively), we received information regarding the whole process of PAT, specific policy implementation, innovative practices, and the results as perceived by the government. And through discussions with aiding cadres from Guangdong and other provinces, we obtained insight into their understanding of PAT, their efforts in LITT management and the aid outcomes from LITT (these interviews took place in August 2014 in Lunang, in September 2015 in Nyingchi, and in August 2019 in Lhasa).

Identifying Local Ethnic Culture

The understanding of local culture varies among different stakeholders in the LITT project. Lunang Township is located in the southeast of the TAR. It is a multi-ethnic region inhabited by populations of Tibetan, Monpa, Lhoba, Dengba, and other groups. The local culture is not purely Tibetan but rather a mixture of several cultures. For political-economic purposes, however (i.e., in order to conform to the requirements of PAT), Tibetan culture is emphasized, and the mixed local culture is promoted as "Tibetan."

Lunang: "Non-typical" Tibetan Culture

Historically, Nyingchi was part of the Gongbo region (Ch. *Gongbu*; Tib. Kong po). Stretching over the Yarlung Tsangpo River bend and Nyang River valley, Gongbo was suitable for farming. It was also rich in natural resources such as timber and iron ore. Nevertheless, due to its remote location on the eastern edge of the Tibetan Plateau, it was regarded as an "uncivilized" region. This perception has persisted, and today the region attracts few new residents. Although nowadays Nyingchi is promoted as "Tibet's Paradise" (*Xizangde Jiangnan*), the number of inhabitants is still small. Therefore, effecting population growth has been one of main goals of local development in the region.

From the point of view of the locals, the reason for the lack of newcomers in Nyingchi is a "lack of culture." Bayi, the capital of Nyingchi, does not look particularly "Tibetan" at first glance, and people prefer to move to Lhasa, 400 kilometers further to the west. In fact, people associate the presence of "culture" with religion, believing that the flourishing of religious culture means that "the place is cultured." Today, Nyingchi City has ninety-seven religious sites, including forty-nine monasteries, twenty-one scripture halls, and twenty-seven places for monks to practice. These monasteries accommodate 609 monks and nuns, accounting for 0.44 percent of the total population in the region, while the proportion in Tibet as a whole is 1.4 percent (SCIO 2019). Religious sites are generally major tourist destinations; their absence thus inhibits local tourism development. This is particularly true in a place where tourism is evolving around local "ethnic," i.e., Tibetan, culture, which is strongly related to religion (Liang 2018).

The ethnic diversity of Nyingchi Prefecture is another challenge for the development of tourism, as it is not easy to define one culture that represents the local cultural landscape. Nyingchi Prefecture is made up of the counties Gongbo'gyamda (Ch. *Gongbujiangda*; Tib: Kong po rgya mda'), Mainling (Ch. *Milin*; Tib. Sman gling), Medog (Ch. *Motuo*; Tib. Me tog), Bome (Ch. *Bomi*;

Tib. Spo mes), Zayu (Ch. *Chayu*; Tib. Rdza yul), and Nang (Ch. *Lang*; Tib. Snang). From the perspective of cultural zoning, Lhoka culture (considered to be the same culture as in Lhasa) predominates in Nang County, Gongbo culture predominates in Gongbo'gyamda, Khumba culture predominates in Bome and some parts of Zayu, Lhoba culture predominates in Mainling, Monpa culture predominates in Medog, and Dengba culture predominates in some parts of Zayu. As mentioned above, the "Tibetan" culture the tourists are seeking is underrepresented and the cultural diversity of Nyingchi has therefore not been sufficiently commodified and promoted. Instead, in order to attract mainstream tourists to Tibet, Lunang's tourism development has been designed to showcase "Tibetan" culture, and the development of local native traditions and cultural expressions has been neglected.

Multi-Ethnic Cultures
Although there are local peculiarities in Nyingchi, both Nang and Gongbo County lie in the Tibetan cultural landscape. The Monpa and Lhoba are officially recognized nationalities with their own spoken languages and various religious affiliations other than Buddhism. Many Monpa and Lhoba also use Tibetan for communication and there is a long tradition of interaction and intermarriage among both groups and Tibetans. The ancestors of the Lhoba in Nyingchi had long been living in the Yarlung Tsangpo valley. Before 1959, they mainly practiced slash-and-burn farming, weaving with waist looms, and other traditional crafts. The Monpa are the most populous group of the Yarlung Tsangpo valley. The Dengba are the least populous ethnic group in Tibet and speak a separate language. Before 1959, the Dengba resided in mountains and forests. Their traditions and customs were similar to those of the Lhoba. Unlike the Monpa and the Lhoba, however, the Dengba were not officially recognized as a nationality. In contrast to Tibetans, the Monpa, Lhoba, and Dengba are grouped among the PRC's "less populous nationalities" (*renkou jiaoshao minzu*).

From the distant perspective of the state administration and non-local officials responsible for the development of tourism, the Nyingchi culture is summarized as "non-typical" Tibetan culture, as opposed to the "typical" Tibetan culture understood as culture centered around Lhasa. The local blend of religious rituals, ancient legends, myths, folk customs, and totem worship in Nyingchi reflects what Louisa Schein (2000, 101–6) has described in her research as "internal Orientalism." To stimulate tourism and meet visitor expectations, the authorities represent these practices as "mysterious," "simplistic," "beautiful," "backward," "ignorant," and "feminist." Once local ethnic minorities abandon their traditional practices, they are considered

"polluted" or "dangerous." The locals' aspirations for a modern life contradict the expectations of the tourists. Moreover, most tourists coming to TAR expect to experience the Lhasa-centric "typical Tibetan culture," which differs significantly from the Tibetan culture of Nyingchi. The competing goals of attracting tourists, maintaining traditional culture, and accepting outside influences to advance development caused a major dilemma in the design of the Nyingchi LITT project.

The "Tibetan" Culture of Lunang: Neither Fish nor Fowl

Tourism development in Lunang is meant to be based on rich local cultural and ecological resources. For the abovementioned reasons, it is challenging to define, identify, and commercialize these resources. The promotion of Lunang's unique Gongbo culture and the development of local ethnic spectacles could be attractive not only to tourists from outside TAR, but also to Tibetan tourists. It might therefore be prudent to focus on the development of local Nyingchi cultural traditions to be showcased to tourists in Lunang rather than the so-called Tibetan culture of other regions. The local cultural diversity, however, is not easy to grasp.

Cai Jiahua and Zou Jiahua, both PAT personnel from Guangdong Province, served as Nyingchi County's CCP deputy secretary and the deputy head of Nyingchi County government, respectively. They initiated tourism development at Lunang (Yang 2015). The main purpose of Guangdong's PAT program was to promote economic development in Nyingchi. In this tourism development project, the idea was "for tourism to make full use of the rich resources of Gongbo culture, Bon, and eco-tourism." As claimed by Cai Jiahua, this project had to "dig deep into the abundant Gongbo culture and integrate the local culture into eco-tourism development." Although Cai Jiahua recognized Gongbo culture as dynamic and complex, he failed to clearly define it, instead vaguely expressing that it is part of Tibetan culture. In order to create attractive tourist spots, the PAT personnel decided to rely on two elements—culture and nature. To rely solely on local Gongbo culture was regarded as insufficient and a decision was made to integrate the diversity of all Nyingchi ethnic groups and their traditions into the Lunang tourism development. Cai Jiahua confessed that the resulting cultural agglomeration of "Tibetan culture" turned out to be "neither fish nor fowl" (*sibuxiang*). At the same time, the attempt to showcase cultural inclusion by integrating cultural characteristics of the Tibetans, Monpa, Lhoba, Nu people, and other minority nationalities seems to have failed. Although the designer of this project had originally hoped to avoid flattening out Tibetan culture, the result was the opposite.

Staged Culture versus Authentic Culture

The culture imagined or designed by tourist developers in Lunang can be seen as "staged culture" (Wilke 2010). John Urry (2011) created the concept of the "tourist gaze" to express the most fundamental characteristics of tourism. Tourists construct this "gaze" through the consumption and collection of tourist experiences. As a tourist product, culture is increasingly staged for tourists and decorated so as to look authentic; however, it loses real meaning for the locals (Kithiia and Reilly 2016). Musapir (2020) has examined complex religio-cultural traditions that have been transformed into simplified and exoticized patriotic "song and dance performances," seen by the community elders and cultural practitioners as fake. Qin Beishou (2017) believes that the tendencies towards cultural assimilation and vulgarization that appear in Yunnan's ethnic stage performances have damaged the original ecological characteristics of minority cultures and that the assimilated performance forms have had an impact on the effectiveness of cultural inheritance. On the other hand, an authentic culture is vivid and runs through the daily lives of local people. Tourism promotion would ideally integrate both staged and authentic culture. In developing culturally appropriate ethnic tourism experiences, it may be difficult to navigate between staged and authentic culture, and between culture as everyday life and as commercialized tourist product.

For example, the components of everyday life that represent authentic local customs and lifestyles and other cultural features are sometimes not included and showcased effectively. This is not because local residents do not have the means or the right to commodify their culture, but because they sometimes don't know how to do so. Only when a local ethnic culture is confronted with other cultures can it be highlighted and an appropriate market operation be implemented to convert it into marketable products and services. Although backpackers went to Tashigang Village to live in homestays and experience local ethnic culture before LITT started, they only explored local ethnic culture as tourists, not as local residents exploring products and projects from their daily lives that had some kind of market value. We visited local residents, and they always told us that "these tourism products and services need to be gradually developed during our interactions with tourists."

Gradually, some elements of everyday culture are transformed into staged culture as tourist products. Stone pot chicken (*shiguoji*) is a good example. The local tradition of using a stone pot to cook food dates back thousands of years. In addition to the stone pot's fast heat conduction and non-stick and color-change resistant properties, the natural texture of stone mixed with

boiling soup offers a stunning flavor (Yang et al. 2021). This dish is heavily promoted as an iconic food of the region. In contrast, other local products, such as the Tibetan "three treasures" (i.e., buttered tea, *tsampa*—roasted barley flour, and highland barley alcohol), are rarely visible at tourist sites, and tourists who want to sample them must visit guest houses opened by residents.

Theoretically, the staged culture developed to attract tourists might distort the local culture. As an example might serve Philip Xie's (2010) observation of ethnic tourism to Indonesian community on Hainan Island showing significant distortion of local culture due to a lack of understanding of the community's perceptions of authenticity. There is always a gap between the authentic everyday culture and the commercialized staged culture. Therefore, while it is important to ask who should be responsible for protecting local culture in an authentic way, it is equally important to examine the debate on authentic vs. staged culture in a nuanced manner.

Protection of Tibetan Culture

Recruitment of a Foreign Company

The LITT program in Nyingchi initially defined Lunang as an "international tourist town featuring rich Tibetan culture, natural ecology, holy tranquility, and modern fashion." Based on an open bidding process, the project initially commissioned a foreign tourism design company—Leisure Ques (LQI) from the USA—to lead the project design. It was assumed that LQI would bring its expertise and reputation in tourism development to the project. However, from the very beginning, there was a debate about how to showcase local "Tibetan culture." A proposal tabled by LQI at a planning evaluation meeting in April 2011 stated the ambitious goal that LITT aims to build "a world-class, the largest, most fully featured and highest-profile tourist reception center in northeast Tibet." However, the experts attending the meeting believed that the design did not sufficiently prioritize the inclusion of local ethnic cultures. Although the proposed plan was eventually endorsed for implementation, the failure to fully express local culture, which could have been due to LQI's lack of awareness of the local culture and inadequate understanding of the local context, was seen as potentially fatal.

When the governor of the Guangdong Province Zhu Xiaodan inspected the LITT project after the endorsement, in May 2011, concerns were raised again by local stakeholders. Zhu suggested that the project should "highlight local ethnic culture and fully respect the lifestyle of local Tibetans" in order

to show his idea of aiding Tibet by respecting local culture. He insisted that the project should pursue its initial goal of focusing on "making Lunang a tranquil, holy, picturesque, modernized international tourist destination with Tibetan traditional cultural characteristics and customs, and the harmonious relationship between humans and nature" (Hua 2012). Obviously, the difference in the understanding of local culture and cultural protection between LQI and Chinese stakeholders, and especially the Guangdong provincial government as the PAT investor, was the decisive factor. As the most important result of fulfilling Zhu's vision, ultimately Guangdong Province officially revoked its approval of the LQI proposal and recruited China Urban Design Research Center led by Chen Keshi instead of LQI as its project partner.

Recruitment of a Domestic Company

In the following stage, Zhu Xiaodan had a design company with Chinese localization experience take over the design of the LITT project. In May 2011, Chen Keshi, a well-known Chinese urban planner and designer, was commissioned to lead a new proposal. He involved his China Urban Design Research Center, based at Peking University, and the technical implementation was by China Reconstruct (Chen et. al. 2017). In April 2012, having been endorsed by the government of Guangdong, the overall goal of the cultural development of LITT was set as showcasing "southeast Tibetan culture" and the "Gongbo architectural style."

It is critical for tourism development to protect local culture while making use of it. In practice, developers often focus more on economic development than on protecting local culture (Zhu 2008; Ai and Shen 2018). The case of Lunang provides a good example of the importance and necessity of government intervention. It is worth noting that LITT is a project assisted by Guangdong Province for the TAR, with funding from Guangdong. Moreover, since Guangdong Province is not providing this assistance to generate economic returns for itself, it mainly completes the assistance tasks assigned by the central government. From the decades of implementation of aid projects in Tibet, it can be seen that the provinces functioning as aid donors do not transfer their investments to the TAR, but rather organize the construction and implementation of the projects. If Guangdong as the aid provider directly transferred these funds to Nyingchi prefecture, it would actually be a horizontal transfer payment, and no system of horizontal financial transfer payments has been established in China. The main purpose of the central government's establishment of a corresponding aid system for TAR is for the aid provider to utilize

their funds, along with their advantages in engineering technology and management, to assist the recipient areas in building infrastructure and developing projects such as Lunang. And for development projects like Lunang, the benefits accrue to the recipient, not Guangdong as the aid provider.

In tourism development projects in other regions of China, the main purpose of being an investor is to gain benefits from the operation after the project is completed. Although the developers and operators of these projects make verbal and even written promises to protect cultural heritage and ecology, they often betray the expectations of local residents. Due to the costs involved in protecting culture and ecology during project development, the protection of local cultural heritage and ecology is often ineffective in non-targeted aid projects. Fortunately, though, this has not been the case for LITT in Lunang.

Architectural Decoration and Finishing

Architectural decoration and finishing reflects the designers' idea of Tibetan culture. Whether or not the architecture in tourist destinations is able to showcase Tibetan cultural characteristics as perceived by designers eventually depends on the decoration and finishing, which is also an important element for local communities to get involved in. In fact, a large number of skilled craftspeople from local and neighboring regions have been hired to contribute to architectural decoration in Lunang.

Many ethnic groups in TAR have acquired thangka painting skills in a monastery. The drawing of thangka is a process of endowing and displaying religious values, including the dissemination value of religious doctrines, the worship value of religious relics, the practice value of religious practice, and the value norms of religious aesthetics (Ma 2007). Thangkas that depict deities are not merely decorative; they can be "animated" by clergy to make it an actual representation of the depicted deity in a monastery. Therefore, using thangka techniques just for "art" is, arguably, an appropriation of the practice. In the LITT project, these skills are important for decorating tourist architecture in a way that showcases local Tibetan traditional arts. As a unique traditional skill, this style of painting can seldom be applied by outsiders and provides an almost exclusive opportunity for local Tibetans. Compared with other jobs, painting pictures on buildings is highly technical and, therefore, local painters earn much higher salaries. In recent years, local communities have used more and more steel and cement to build private houses; however, they still prefer to decorate them with locally inspired

Tibetan paintings. The decoration of buildings is certainly an important cultural expression of local people and, in this case, an expression of local Tibetan culture. It is important to highlight that the active participation of local Tibetan people in architectural decoration in the LITT project significantly contributes to the recovery and retention of local Tibetan culture.

Participation of Local Villages in the Project

Designers have taken into consideration the inclusion and benefit sharing of stakeholders, particularly local communities, in the LITT development. While four administrative villages—Norbu, Dumpatshal, Tashigang, and Stongjug—are located within the planned LITT zone, four other villages— Klumo, Badkar, Lagdong, and Balmo—are far away from the project zone, at a distance of thirty-eight to fifty-eight kilometers. To include these four outer villages in the project, designers have assigned a commercial plot within the LITT zone especially for these villages to run independent development programs. This specially assigned plot is located in the proposed tourist services area, where typical tourist services will be set up. Importantly, providing villages with a land plot outside their administrative boundaries is a policy breakthrough (to some extent) with governmental support and approval. The offer of land development rights not only opens a window to showcase the economic and cultural characteristics in these villages, but also gives these communities an opportunity to share the benefits of tourism development in the region. On the other hand, this will also bring commercial benefits to developers as it introduces more diversity of culture, services, and products to the tourist attraction.

Village	Number of households	Population (people)	Distance* from Lunang Town (km)
Tashigang	64	302	2
Norbu	70	327	3
Dumpatshal	30	157	10
Stongjug	21	99	21
Klumo	18	76	55
Badkar	20	129	38
Lagdong	33	119	58
Balmo	26	124	42
Total	282	1,333	

Figure 7.1: Population and Location of Eight Administrative Villages in Lunang Township. *The distance from Lunang Town is the distance from the location of Lunang People's Government

A Dilemma for Local Residents: Economic Development or Cultural Protection

Generally speaking, local residents are living carriers of local ethnic cultures. Although there are Monpa, Lhoba, and Dengba living in Nyingchi besides Tibetans, the tourism development project in Lunang town hopes to display and protect the local Tibetan culture. Investigation of the participation of locals who are Tibetans in the project can provide an insight into the protection of local culture to some degree. It is challenging for local residents to find a balance between embracing the economic benefits that this project is likely to bring and protecting the details of their own specific culture so that they remain present and visible within the larger concept of "Tibetan culture."

Guest Houses: A Rapid Growth Trend

As previously mentioned, in some villages, such as Tashigang Village of Lunang Township, guest houses were operating before the LITT project started. In 1998, backpackers began to pay to stay overnight at the homes of villagers in Tashigang. Puncog, known as "Uncle Puncog" by tourists, was the first person to provide guest house accommodation services in the village. In 2003, Tang Tsering, another Tibetan in Tashigang village, where most residents are Tibetan, transformed his family house into a Tibetan guest house and received an incentive subsidy of RMB 43,000 from the government to decorate it. Since then, guest houses have developed rapidly, partially due to encouragement and support from the government.

By 2010, twenty-six households, i.e., 50 percent of all households that consist of Tibetan families, had opened guest houses in the village. The profits from guest houses significantly contributed to household incomes. On average, the revenues from guest houses accounted for a quarter of total household income in 2010. The revenue of the guest house of Uncle Puncog reached RMB 200,000 in 2010, making up more than 50 percent of his total income. The success of private guest houses in some villages inspired Guangdong Province's PAT initiative to redirect the focus of its aid effort from infrastructure projects, such as building roads and schools, to tourism development, and thus the LITT project has become one of its most prioritized projects. Tourism development in the region has further stimulated the local guest house business, which has already expanded to Bumpatshal, Mamgling, Dumpatshal, and other small villages. The rapid growth of guest houses has brought more income to local communities. For example, by 2017, out of sixty-eight Tibetan households (312 people in total)

in Tashigang village, forty-eight had opened guest houses. Collectively, they received 71,000 tourists, and generated a total income of RMB 2.91 million.

The development of guest houses gets more and more local residents directly involved in tourism. The six key components of tourism, i.e., eating, living, transport, traveling, shopping, and entertainment, create economic prosperity in local communities. In fact, with the development of tourist services, including guest houses, food services featuring local cuisine such as stone pot chicken and sales of local specialty products, household income has increased significantly, with tourism being the main income generator. Importantly, in order to showcase local culture to tourists, local communities began to recover some original traditions—to stage existing everyday culture. For example, local Tibetans display and share their understanding of traditions and lifestyles with tourists, such as day-to-day Tibetan clothing with local characteristics, handmade buttered tea, digging up matsutake mushrooms, milking yaks, and other examples of everyday culture. Through these activities, tourists can experience and appreciate the local ethnic customs that are embedded in the open-ended concept of Tibetan culture. The purpose of these activities is also to promote the retention, recovery, inheritance, and protection of traditional culture, yet the effect is not always significant.

Choices of Guest House Styles: Conflicts between Tradition and Modernity

Generally speaking, local ethnic groups tend to support and protect their local culture, given that they carry it with them and care about the multiple dimensions of connection with it. However, cultural protection is always a complex issue, especially in the context of a less developed economic background and a pluralistic cultural environment. In the development of family-run guest houses in this region, one issue has been that local households seem not to pay enough attention to cultural protection. The rapid growth of the guest house business, without a comprehensive plan, has stimulated more and more households to convert traditional residential properties into commercial guest houses. During this transformation, many features of traditional architectural styles and locally embedded Tibetan culture have disappeared.

For example, many locals learned that most tourists (so far, they are mostly domestic tourists) prefer a modern room layout. They made the judgement that tourists do not like traditional Tibetan rooms, as they have a wooden structure, small windows, low ceilings, and poor natural light. To make their properties more attractive, local people generally choose

to renovate their rooms using modern styles and architectural design. In practice, local guest house owners renovate their guest rooms in several ways. The most popular way is to renovate existing rooms by enlarging the windows to let in more natural light and installing new bedding to make the room more modern. Another way is to rebuild the property, demolishing the original building to construct a modern-style hotel. For example, Pasangs, the Tashigang Village head, built a small hotel beside his house with a sign on the roof that read "Ggrongsmad Guest House." The two-story hotel has more than thirty standard rooms little different from those in a city. Only the exterior is in a local Tibetan style. We visited several newly built hotel-type guest houses which were independent from the owners' residential properties. All these buildings are in a modern style, comparable to standard urban hotels, although their external appearance is "Tibetan" in style.

It is understandable that local residents choose to satisfy tourists' needs. However, in the long run, this will likely damage local culture and eventually damage economic growth in the region. While balancing immediate economic benefits and long-term cultural conservation is challenging, as mentioned previously, it could be managed more effectively with a comprehensive understanding of tourism itself, including tourist markets and business management. Assistance from the government is necessary to guide and regulate the development of tourism, including the guest house sector. The PAT initiative and its LITT project have the potential to play a significant role. For example, the government should encourage tourist management authorities to educate tourist developers and local ethnic groups that tourists visit Tibet for a Tibetan cultural experience and not for luxury hotel rooms which they could find just as easily in big cities. This would help prevent local residents from making such culture-demolishing changes when renovating their houses. It appears that the government has already noticed the problem and taken steps to reverse the trend. The local government has required existing guest houses to retain and recover their Tibetan cultural features and stopped approval for new guest houses. We understand from the field survey that local people have started to adhere to the requirements to improve their guest houses.

As well as struggling with guest houses, local people are also facing challenges in their religious beliefs to some extent. For example, when tourists order freshly made stone pot chicken on no-killing days (when people are traditionally not allowed to kill living creatures), locals will hire non-locals to kill chickens for them. That is to say, they are struggling to balance their pursuit of commercial opportunities and their existing beliefs and lifestyles.

Commercialization of the Paper Flag Formation

On the top of a hill in Tashigang Village, there is a prayer flag formation. The prayer flags surround a small forest on the top of a small hill and can be seen from the main road one kilometer away. They are made of materials such as cotton, linen, silk, etc., and feature five colors: blue, white, red, green, and yellow, symbolizing the sky, auspicious clouds, flames, rivers, and the earth, respectively. Tibetan Buddhism also gives the meaning of these five colors as five Buddhas and five kinds of wisdom. The rules are that all homestay tourists from Tashigang Village can enter the prayer flag formation for free, while others need to pay ten RMB per person. In order to collect the entry fee, the villagers have built a fence around the formation, and at the entrance, there is usually a burly young man responsible for the collection. Visiting prayer flag formations does not require payment elsewhere. Charging people to see them is a typical case of the commodification of religious culture. After the LITT project started in Lunang, Tashigang Village also attempted to turn some of the village's objects into ethnic spectacles to be gazed upon by tourists. For example, an old house whose owner fled to India in 1959, which had been vacant for decades, was renovated as an "ancient house" for tourists to visit. Local villagers refer to this old house as the "landlord's house." The renovation of the house was completed by a village organization with the aim of adding traditional cultural elements to the village.

Jointly Built Guest Houses

The considerable profit from operating guest houses in Tashigang Village has not only incentivized local residents to expand their guest houses but has also ignited investment interest from outsiders. Gradually, joint ventures between local villagers and external investors to build and run new guest houses have emerged, for example in Tashigang Village. Our field survey reveals different "co-operative" mechanisms largely based on a "local land plus external capital" model, which was not related to LITT. Usually, local households offer the right to use their contracted land (farming or pastoral land) to external investors for a fixed term (e.g., twenty years) at an annual fee of, e.g., RMB 30,000, while investors from outside invest to build and run new guest houses. The investor will independently operate the business until the end of the lease period, when the right to use the land and any assets on the land reverts to the local household with no fee. The investor will usually invest around RMB four million to set up a new guest house business.

However, according to current legislation, such land transfers are illegal. Related laws and regulations do not permit farming and pastoral land to

be repurposed to build commercial facilities.[1] We found from the survey that the local government noticed the construction of illegal buildings and took some action to prevent it in the early stages but failed to do so consistently. Consequently, more illegal guest houses have been built and opened for business, although the process was delayed by the governmental interventions. It is important to note that local households have various perceptions of this cooperation between locals and external investors. Most households would be in favor of stronger governmental action, as they generally regard this cooperation as stimulating cut-throat competition and stealing the benefits of tourism from local people.

Local Views on Cultural Protection

As discussed above, members of the local community have gradually formed their own views regarding local cultural protection in the LITT project. Our field survey of local community members found that local villagers generally hold positive views towards the project, while they have been cautiously trying to achieve a balance between economic benefits and cultural protection.

In May 2015, we conducted interviews with twenty-seven households, i.e., 42 percent of the total of sixty-four households, in Tashigang Village, to understand their perception of the LITT project, which had helped the locals to convert their houses into guest houses, and associated cultural protection issues. The survey suggested that all interviewees welcomed tourism development at Lunang and were keen to share in the economic benefits of tourism. They did not necessarily oppose the development of tourism activities by external businesses in local villages, as long as these external businesses did not compete directly with local family guest houses. They expected their own guest houses to be protected in some way. However, they did not really have an idea of how to protect their interests by preserving local culture. When we came back to the same village in May 2016 and July 2019, we found some encouraging changes. While they were still passionate about participation in tourism development, the locals were more experienced in tourism operation. One obvious piece of evidence was that almost all the guest houses had set up wooden signs to advertise their services. This suggested that they had now started to learn about tourism management and engage with tourist markets. Meanwhile, many

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1   Tashigang village leader told me confidentially that local government repeatedly informed the villagers about all relevant laws and regulations ahead of the start of the cooperation between locals and the external investors.

guest houses had been renovated to highlight the "Tibetan architectural style," and local households had more initiative and willingness to show their original authentic lifestyle to visitors. Undoubtedly, this change reveals that local communities perceived tourism as an important development in their villages and that cultural protection and cultural presentation have become more and more critical for attracting and retaining tourists. The gradual change in local people's perception of tourism and the role of local culture in tourism development will benefit sustainable cultural tourism development in the region.

Factors Directing the Protection of Local Ethnic Culture

Decision-Making and Implementation

While Guangdong Provincial Government has invested enormous amounts in personnel and capital, non-governmental capital makes up a substantial proportion of the overall investment. Therefore, these PAT partners have a larger stake in decision-making. In this regard, it is important to explore the role of PAT partners in protecting local ethnic culture. Two key persons have played a critical role in LITT decision-making and project implementation. As the governor of Guangdong Province, Zhu Xiaodan is the top decision-maker for LITT. His aim for the project in relation to cultural protection is to "protect the local environment, respect local culture, and protect local Tibetans' interests" (*baohu dangdi shengtai, zunzhong dangdi wenhua, weihu dangdi Zangmin liyi*). Zhu has visited Lunang three times and met with the chief designer Chen Keshi sixteen times to facilitate project development. Cai Jiahua, heading the Guangdong PAT initiative in Nyingchi Prefecture and commanding LITT on the ground, has been implementing the project following the decision made by Guangdong Provincial Government.

We made several visits to the construction headquarters of the LITT project located in Norbu Village and interviewed Cai Jiahua and Huang Zhiming, who served as the deputy county governor (originally from Guangdong Province for PAT). Interviews and group discussions suggested that they were conscious of the importance of protecting local Tibetan culture. They indicated that "as a PAT project, it should do well to local residents and defend their interests including local hybrid culture, otherwise this project is meaningless" (Chen et al. 2017).

In May 2016, at the construction headquarters of the LITT project, Cai Jiahua shared a story of architectural decoration with us. When building the roof of the tourist distribution center, the construction team did not follow

the blueprints. The construction supervisor reported this to Chen Keshi, the chief designer of LITT, who insisted that the roof had to be rebuilt, as if it were left in its current state, the whole building would lose its Tibetan style. Rebuilding would cost more than RMB fifty million, which was expensive. The initial choice of Chen Keshi as the project design supervisor of LITT did not take into account whether a local Tibetan was needed. The main consideration was that the LITT investment was the largest project among all the PAT projects, which indicated that LITT's design supervisor needed to be a highly experienced expert in the early stages. Chen Keshi achieved great success in the early stages of other project designs and accumulated substantial experience. Therefore, his request to rebuild the roof received support from the local government and Guangdong Province, which is providing assistance to Tibet. The construction companies were reluctant to rebuild it and tried hard to persuade Cai Jiahua to accept the existing architecture. However, Cai Jiahua was determined to support Chen's advice. This story reveals that the chief designer responsibility system guarantees the protection of Tibetan culture during the process of construction, which depends on the people in charge.

Channels of Local Participation

During interviews and group discussion, we acquired information about local participation in the LITT project. During a conversation with Chen Keshi in May 2015, we understood that the daily work of Chen and his team was to oversee project sites at Norbu, Tashisgang, and other villages. They talked with local people, collected suggestions and advice from them, and integrated the information into the project design and implementation. This was a way for local residents to engage and participate in the development of LITT. In fact, throughout the project, the managers and those in charge (including Cai Jiahua and Chen Keshi) had been living in local villages. This suggests that local people were listened to and encouraged to participate.

In the PRC, only land expropriated as state land can be used for commercial development. This land acquisition has always led to conflicts between stakeholders. In many places in interior provinces, there have been a large number of incidents where farmers fought fiercely against such land acquisition. These incidents reflected the refusal of land "owners" (local households, who possess land use rights) to accept the mandated price at which land allocated to private households would be converted into state land, and their desire to sell their land to property developers. The LITT project also needed to expropriate the land of local people, but

this land acquisition did not encounter any obstacles, according to Cai. He suggested there were two reasons why local residents were willing to accept the land acquisition: firstly, because the price offered was relatively high, and secondly, because local people extensively participated in and benefitted from the project.

Considering the large scale of the project, however, the benefits experienced by local communities through participation remain limited. The total investment in this project was RMB 3.8 billion, but local people could only be involved directly in very limited activities. For example, they exclusively supplied the gravel needed in the construction. According to Cai's estimate, gravel supply would generate a total of RMB sixty million, at a unit price of RMB sixty-five per cubic meter, across the entire project. This is indeed a substantial income for villages with small populations. However, considering the huge total construction cost and annual (not total) income from the gravel supply business, this is still only a small proportion of the total cost of the project. Obviously, more active participation is an important way to increase local people's benefit share. The challenge here is that local people have a very limited capacity to do the necessary jobs—especially the skilled jobs required to build complex structures. It is therefore important to engage residents in activities they can feasibly carry out—for example, those which require local cultural awareness and local knowledge, such as local material supply and traditional painting of buildings, as mentioned previously. That is to say, the construction of these projects requires the employment of professional and technical personnel from outside the region, but this is not inconsistent with the employment of local residents to participate in the construction.

Cultural Consciousness of Investors

Multiple investors have been involved in LITT. Guangdong Province invested in building infrastructure, Evergrande Real Estate Group invested RMB 700 million in building a "courtyard-style hotel" (*yuanluoshi fengge binguan*), Guangdong Pearl River Investment invested RMB 700 million in building a "palace-style hotel" (*gongdianshi fengge binguan*), Poly Real Estate Group invested RMB 700 million in building a "villa-style hotel" (*bieshushi fengge binguan*), and Guangdong Provincial Tourism Holdings invested in building a "tourist center" and a "commercial street." From the perspective of commercial gain, these companies consider how to attract more tourists to their hotels and attractions, assuming that tourists come to Lunang for its unique local culture and natural landscape rather than

for luxury hotels. Consequently, they exploit local "ethnic culture" for own commercial benefit.

Conclusion

Tourism development in ethnic areas always requires attention to cultural inclusion. This involves not only recognizing, respecting, and protecting local cultures but also promoting cohesion among different ethnic groups. Protecting the unique Tibetan culture is especially important for successful tourism development in the region. The LITT project is an example of a successful collaboration between different stakeholders, including Guangdong Province, Nyingchi Prefecture, and local businesses and communities, resulting in greater cultural cohesion. However, the case of Lunang highlights the need to prioritize local cultural protection, as local communities are the primary bearers of ethnic culture. While local government officials and communities should have a strong commitment to cultural protection, they may sometimes prioritize economic benefits over cultural preservation. Interestingly, external providers of aid and government officials seem to place more emphasis on local cultural protection than local stakeholders, perhaps reflecting a difference in understanding between insiders and outsiders. To bridge this gap, the LITT project has attempted to integrate local and stereotypical views of Tibetan culture, incorporating everyday cultural products, such as local food and architectural styles, into the local cultural presentation.

The perception of local ethnic culture in Lunang varies greatly between external stakeholders and local residents. While the external stakeholders view the culture from a tourist perspective, the locals see it as an integral part of their day-to-day lives. This difference in perception makes it challenging for the project designers and constructors to determine what kind of "Tibetan culture" Lunang should display. Consequently, conflicts arise among local residents, who struggle to balance the protection of their culture with the pursuit of short-term economic interests.

Despite these challenges, the large-scale tourism development in Lunang has shown a commitment to cultural inclusion by external donors and investors, as well as the government. At a micro-level, policy makers have made efforts to engage local communities in project activities and consult with experts and locals to adhere to the principle of cultural inclusion. However, irrational short-term behavior poses a significant challenge to cultural protection in this complex process. The LITT project, as an aid

project, prioritizes local ethnic cultural inclusion and seeks to benefit local communities and promote regional development. This project highlights the importance of active local participation, which is necessary, important, and feasible for similar aid projects. Despite its positive impact, the LITT project presents challenges to local cultural security that cannot be overlooked. First, although LITT is an aid project to Tibet, it is also a commercial venture, and commercial goals may conflict with local cultural safety goals. This problem has been evident to some extent since the establishment and operation of LITT. Second, marketization in the region is advancing rapidly due to LITT's influence. For traditional societies like Lunang, adapting to rapid modernization and marketization poses significant challenges to local residents. Resistance to modernization and increasing cultural awareness of protection have led to the risk of social instability. Third, although the donor governmental bodies and the local government have made efforts to protect the local ethnic culture from commercialization during the building of LITT, after its completion, commercialization and marketization will inevitably accelerate. If government bodies reduce their efforts to assist locals and allow the market to penetrate the local area completely, the impact on local residents will be even more significant.

Overall, the large-scale tourism development project in Lunang has had significant economic, cultural, and social impacts on local residents. For example, Tibetan Buddhism is a fundamental aspect of Tibetan culture, but with the involvement of local residents in LITT, the change of local religions has become increasingly apparent. The rapid social changes brought about by tourism development, especially in the promotion of the LITT project, have altered the society in which local residents live and have led to the commodification of some elements of Tibetan Buddhism. As an example, religious rules that were once considered sacred, such as prohibitions on killing living beings, have been relaxed, taking on a more flexible form, religious objects have been turned into commodities for profit, and religiously significant paintings have been used to decorate ordinary buildings. These changes will impact the protection of national culture.

The LITT project was completed in October 2017 and underwent trial operation in May 2018, which was reportedly successful. However, since its opening in February 2020, the project has faced significant operational challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the situation remains unstable in 2023. Moving forward, there are various associated issues that require further exploration, such as the management performance of different tourist projects, local resident participation in business operations, and potential sociocultural changes and impacts on local lifestyles.

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8. Adaptation of the Offering to the Mountain Deity among the Qiang in Northwest Sichuan: Cultural Security on Multiple Levels

Bian Simei

Abstract: This chapter aims to explore multiple-level cultural security concerns among the Rrmi people, who are constituents of the Qiang nationality and the Chinese nation, by examining the coexistence of two versions of their local ritual of offering to the mountain deity. The traditional local ritual of *Hsugdu* is routinized in the process of the identification of their Qiang nationality and the promotion of cultural tourism, and forms the basis of the adapted ritual of *zhuanshanhui*. *Zhuanshanhui* integrates the main content of the traditional *Hsugdu*, exemplary Qiang history and culture, and popular environmentalism. It has become the representation of the local Rrmi to outsiders and a potential touristic resource. Besides promoting cultural tourism, local Rrmi need to maintain their cultural distinctiveness to present their cultural identity and secure touristic resources while integrating themselves into the Chinese nation.

Keywords: ritual of offering to the mountain deity, Rrmi people, Qiang nationality, cultural adaptation

I still remember the first time I visited the Yunshang Administrative Village in northwest Mao County in Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture in northwest Sichuan, in 2011. I was invited by a friend working in the county Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Office (*feiwuzhi wenhua yichan bangongshi*)[1] to witness "real Qiang culture" (*zhenzhengde qiang*

1   China is a signatory to UNESCO's 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. China allocated ample finances to preserving its domestic intangible cultural

wenhua), which turned out to be an offering to a mountain deity (*jishanhui*). The officials intended to recommend the ritual to the provincial-level ICH, and the purpose of the trip was to film it.[2] It took us two days to finish shooting, and the locals were hospitable. I found the ritual interesting and returned to the village in 2013 to do fieldwork for my doctoral project. This time I had a different experience, at least in the beginning. My host was the village secretary of the CCP, who was also one of the nominated inheritors of the local ICH. He told me:

> I will not tell you anything about the ritual. You are just like a journalist. You are going to write it down, everyone will read your paper, and then everyone will know it. As a result, no one will come to our village to see our ritual anymore.

I was quite embarrassed at being treated as if I were there to "steal" their culture. Yet, after about six months I finally gained their trust and was able to gather some core information about the ritual. The same person then said to me that it was good to record their ritual, to write it down, because in another one or two generations, the Qiang language would probably disappear and so would the real content of the ritual.

Villagers in the region of Songping Valley in northwest Mao County in Aba Prefecture claim to have celebrated the folk offering to the mountain deity, known as *Hsugdu*[3] in Qiang language or *Zuoshan* in Chinese, for hundreds of years. The annual festival, which takes place in the sixth month of the lunar calendar,[4] is performed throughout the whole valley today. Variations of the Offering to the Mountain Deity ritual exist among some Qiang subgroups,

heritage and promoted "traditional culture" all over the country. The certified ICH is often related to the preservation and commodification of local culture (for more, see Blumenfield and Silverman 2013).

2   In the Intangible Cultural Heritage Law of the People's Republic of China, the government above the county level is empowered to investigate, recognize, record, put on file, and recommend potential ICH. The government will also fund certificated ICH and inheritors for the purpose of protection (see https://www.gov.cn/flfg/2011-02/25/content_1857449.htm, August 2023).

3   The transcription of the Qiang language in the text is based on the Qiang writing system invented in the 1990s, which was based on Latin letters. I would like to thank Chen Weikang, who is a Qiang language expert, for helping me with the spelling of the Qiang words.

4   The time of the offering to the mountain deity varies in different regions in Mao County due to their different elevations. In pre-socialist times, the ritual was held in the fourth month of the lunar calendar for Jiaochang region, the fifth month of the lunar calendar for Weimen and Sanlong, and the sixth month of the lunar calendar for Songping Valley and Qugu. Qiang in Wenchuan and Li County held their ritual on the first day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar (see Xi'nan minzu daxue yanjiuyuan 2008, 191).

as well as among subgroups of Tibetans, such as the Gyalrong and Amdo Tibetans who live in proximity to the Yunshang Rrmi and maintain the Bon traditions (La 2017; Tsering 2017; Li 2019). As one of the subgroups of the Qiang, the Yunshang Rrmi people's religion has mostly been influenced by the Bon historically. The ritual is aimed at pleasing the mountain deity so as to obtain a good harvest, an abundance of domestic animals, good luck, and agricultural and human fertility. It also links individuals to their natal land and creates a collective sense of belonging for a community. It can bring personal or communal good luck and ward off penalties from non-human beings. Yunshang Rrmi generally consider *Hsugdu* to be one of their most important and distinctive rituals.[5]

In fact, nowadays, there are two versions of the ritual: one is the routinized performance on an administrative village (*xingzhengcun*) level, which incorporates many external elements and takes place on a larger scale (see below); the other is on the hamlet (*zhaizi*) level,[6] and often the only participants are the villagers in that hamlet. The first ritual we visited was the routinized one, and the participants were from the three village groups of Yunshang Village.[7] Moreover, the contradictory statements of my host, a member of a subgroup of the partially constructed and heterogeneous Qiang nationality (*minzu*) recognized by the PRC (Wang 2003), actually reflect his sense of insecurity about the local Rrmi culture. Cultural security embraces the premise that the initial "culture" of a group, providing for common sense, will not be substituted or assimilated, that the group is able to feel a shared cultural identity, and at the same time, that the group's culture's distinctiveness, independence, and integrity should be maintained and that its culture can be inherited and developed (Chen 2012). As I will show, the secretary's concerns about cultural security manifested on multiple levels because of the complex background of the Rrmi identity, a very local identity, and the identities of the Qiang nationality and the Chinese nation (*Zhonghua minzu*). Similar situations exist among many ethnic minorities in southwest China.

My host's attitude shows the common worries of the locals, especially the old generation. These worries manifest at least in two ways. First, the

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5   The other important festivals are the Spring Festival and collective temple festivals.

6   Here I use "hamlet" to refer to the smallest community, a *cua* in Qiang, and a *zhaizi* or a *zhai* in Chinese; one or several hamlets form a village group (*cunxiaozu*), depending on their scale; several village groups form an administrative village (*xingzhengcun*); several administrative villages form a township (*xiangzhen*), and several townships form a county (*xian*).

7   There were three village groups (*zhaizi*) in 2013, but these were officially reorganized into two later on. However, villagers still habitually refer to them as three *zhaizi* in their everyday life today.

locals are afraid of losing the particularity and authenticity of their hamlet culture, because the promotion of a Qiang identity increases the convergence of the subgroups' cultures, which can be "stolen" or imitated by the other Qiang subgroups. Second, being incorporated into the Chinese nation, they have been adopting the majority Han culture, notably the language through national education, and might eventually be assimilated.[8] These concerns are closely related to the development of the PRC's ethnic policy and the corresponding approach to economic development in this area in past decades.

Before the late Qing Empire, many ethnic groups living in the sprawling Sino-Tibetan-Qiang-Hui borderland in northwest Sichuan existed relatively autonomously. They had long historical links with the Tibetans and Han, and the borderland was the "middle ground" (White 1991) where various communities served as intermediaries between the two civilizations (Wang 2008). Its peripheral location as a frontier contributed to northwest Sichuan's relative isolation and local autonomy (Hayes 2014, 14) and, at the same time, created their hybrid culture. Living in the valleys, except when they travel to the county town or neighboring valleys, the mountain people mainly spend time in their local hamlet. Even in 2013, there was still no paved road and only 2G internet. Yet, following the establishment of the PRC and subsequent economic development, these groups living in-between have actually (to some extent) been able to manipulate favorable cultural and economic conditions to satisfy their own needs (Jinba 2014).

The Qiang we visited were a small group of people who call themselves Rrmi, living in Yunshang Administrative Village in Mao County. The village was formed from three village groups which were reorganized from six natural hamlets during the 1960s. The population was around 430 in 2021. Except for a few Tibetans and Han marrying in, the majority were classified as Qiang. The Amdo Tibetans from Songpan live to the north of the village, and the Gyalrong Tibetans from Heishui live to the west. The Amdo Tibetans speak the Amdo dialect of Tibetan, and the adjacent Gyalrong in Heishui speak a language similar to Qiang. All of them make similar offerings to the mountain deity, but Tibetans often have Bon monasteries and the Yunshang Rrmi have a localized Han-style Buddhist temple.[9] Although the Gyalrong

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8   For more on the role of language in maintaining or diminishing cultural security, see Giulia Cabras' chapter in this volume.

9   Their temple was first built by a Tibetan lama before the 1950s, then destroyed in the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) and finally rebuilt in 2008 into a temple with Han Buddhist statues. Yet, the meanings of these statues were localized.

Tibetans and the Qiang speak a similar language, they cannot communicate smoothly. Sichuanese is often the lingua franca. Those who speak Rrmi (also termed Rrmea) have never formed a united or coherent ethnic group of Qiang (Wang 2003). Traditionally, their local cultural identity as members of a hamlet has been the key form of recognition. Their established social structure within a hamlet is mainly based on territory rather than lineage, like that of the neighboring Gyalrong (Chen 1947). Their relationship with the local mountain deity reflects their individual and collective belonging. Under the influence of Han culture, however, the principle of lineage gains on importance as well.

During more than seventy years of the PRC's administration of this area since 1950, there was a period of a few years during the Cultural Revolution when the Yunshang Rrmi's *Hsugdu* was banned and only practiced secretly at night.[10] In the reform era which began in 1978, the ritual was revived, and it was routinized in the early 1990s in the process of Qiang nationality-building. The Yunshang Rrmi actively participated in the construction of the Chinese nation through the principle of "diverse unity" (*duoyuan yiti*; Fei 1989) by promoting their Qiang culture, which distinguishes them from the majority Han and the Tibetans practicing Buddhism. At the same time, the Rrmi adopted the exemplary history written by Han historians and Qiang intellectuals to integrate themselves into the Qiang nationality and the Chinese nation. They are proud of their authentic Qiang culture but at the same time also experience cultural insecurity in several ways.

Based on ethnographic and historical research, this paper specifically investigates the Rrmi traditional offering to the mountain deity before the 1950s and its evolution since the ritual was restored for the public after the Cultural Revolution (1966–76). Having followed the ritual since 2011, I have discovered that varieties of the ritual exist among different Qiang sub-groups, depending on their living environment, tradition, and interpretation. Notably, the adapted versions of this ritual coexist with the traditional ones. They are more like performances "invented" (Hobsbawm 1992) by the Rrmi, mainly to represent themselves to outsiders and tourists. The rituals are larger, livelier, routinized, and mostly funded by the government. They feature the Qiang nationality's paradigmatic history, elements of Qiang cultural markers and popular themes or ideologies related to the relevant state policies. The adapted ritual has become popular and been watched by many outsiders. However, it is my main goal to record and reveal the traditional hamlet ritual, which has not often been witnessed by outsiders,

10   Interview, Yunshang Village, September 2013.

and the process of forming and refashioning the ritual in order to present a more complex picture of the participants' identities as local Rrmi, Qiang, and members of the Chinese nation. Multiple levels of identity imply the existence of multiple aspects of cultural security, or insecurity.

From Rrmi to Qiang: Obtaining a New Ethnic Identity

The history of how the Yunshang Rrmi obtained their Qiang identity and how the Qiang identity relates to the concept of the Chinese nation provides a foundation for understanding their cultural security. It has been persuasively argued that the PRC's official identification of nationalities does not always correspond to the natural self-ascription, language, and cultural practices of an ethnic group (Harrell 2001; Kaup 2000; Wellens 2010). It is not uncommon for people speaking similar languages and practicing similar cultural activities to be identified as two distinct nationalities. There are also sub-groups in some identified nationalities. For instance, the majority Han on the east coast and in Sichuan are different, both in their language and culture. A similar situation could easily arise for people living in the borderlands. Borderland people are often multilingual and have a hybrid culture, and their identity can be multiple and dynamic. They can be identified as different nationalities in different discourses. The peoples who speak a similar Rrmi language living at the junction of Mao County and Heishui County were classified as either Qiang or Tibetan. The separation, to some extent, corresponds to their administrative territorial boundaries, but the nationality label is often less important than their local identity—for example, in the case of intermarriage with other nationalities. When a Rrmi girl identified as Tibetan marries into Yunshang village, she will put on Qiang costumes and present herself as a Qiang when necessary. The awareness of belonging to a specific nationality only arises in supra-local contexts, for example when they speak Sichuanese and have to identify themselves to outsiders or the state.

The Qiang are the earliest and one of the most active minorities recorded on oracle bones by the Chinese of the Shang dynasty (ca. 1600–ca. 1045 BCE), but the relationship between the ancient Qiang and the modern Qiang nationality is interpreted differently by various scholars. Some ethnologists consider the Qiang to have existed continuously under different dynasties throughout Chinese history. It has been argued that many Qiang tribes were scattered across the western region of the central China in different times, and they often had wars with the Chinese and among themselves. Some of

the tribes vanished or migrated to different regions and were integrated into other groups in different ways. Ultimately, only a small group migrated to the upper region of the Min River in northern Sichuan. They have lived there until the present day and are identified as Qiang (Ran et al. 1984; Ren 1984; QZJS, 2008).

In contrast, Wang Mingke (1997; 1999; 2003) argues that the term Qiang does not represent a historically continuous entity but is a name given by Han Chinese to the non-Han people they met while moving westward, and thus a description of their western ethnic boundary or a sense of otherness. The natural geography and atrocious weather on the eastern edge of the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau naturally formed a frontier preventing the westward expansion of the Han in the Later Han period (25–200). People beyond this ecological frontier could not adopt the Chinese mode of food production or social organization, thus the ethnic boundary has been fixed ever since. In addition to the westward movement of the Han, in the seventh century, the old Tibetan kingdom rapidly expanded to the eastern fringe of the plateau. In the process of the Han moving westward and the Tibetans eastward, part of ancient Qiang was gradually assimilated by Han, Tibetans, and communities which today are classified as Yi. Finally, only the community living in the upper Min River Valley and the nearby Beichuan region were still recorded by the Han as Qiang people (*Qiangren*) or Qiang civilians (*Qiangmin*) and were eventually classified as Qiang by the central government in the early 1950s (Wang 2003).

Although the history of the Qiang is written and interpreted in various ways, there seems to be agreement that the Qiang were partially absorbed by the surrounding Han and Tibetans and vice versa. To a large extent, the identification of the Qiang ethnic category enhanced connections between the ethnic groups in China proper and the southwestern borderland (Wang 2003, xxii). The typical interpretation is that many nationalities of southwest China, including Tibetans, Yi, Bai, Lisu, Naxi, Pumi, and others evolved from the ancient Qiang. It is recorded on the Shang dynasty oracle bones that the Qiang were captured as slaves and sacrificed by the communities inhabiting the Central Plains, yet they also intermarried with them (Ran et al. 1984). The Qiang are therefore considered by some historians an important component of the *Huaxia*, the predecessors of the contemporary Han nationality (QZJS 2008, 2). According to some interpretations, the Chinese nation is descended from the mythical emperors Yan and Huang, hence the name *Yanhuang zisun* (the offspring of the Yan and Huang emperors). Notably, the Yan Emperor is also considered Qiang (Wang 1999). Fei Xiaotong (1989) pointed out that the Han absorbed blood from other ethnic groups but the Qiang transfused

blood to the other groups. Thus, the Han and other minorities in southwest China are "glued" together by the Qiang.

Identification of China's nationalities started during the Republic of China (1912–49), when China was transitioning from an empire to a nation state. In this period, Thomas Torrance identified the people in the upper Min River Valley as Qiang and reconstructed their history from the mythical emperor Yu the Great of the legendary Xia dynasty (ca. 2070–ca. 1600 BCE) down to the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), arguing that the Qiang were monotheists and descendants of the ancient Israelites (1937). David C. Graham (1958) constructed a lineal history of the Qiang based on Chinese historical sources and pointed out that the Qiang were polytheistic members of local tribes who had migrated to the upper Min River valley. Torrance emphasized the Qiang's difference from the Han, but Graham, along with other scholars, admitted that the Qiang had absorbed many cultural elements from the Han and the Tibetans and that there was no way to identify them except by their language (Hu 1941, 25). Thus, their identification was carried out in loose accordance with the four common traits (language, territory, economic life, and culture) that Joseph Stalin considered to be constitutive of a nationality and following a linguistic taxonomy of Chinese minorities proposed by the British linguist Henry Rodolph Davies in 1898 (Mullaney 2010).

The identification of the Qiang was not consistent in a local context either. They were classified either by language, blood ties, customs, their own preferences, or a combination of these factors. In the 1950s, the Yunshang Rrmi were classified as Qiang because of their language although they practiced similar customs to the Tibetans surrounding them, e.g., *Hsugdu*. The Heishui Rrmi, who lived in the valley to the northwest of Yunshang, were initially identified as Qiang (Xi'nan minzu daxue yanjiuyuan 2008, 2), but in the late 1950s, the Heishui people were reclassified as Tibetans (Li 2009). Similar situations arose in Beichuan County in the eastern part of today's Qiang-inhabited area. Beichuan was not included in the Qiang region in the 1950s because its inhabitants lacked Qiang cultural markers (except for a few remote villages in the deep mountains close to Mao County and Songpan County whose populations could still speak Qiang and kept some traditional customs). However, many Han who had Qiang relatives changed their identity to Qiang in the 1980s, mainly due to the preferential policies towards ethnic minorities.[11]

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11   Beichuan County became the Qiang Minzu Autonomous County in 2003. According to the Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy (*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo minzu quyu zizhifa*), the minority autonomous county enjoys preferential policies

Today, with the boom of the ethnic tourism market, the various Qiang communities in different regions, like the Tibetans (see Yang Minghong and Zeng Benxiang's chapter in this volume), compete with each other in the preservation and commodification of the Qiang culture. Meanwhile, more Han are willing to change their nationality classification to join an ethnic minority. For instance, some Han in Shaanxi claimed they were the descendants of the Qiang and wanted to be reclassified as Qiang, but this request was rejected by the central government (Ren 2009). Varieties exist among the Qiang and they had been trying to act as Qiang by internalizing particular features of Qiang culture, including dress, rituals, singing and dancing, and other attributes. The offering to the mountain deity is one of the most influential Qiang cultural markers that is being spread and promoted.

The *Hsugdu* Ritual of the Rrmi

The traditional offering to the mountain is called *Hsugdu* in Rrmi; in Chinese it is called *zuoshan* (sitting on the mountain) or *jishan* (offering to the mountain). In other Qiang subgroups, this ritual is also referred to as Mountain God Gathering (*shanshenhui*), Pagoda Gathering (*tazihui*), or offering to the sky gathering (*jitianhui*). Among Tibetans, it is referred to as the "*yüllha* cult" (Karmay 1998; 2000; Huber 1999), which included two types of cult mountain: "*yüllha*" (god of the local) and "*néri*" (mountain abode). "*Yüllha*" was considered the object of "secular" worship which sought success in purely mundane activities (Karmay 1998, 426) and was essentially a non-literate tradition dealing with present life and this world. The holy mountain "*néri*" was viewed as the focus of systematic Buddhist and Bon religious worship and spiritual exercise, like circumambulation and meditation. It originated and is embedded in extensive textual traditions and mainly focuses on death and future life (Huber 1999, 22–23). Normally, every community has its own local sacred mountain in which the mountain deity dwells and receives offerings; and a pilgrimage holy mountain is considered the "abode" of some deities, who often possess an identity in Buddhist and Bon religion. This cultural diffusion results in a situation where the Yunshang and the surrounding Tibetans make similar offerings to the

on politics, economy, culture, and society. For example, minorities in the autonomous region could have more than one child during the period of the One Child Policy, and the students get extra points in the university entrance examination (https://www.gov.cn/test/2005-07/29/content_18338.htm, August 2023).

mountain deity—except for some details, which are called *Labtse* in Tibetan. The Yunshang Rrmi made offerings to their local dwelling mountain and also went for circumambulation to the regional holy mountain in Songpan: *denlong rrgvubu* in Rrmi, *Shar dung ri* in Tibetan, or *Xuebaoding* in Chinese (Snow Treasure Mountain). However, they have stopped visiting the holy mountain in recent years, mainly due to their increasing consciousness of being Qiang and their belief that it was part of Tibetan culture.

Before the 1950s, the Yunshang Rrmi were ruled by local chieftains (*tusi*) from Mao County, Songpan county, and Heishui county at different times. Their basic living unit was the hamlet. Within a hamlet, several households formed a group of people under the same house name, a *josdbuxea*, which is a unit formed on the principle of land ownership. They consider each other family and share responsibility for organizing events such as weddings or funerals. Normally, two to four house names[12] exist in a hamlet. Villagers led a half-arable and half-pastoral life, supplemented by hunting and gathering in the forest. The rich natural resources provided them with many forms of sustenance, but all were considered to be governed and protected by the mountain deity. Disputes often happened because of territorial conflicts, and the ritual maintained the territorial boundaries between hamlets.

Hsugdu is one of the most important collective rituals for praying for blessings and "fulfilling vows" to the mountain deity. Each hamlet held it on a different day in the sixth month of the Chinese lunar calendar so that friends and relatives from neighboring hamlets could take part in each other's gatherings on ritual days. Almost every hamlet had at least one *leahsea*, a sacred altar for holding bamboo sticks, which was built with a pile of stones and located on the mountaintop, in a mountain pass or at the foot of the mountain. Only hamlets that were too small to maintain their own might share a *leahsea* with their neighbors. Today, the local ritual process is the same as before, except that some new factory products, such as bottled alcohol and machine printed *lungta* (paper prayer flags), have been adopted.[13] I observed the ritual on a number of occasions. Only men could perform the ritual; women were in charge of preparing barley wine, smoked pork, and other food. Men first performed the ritual at a mountain pass. They stuck the five-color paper flags on top of the bamboo sticks and

12   The Yunshang Rrmi people maintain a traditional social structure based on the house system, which is similar to that of the surrounding Tibetans. Due to their sinicization, their house names have been changed into Han family names.

13   The *lungta* (Tib. *klung rta*) and their use were adopted by the Rrmi from Tibetan culture.

planted the other end in the grassy soil. Each man from each family had to set up one stick with the flags there. Then they took out the *lungta* and threw them into the air.

The same men would then perform a similar ritual at a small *leahsea*, which was for the deity controlling the hail stones; this time, they stuck the flags on top of the *leahsea*. Men burned the dried cedar twigs to make fragrant white smoke (everything for the ritual had to be smoked in order to be cleaned). After that, men set off the firecrackers, and then each man plugged his own bamboo stick with flags on top of the *leahsea*. Smoked pork was put on the *leahsea* as an offering. Men lit the incense and then stuck it in the cracks in the stone while walking around the *leahsea* anticlockwise and talking to the mountain deity. They told the deity their wishes for the whole hamlet or their own families. Then they opened a bottle of alcohol and finally, the men poured spirits into the bottle lid and toasted each other. The local women were not allowed to participate in the ritual—they just passed by or stood far away. As an outsider and a researcher, I was granted the privilege of getting close to watch and take pictures, but I was not allowed to touch any objects.

After making offerings to the small *leahsea*, the men would arrive at the biggest *leahsea* located on the highest mountaintop. The ritual process was the same, except that all the men would pray together for the whole hamlet. The oldest man, who was often the *cayddi* (village head), would lead the prayer by speaking to the mountain deity.[14] He would say that they had experienced a peaceful year, they were united, and the ones who fought had been punished. They asked for the mountain deity to protect their crops and herds and made a wish for a prosperous year. They also asked for more children, especially sons. Then the elders summoned deities in Beijing first, and then different mountain deities living in the nearby region, from Dujiangyan, the closest place to the Chengdu plain that venerated a mountain deity, then Mao County (in several valleys), then Songping valley, then Songpan County and the holy mountain, the *delong rigubo.* More than thirty mountain deities were summoned. The *leahsea* often had a name; some *leahsea* were named after mythological person who was considered the

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14   The *Cayddi* system (*huishou zhidu*) is their traditional institutional regime, which plays a significant role in their everyday life. It contains several old men from different houses. They are in charge of organizing collective rituals, managing public affairs, and mediating internal conflicts. The contemporary *cayddi* system has been transformed into a new form in which two male household heads are nominated as *cayddi* each year; all the male households take turns at being in charge. The elders are still in charge of holding rituals but the nominated *cayddi* are in charge of other public affairs.

ancestor of the villagers. When they made an offering to the *leahsea*, they confirmed that they shared the same ancestor and were a single community.

At this stage, an individual man could ask all the male members of the village to help him fulfil his vow or make a new wish for the next year. If his wish was granted, he would fulfil the vow next year at the temple festival or *Hsugdu*. The amount required to fulfil the vow varied from a chicken to a yak, from a handful of grain to a jar of alcoholic drink made of barley. It is noteworthy that the men often released the livestock instead of killing them. After that, they would go back to the place where the women were waiting. They sat in three circles. Each was formed by people who shared the same house name. They toasted each other, ate together and later on sang and danced. Before the foundation of the PRC in 1949, some old men[15] told me that relatives living in other hamlets visited each other on the ritual day to enjoy the festival together. Babies presented for the first time would be given a ritual name[16] before the *leahsea*. If the newly born baby was a boy, the father or grandfather would carve a wooden arrow to be stuck into the *leahsea*. Then they would have horse racing, singing, and dancing. The following two to three days would be for eating, drinking, and having fun together.

Collective rituals involving offerings to the mountain deity helped the community to generate a sense of collectivity by forming a relationship with the deity and demarcating hamlet boundaries. Meanwhile, individuals also built a relationship with the mountain deity by praying and fulfilling their vows. It was a way to present how communities positioned themselves in relation to nature and to other groups and actors (Zerner et al. 2003). In the ritual, people from other hamlets, whether Qiang or Tibetans, were welcomed and many regional mountain deities were summoned to enjoy the offerings. The collective ritual helped the Yunshang people confirm their collectivity as human beings in relation to other non-human beings and as villagers within a specific hamlet in relation to other settlements in the region.

To a large extent, these meanings of the local discourse still survive today. In addition, on the administrative village and even the county level, people have developed different versions of the ritual by incorporating ritual elements from different subgroups to strengthen a common sense

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15   Interview, Yunshang Village, August 2013.

16   Today, the name given in front of the *leahsea* is not used in everyday life but only in ritual space. The family name is the house's name, so the new name will indicate which house the person belongs to.

of belonging to the Qiang and, meanwhile, to develop their local touristic culture and economy.

Reviving the Ritual: Two Coexisting Versions

Since the end of the Cultural Revolution, the state has restored a degree of religious freedom and other cultural rights of PRC citizens. Freedom of religious worship was enshrined in the new PRC constitution promulgated in 1982, and northwestern Sichuan saw a revival of local religious and cultural institutions. Even though the process was different for different subgroups, the general trend of adjusting to the identity of the officially classified nationality to tap into the booming ethnic tourism market was the same. From the 1980s to the early 1990s, the changes in state policy became visible in new official discourse on "quality" (*suzhi*), "material civilization" (*wuzhi wenming*) and "poverty alleviation" (*jianshao pinkun*). In 2000, the Great Opening of the West (*xibu da kaifa*) development strategy was implemented to modernize western China. Environmental and cultural protection and conservation policies were also broadly initiated (Delang and Wang 2013). These policies were intertwined with the promotion of both ecological and ethnic tourism in this region due to its geography and rich ethnic minority culture. In 2014, the Tibeto-Qiang-Yi Cultural Industry Corridor Project was launched. The project claimed that the state would utilize minority nationality cultures to a reasonable extent as resources in the cultural industry and cultural market. The purpose was to preserve and hand down cultures to new generations and cultivate the minorities' cultural industry brand, to improve the economy, and to build an "ecological civilization" (*shengtai wenming*) in the relevant regions.

The annual *Hsugdu* was revived against a complicated background. Moreover, due to the founding of the Yunshang administrative village, the villagers had to present themselves as a community to outsiders, so they created a new *Hsugdu* on the administrative village level. The newly adapted ritual was renamed *Zhuanshanhui*, literally "turning around the mountain gathering," by the ICH officials. The ritual was nominated as a provincial ICH in 2011 and gained state financial support to be held annually. Today, *Zhuanshanhui* has become one of the Qiang cultural markers and a touristic resource which involves people from the whole valley and many from other regions of Mao County.

Cultural heritage in China is closely related to tourism and economic development. However, "the fundamental issue is how cultural heritage is

managed, by whom, in whose interests, and with what impacts" (Blumenfield and Silverman 2013, 9). Amdo Tibetans, Gaylrong Tibetans, and Qiang practice a similar offering to the mountain deity called *Hsugdu* by the Qiang and *Labtse* by the Tibetans, but only the Qiang applied to have it registered as ICH. A Qiang official justified the certification of the offering to the mountain deity as Qiang ICH with reference to the long history of the *Hsugdu* among the Qiang and the fact that the Qiang actually applied for certification by the ICH.[17]

Labtse is very common in Amdo,[18] and was thus perhaps not considered an endangered cultural practice like those normally targeted by the ICH. There are other cultural practices registered as Tibetan ICH, such as Thangka painting, Tibetan medicine, Tibetan opera, and others.[19] *Labtse* takes place mostly in rural areas and is often in the process of being tamed by Buddhism; it might be less visible due to the dominant Buddhist culture, which is also one of the five dominant religions in China.[20] When comparing Tibetans to Qiang, the Qiang would point out that they are different from typical Tibetans believing in Buddhism, but hold an ambiguous attitude towards Tibetans from Amdo and Gaylrong practicing Bon. On the ground, this is not a big issue for the Yunshang Rrmi people, many of whom like Tibetan culture and have Tibetan relatives and friends.

The Routinization and Adaptation of the Ritual

In a sense, the objectification and routinization were rather an "adaptation" in Hobsbawm's (1992, 5) sense of taking "place for old uses in new conditions and by using old models for new purposes." According to my key informant, He Guotian, who had been the leader of the Yunshang Administrative Village for more than thirty years and the main promoter of Songping Valley's touristic development, the adapted ritual was first routinized and standardized in the 1990s as Songping Valley was being promoted as a place of interest in the county and then on the provincial level. The touristic center

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17   Interview, Mao County, July 2023.

18   See, for example, Tsering 2017.

19   Telephone interview with informants from Amdo and Gyalrong Tibetan community, July 2023. China's definition of Intangible Cultural Heritage is similar to UNESCO's, but notably emphasizes the protection of ICH. Therefore, people usually get the impression that certified cultures are endangered, which is not necessarily true.

20   The CCP is officially atheist, but the government recognizes five religions. They are Buddhism, Catholicism, Daoism, Islam, and Protestantism.

only covered two villages in the valley; Yunshang Village was not included. He Guotian was from Yunshang Village, so he first formulated an adapted ritual based on the Yunshang's *Hsugdu* and then performed it on the day Songping Valley was evaluated as a national-level tourist spot (*guojiaji lüyou jingdian*) in Baila Village in 2000. At this time, different Qiang subgroups coming from different regions in Mao County gathered in Songping Valley to perform Qiang culture. The Yunshang Rrmi people finally recognized the value of their ritual and how they needed to "improve" it to make it more authentic Qiang culture.[21]

In accordance with Catherine Bell's (1997, 73) argument that the performance model of ritual emphasizes "active rather than passive roles for ritual participants who reinterpret value-laden symbols as they communicate them," the Yunshang people consciously molded, fashioned, formulated, and performed their ritual in a specific context in order to fit in with the surrounding world. The ritual also evolved in response to different themes or requirements from the government. The adapted ritual thus became a "ritualized ritual" (Douglas 2003, 3) that integrated external symbolic forms which were reinterpreted and refashioned from time to time.

Based on the traditional *Hsugdu*, He Guotian created a new *Hsugdu* at the higher village level to be held on the nineteenth day of the sixth month of the Chinese lunar calendar, which was right after the day of his own hamlet's *Hsugdu*. Villagers from the three village groups had to partake in this ritual, and outside audiences would be present. Meanwhile, the times for holding the hamlet's and the village's *Hsugdu* were also fixed. Before 1949, the time was any day of the sixth month of the lunar calendar. Everyone had to wear the unified local traditional costumes in the village-level ritual. For the convenience of visiting tourists, the village *Hsugdu* was mainly held at the foot of the mountain instead of on the mountaintop. The whole process and meaning were written down. The process was similar to that in the local rituals, but certain "special elements" from their daily life and that of other Qiang were incorporated in order to make it more standardized and to make it look more "exciting" (*renao*). For instance, special multi-voice singing, local dancing, a ritual for opening barley wine jars, jaw harp (*kouxian*) and Qiang flute (*qiangdi*) performances, traditional games, an evening campfire party, and the sacrificial slaughter of a yak were included in the ritual.

These elements were carefully selected and arranged by He Guotian and his team, and most of them were eventually recognized as Qiang ICH. Being a leader and having traveled around, he told me that he had noticed

21   Interviews, Mao County, September 2013.

the importance of "being different" or exotic in tourism. The tourists were mostly Han, so the ritual had to be exotic. Being different from Han culture was not enough; it was better also to be different from the culturally close Amdo and Gyalrong Tibetans.

With their increasing Qiang ethnic consciousness, the Yunshang Rrmi integrated other Qiang subgroups' cultural elements into the *Hsugdu* to represent their comprehensive Qiang identity. For example, the jaw harp and Qiang flute featured in the rituals as Qiang cultural markers, but I found no-one playing such instruments in their daily life. Another element was sacrificing a yak. As I mentioned above, due to the influence of Tibetan Buddhism, in the traditional ritual the Yunshang people used to release livestock in order to accumulate virtue for the next life. However, other Qiang groups, for instance the Qiang living in Heihu, would sacrifice livestock, normally a goat or a sheep, under the instruction of the Qiang ritualist *shibi* (Yu 2004). Among the Yunshang people living in the north of the Qiang area, it was the elders who practiced the ritual (La 2017). In order to make it more exotic and thrilling, and to create the semblance of a Qiang offering, the sacrifice of a yak and the distribution of its meat among the participants was added to the ritual.

The Reinterpretation of the Ritual

The turning point in the reinterpretation of the ritual came in 2000. The county government organized a performance in Songping Valley to promote it as one of the first tourism spots in Mao County. The show was held in Baila Village. All twenty-two townships in Mao County participated in the event (with the exception of Tumen Township in the eastern part of the county, where the ritual is not practiced due to the sinicization of the local population). The Yunshang Rrmi, as the representatives of Songping Valley, performed their *Hsugdu*. The *Hsugdu* had not been practiced in Baila village before the event, but upon He Guotian's suggestion, the local people built a *leahsea* and started to perform the ritual. It was another festive occasion on which the heterogeneous Qiang subgroups could witness each other's performances, get to know each other, and form and strengthen the Qiang identity. The *Hsugdu* was recognized as county-level ICH in 2003 and later, in 2011 as province-level ICH, under the term *Zhuanshanhui*. Traditionally, *Hsugdu* was held among relatives but not in turns by villages. An elder told me that it was a private "turn-taking" among relatives but not a collective "turn-taking" among villages. The new name has shifted the original meaning

away from a gathering of relatives living in different hamlets. It emphasizes the fixed collectivity of each village group or administrative village. It is reorganized according to the village but not the traditional relationship between people, which certainly reflects deep influence from the state, with its hopes that this formation could unite and strengthen the Qiang identity.

The second adaptation is the combination of paradigmatic Qiang history (Wang 2003) and the adopted body-armor-dance (*kaijiawu*). As I have mentioned, the written history of the Qiang dates back to around 1300–1100 BC. It is said that the ancient Qiang often had wars with the Han and among each other. Eventually, they lost the wars and migrated to the upper Min River. Even in the 1930s, Graham (1958) had recorded legends of the war between local tribes and the incoming Qiang. This history is preserved in the tradition of the body-armor-dance performed by villagers from Heihu, Chibusu, Sanlong, and Shaba towns. The body-armor-dance used to be danced at the funerals of local heroes and respected old people. All men wear armor, hold swords in their hands and dance in a circle. Interestingly, the Heishui Gyalrong Tibetans also practice this dance and have applied to have the practice recognized as Tibetan ICH.[22] The Yunshang decided to incorporate the body armor-dance into the *Hsugdu* and interpreted it as a ritual dance for sending warriors off to war. One elder told me that they would dance it before wars to pray for the safety of the warriors and victory in the war.[23] Yet in the hamlet-level *Hsugdu*, no such dance was practiced. The Yunshang have been continuously exposed to such historical stories and images on TV, in the county museum and in books. Perhaps due to suggestions from the ICH office, the local leaders chose to make use of these histories and stories in order to confirm and represent their identity as Qiang.

Third, the ideology of environmentalism and the state's discourse of building an ecological civilization was implanted into the ritual by the locals.[24] The Yunshang Rrmi people often interpret *Zhuanshanhui* as environmentally friendly and perceive the ritual as indicative of their wish and action to protect the environment. They often point out that their original sacred forest[25] is an important part of their religious system. If it

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22   This dance among the Heishui Gyalrong is called *kasidawen* in Chinese and is interpreted as a dance to pray for the warriors' safety during conflicts. It is danced before the warriors' departure. The Yunshang people also adopted this interpretation. See below.

23   Interview, Yunshang Village, August 2013.

24   See also Toni Huber's (1997) exploration of how exiled Tibetans reflexively internalized Green Buddhism so as to represent their cultural and political identity.

25   Villagers were not allowed to go into the sacred forest in pre-socialist times. They maintained this habit until the government initiated logging in this region in 1980. One of their sacred forests

had not been for the state's logging project, the original forests would have survived until the present day, because their religion forbids humans to excessively exploit the natural world. However, due to the fact the ritual was not publicly practiced during the Cultural Revolution, and because atheist education was promoted in the education system, the Yunshang Rrmi's everyday attitudes towards the environment changed. Today, they herd yaks on the mountaintops and gather hynobius for sale in herbal medicines. It is this trend that the *Zhuanshanhui* ecological approach seeks to counter by promoting a sustainable relationship between humans and nature. It corresponds to the depiction of the green minorities and the state's promotion of an ecological civilization.

Paradox and Challenge: The Multiple Level Concerns of Cultural Security

Nowadays the Yunshang Rrmi people practice both the traditional *Hsugdu* and the adapted *Zhuanshanhui*. Yet they often expressed their multiple concerns about their cultural security related to the PRC's ethnic policy and the related program of local economic development through the promotion of minority cultures tourism. The Yunshang Rrmi were included in the Qiang nationality while actively participating in creating, routinizing, and representing the adapted Qiang culture. Today, they have already developed a relatively weak tourist industry (based on home-stay accommodation and local food) and evoked a strong sense of *minzu* pride, but at the same time, they have begun to experience a deeper insecurity about losing their local hamlet culture.

The traditional *Hsugdu* is practiced regularly. However, all four villages in Songping Valley—Yunshang, Huoji, Erbaxi, and Bailai villages—revived, developed or even invented a parallel institutionalized ritual performed on the valley level: the *Zhuanshanhui*. The date of the *Zhuanshanhui*, when it is performed, is right after the village *Hsugdu*. Erbaxi and Baila village did not practice *Hsugdu* before the *Zhuanshanhui*, but they built *leahsea* and started to make offerings to the mountain deity after that. From 2000 to 2018, the adapted ritual was always funded by the government, and it

was reclassified by the government as the timber forest of the administrative village due to its location, so this sacred forest was logged by the government and the villagers themselves. However, this is not a common situation. Most sacred forests and sacred trees have been preserved until today; only the common forests were cut down.

was always held in Yunshang Village. After He Guotian passed away in 2018, the four villages started to hold the ritual in turn—Huoji Village in 2020, Erbaxi Village in 2021, and Baila Village in 2022. Due to He Guotian's efforts and the Yunshang Rrmi's maintenance of the tradition, villagers from the four villages were often invited to perform together in the other *Zhuanshanhui* in the valley.

The main differences between the local *Hsugdu* and the adapted *Zhuanshanhui* in Yunshang Village are summarized in Figure 8.1:

	Hsugdu	*Zhuanshanhui*
Participants	villagers in a hamlet	villagers in the administrative village, sometimes the whole valley, always with outsiders, e.g., performers from other Qiang subgroups, officials, tourists, journalists, researchers, etc.
Location	*leahsea* on the mountaintop	*leahsea* at the foot of the mountain
Ritual process	traditional ritual process of offering to the mountain	traditional ritual process and cultural performances from other Qiang subgroups from outside the valley
Main purpose	pleasing local mountain deity and to prey for the hamlet's prosperity and fertility	representing Qiang to outsiders, inheriting the ICH and attracting tourists

Figure 8.1: Differences between the local Hsugdu and the adapted Zhuanshanhui

However, the coexistence of the two versions of the ritual seems to confirm Hobsbawm's (1992, 14) idea of the paradox of inventing a tradition, which is that modern nations and their impedimenta generally claim to be the very opposite of novel and constructed. When the Yunshang Rrmi claim that *Zhuanshanhui* is their cultural inheritance, they are in fact rooting a constructed past in remote antiquity; and when they wear their daily clothes—normally men wear factory-made modern clothes and woman both modern and traditional clothes—and practice *Hsugdu* with no outsiders, that is their true self and convention. Their distinctiveness makes them particularly attractive to outsiders. Yet due to the mutual imitation and competition among the sub-groups (see also Jan Karlach's chapter in this volume) and even among villages in the same valley, and due to the government's involvement, the adapted ritual is in danger of becoming more and more similar to the other Qiang rituals. For example, some of my Yunshang

informants think that the offering to the mountain deity at the county level is an imitation or replication of their ritual. I was told that this was because one man from the village was working in a tourist spot in Mao County—the Chinese Ancient Qiang Castle (*zhongguo guqiangcheng*)—and taught them the ritual process. Several men said he was a cultural traitor to the village. In fact, the ritual at the county level combines elements from several Qiang subgroups, but such scandals highlight people's fear of losing their local cultural particularity, and their consciousness of the ownership of culture in the growing ICH recognition and cultural tourism.

Cultural property has been widely discussed in relation to the commodification of ethnicity, the "native" cultural products and practices. Cultural identity has been increasingly claimed as property by its living heirs, who reconstruct, brand and sell it self-consciously in consumable forms (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009, 29), such as the *Zhuanshanhui*. "Who owns the native culture" has also become the object of contention in multiple levels, such as tensions between the "cultural traitor" or the promoter of *Zhuanshanhui* He Guotian and other villagers, different Qiang communities, or even between Qiang and Tibetans. Yet, as I have mentioned above, in a culturally hybrid and poor region, the contention can be more critical, as power relations and individual agencies all influence the results. The sense of cultural ownership increases their sense of cultural (in)security.

Another correspondent question is about cultural authenticity. The Yunshang people claim to represent the "authentic" Qiang culture, although they reproduce the process of the ritual, reinterpret its meanings and accept the new *Zhuanshanhui* as an authentic form of Qiang culture. Currently, the concept of authenticity has taken the evolutionary nature of culture and heritage into consideration. Authenticity is thus seen as a process of mixing rather than a static object (Xie 2010). Adaptation of the Rrmi ritual involves different stakeholders, the Qiang communities, the outsiders and the government. According to Xie, authenticity is a mutable concept that evolves in various stages of ethnic tourism development. In the stage of "situational adaptations" tourism can inject new meanings and/or values into current cultures, and eventually culture and tourism become inseparable (Xie 2010, 44). Tourism development as an inseparable goal of ICH recognition thus brings new values and practices also to Yunshang Rrmi. Within the Qiang nationality state discourse, they lean to be the more "authentic" Qiang. As a result, Rrmi and Qiang identities interact, entangle, and become interchangeable.

Within the context of Chinese nation, the Qiang feel increasing cultural insecurity through the accelerating sinicization, demonstrated in particular through the loss of the local Rrmi language. Children are educated in

Mandarin, and as a result the youngest generation has almost stopped speaking Rrmi, although they can understand it. "If you lose the language, then you will lose the most important part of the culture," the elders often say, "the culture will only be an empty shell."[26] The same seems to be happening with the ritual.

Simultaneously, due to development and globalization, young people—especially those with an education, notably woman—tend to leave for the cities, which endangers the preservation of the common cultural heritage of the Rrmi. Recording the *Hsugdu* thus becomes an acceptable way of preserving the local culture, in case it disappears one day. In this respect, the Yunshang people embrace their Qiang identity to maintain some differences from the majority Han.

Conclusion

The simultaneous promotion of both identities (that of the Chinese nation and those of minority nationalities) according to the "diverse unity" (*duoyuan yiti*) principle can both enhance and diminish the cultural security of China's ethnic groups. The Yunshang Rrmi's worship of the mountain deity is a major component of their cultural identity. At the same time, the Rrmi are one of the constituents of the Qiang nationality, together with many other subgroups defined by their own respective cultures. They are also a constituent part of the Chinese nation and Chinese culture (*Zhonghua wenhua*). In general, ethnic minorities need to preserve their distinct culture to present their cultural identity on the one hand, while on the other, they need to integrate themselves into the Chinese nation through "interaction, exchange, and fusion" (*jiaowang, jiaoliu, jiaorong*; Jin et al. 2011; see also the introductory chapter by Jarmila Ptáčková and Ondřej Klimeš). Meanwhile, the state encourages minority regions to develop their local economies mainly by advancing ethnic tourism. Cultural distinctiveness and authenticity play an important role in this form of tourism. In these situations, local communities can feel confident about their ethnic cultures but also experience feelings of cultural insecurity. When facing the majority Han people, local communities can fear assimilation due to the encroachment of Han culture and hope to keep the mystique of their culture; when facing other sub-groups included in the same minority nationality, they worry that their distinctive culture will be imitated or appropriated. As for the Yunshang Rrmi, they consciously preserve their cultural practices in the form of the

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26   Interview with local male informant aged sixty-one, Yunshang Village, 2013.

Hsugdu in order to distinguish themselves from neighboring communities of Han and Tibetans, but they are also ready to identify themselves with the Qiang nationality and Chinese culture through the modified cultural practice of the *Zhuanshanhui.*

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9.   Against the Flattening of Ridges and Ravines: (Dis)locating Cultural Security through Writing with the Yi of Southwest China

Jan Karlach

Abstract: The Yi nationality, an ethnopolitical category constructed during the 1950s nationality recognition campaign, is typically portrayed by the Chinese state and its citizens as a coherent ethnic group with shared cultural characteristics. This clichéd depiction reflects the state's top-down cultural security imperative to present each nationality as a building block of the Chinese nation. However, the official Chinese narrative of ethnic coherence starts to unravel when viewed from a bottom-up perspective built on the everyday practices of the Yi and non-Yi elites as well as of other stakeholders within the Yi nationality. Drawing on longitudinal and multi-sited anthropological fieldwork, this chapter offers three ethnographic vignettes from Sichuan, Yunnan, and Guizhou provinces that reveal how ritual practitioners and ordinary people from different Yi ethnic sub-branches and localities seek to master the hegemonic voice within a wider "Yi-osphere."

Keywords: Yi, Southwest China, hegemony, polyphonic writing, metaphysical critique

During most of 2018, I was conducting ethnographic fieldwork in Xichang (in Nuosu-Yi language Labbu Orro), an administrative seat of Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture (Nuo. Nimu) in Sichuan Province. One morning, I was abruptly awoken by my endlessly buzzing smartphone indicating streams of messages pouring into one of the discussion groups of Weixin[1]

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1   The ubiquitous app developed by Chinese corporation Tencent combining messenger, social network, digital wallet, and micro-programs for various other uses.

titled "Yi Culture Forum" (*Yizu wenhua luntan*). Since the regional variants of the internally diverse Yi language are often mutually unintelligible—with many individuals designated as members of the Yi nationality (*minzu*) not even able to speak any of these variants—the online debate concerning the equally diverse Yi scripts used across southwest China was conducted in Mandarin. The debater from Guizhou Province, a founder of the "Traditional Yi Script Study Group" (*chuantong Yiwen xuexiqun*)[2]—an initiative for recognizing the classical Nasu-Yi script as a standard for the Yi language variant dominant in Guizhou Province—argued that the new modern script used in Sichuan Province's Liangshan, which aspires to become the written standard for the whole Yi nationality, was fake. He made this claim even though a couple of years earlier, the standard script had been expanded by the inclusion of some non-Liangshan characters. Others agreed with his point. One debater from Sichuan, who endorsed the usage of this new standard script, challenged the proponent of the old writing system for "sleeping within his own culture" (*shui zai ziji wenhua limian*). "Yi culture must leave the mountains and meet the cultures of other nationalities. Only by doing so can it survive," he reiterated several times. The Yunnan debaters in the group remained silent.

The foundation of this Weixin group lay in a premise that the Yi were "not united" (*Yizu bu tuanjie*)—an alleged precondition for the decline of Yi culture and a major obstacle to the preservation of its "traditional form" (*chuantongde xingshi*). However, in the online discussion of these Yi culture experts and enthusiasts, many articulations of what does and does not count as the traditional form were mutually antithetical. After one hour, the conversation began to die out. Disappointed with this usual "gridlock" ending, one of the avatars shifted his attention from the screen of his smartphone to one of many local mountain slopes and went to graze his sheep. Through his smartphone camera lens, the chat group's wall became flooded with pictures and short video clips displaying pristine scenes of nature dotted by his livestock. At that moment, I reflected on my years of extensive travel around southwest China and my naive attempt to uncover presupposed components of Yi culture's structural assemblage and its eventual failure.

The need for a careful and reflexive treatment of "culture" in our academic writings is immensely relevant to the discussion about cultural security which took place at the late 2017 Prague gathering this volume stems from. This chapter points out that if not treated carefully, especially on the

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2   The group was functioning on Tencent's earlier platform QQ.

local level, culture and cultural security can disintegrate into a device of hegemony—the consent of those being led to accept the worldviews and values of the leaders (Bates 1975, 352). Since the contemporary world is populated by nation-states that, logically, embody nationalism, cultural security works on the international level as a means for their rulers to maintain a certain worldview in competition with those of other states. This is especially visible in borderlands, where these worldviews most often collide through the local ethnic population which two or more mutually competing states share, and on which they graft their differing visions of cultural representation. The same holds true for minority groups within nation-states vis-à-vis not only the majority but also other *locally* competing ethnic groups. While the consent of minority populations to the PRC's governance is questionable, e.g., in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia, for the Yi, the situation manifests different sets of complexities. I am going to argue that various Yi elites work on positioning themselves to align with the PRC's nationalist discourse and eventually becoming a coherent, united, and singular Yi nationality as an inalienable part of the Chinese nation (*Zhonghua minzu*). However, the inquiry into everyday life will show that various local stakeholders compete for hegemony over the Yi cultural representations using resources provided by the state, which is dominated by the Han majority. In short, adding to the definition of culture and cultural security presented in the introductory chapter to this volume by Jarmila Ptáčková and Ondřej Klimeš, this chapter shows the cultural and identitarian representations and the attached concepts as possible means of competition for the state's resources on a local level (see also Bian Simei's and Yang Minghong and Zeng Benxiang's chapters).

The idea of competition between various "races," as the current nationalities were viewed in a different utilization of the term *minzu* during the rule of the Republic of China (1911–49; see Leibold 2006, 186), is not a novelty. Even though the racial connotations were dropped, this idea was transplanted via Marxist historical materialism into the socialist ideology of the PRC. In his writings, Mao Zedong praised all the nationalities of China as having equal merit in the development of Chinese civilization. He viewed the Han majority as a result of blood-mixing (*hunxue*) between nationalities over the *longue durée* (Mao [1954] 1977, 278). In his recent book, Stroup (2022, 7) turns to an analysis of intra-nationality competition. He persuasively argues that the CCP sparks contestation of the boundaries of Hui identity and that the intra-group competition over the religious notion of purity (*qingzhen*) attached to ethnic practices distracts the ethnic actors from a possible contestation of the state policies. As this chapter will eventually

show, the case of the Yi, who also possess their own conceptualization of purity, might seem similar to the case of Hui at first sight. However, the geographical, historical, and cultural context makes their case radically different.

The Birth of "Yi Culture"

Following the mega-project of nationalities' recognition-cum-classification (*minzu shibie*), the academic disciplines of PRC-style ethnology (*minzuxue*) and the strongly aligned ethnohistory (*minzushi*) both have their foundation in the method of (a)historical "downstreaming" (Shin 2006, 17), portraying every nationality (an ethnopolitical category) as rooted in history. As Kraef (2014, 147) persuasively argues, the present Yi-related cultural discourse originates in the pre-PRC works of Han-Chinese scholars: the ethnolinguist Ma Xueliang, the Harvard-trained anthropologist Lin Yaohua, and, I would add, the often-overlooked sociologist Ma Changshou. During the 1980s, their works became the building blocks of a scholarly cultural revivalist-constructionist movement which later blossomed into the establishment of the discipline of Yi studies (*Yixue*).

The Lolopo-Yi sociologist Liu Yaohan[3] was the first leader of this movement. In the unitary preface to his edited series *Collection of the Research on Yi Nationality Culture* (*Yizu wenhua yanjiu congshu*; see Liu 1986), he encouraged his colleagues, students, and acolytes to conduct research in all corners of the Yi-osphere of southwest China. His principal motivations were twofold: firstly, to shake off the unfavorable labels the Yi have acquired throughout history—especially during the Cultural Revolution, during which they were viewed as backward ex-slaveholders—by concentrating on positive cultural aspects; and secondly, to engage in the PRC's nationalist discourse by positioning the Yi as an essential integral part of the Chinese nation. Both these goals were achieved through an ambitious project of discursive social engineering, an essentialist de-fragmentation of the state-designated Yi communities scattered across Sichuan, Guizhou, and Yunnan[4] provinces. Liu and his research partners not only pictured them as sharing

3   Although he didn't have a doctorate, the native of Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan Province is often honorifically called "The first Yi Professor." He was a major voice in the academic-cum-political affairs of the Yi nationality.
4   99 percent of Yi Nationality members reside in this area, with small pockets in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and several related communities in Vietnam and Laos.

a common genealogical root but also argued that the originally unified Yi are the earliest founders of the whole Chinese civilization.

The remnants of the pan-Yi momentum of Liu's "Yi Culture" (*Yizu wenhua*)—a construct that is written with a capital "C" for the purposes of this chapter—still very much resonate within the Yi cultural and historical discourse (see Li 2009; Qiesa 2002). The notion of an ancient culture dating back tens of thousands of years even survived several persuasive waves of deconstruction (see Harrell 1995; Harrell and Li 2003). Liu's Yi holism, however, was destined not to last long due to Lin Yaohua's decades-old designation of the Liangshan Nuosu-Yi as the most ancient and authentic "archetypal Yi" (Mullaney 2010, 112). Together with their relative isolation from the surrounding world—relative to the other Yi regions, which had already been under the rule of various Chinese dynasties for centuries—this notion also nurtured the perception of the Nuosu-Yi as exceptionally ancient and thus most authentic among their "Hanified" counterparts from other regions. The PRC's scientific scholarly authorities of the 1950s thus linked their discourse with the Nuosu-Yi's essentialist ideas of purity (see Pan 1997)—a superiority of former hard-bone aristocrats (Nuo. *nuoho*) over commoners (Nuo. *quho*), whose bones are softened by their intermarriage with non-aristocratic clans or even non-Nuosu-Yi populations. The Yi have continued to hold these ideas until today and use them as the basis for their clan-based social order (Nuo. *cyvi*). The social scientists thus paradoxically began by emulating an unscientific racial concept, but then failed to fully replace "bones" with "culture."

Capitalizing on the teleological nature of Marxist historical materialism (with social evolutionism as one of its components) and its principal role in the PRC's ideology, the kernel of Yi studies found a firm seat in Liangshan during the 1990s. Other contributors to the region's importance were the high density of the Yi population vis-à-vis other ethnicities (the highest in the country, in fact) and the limited integration of the local population into state structures relative to other Yi, which made the state prioritize them in its ethnocultural politics. The Nuosu-Yi ethnologists Bamo Ayi and Bamo Qubumo—daughters of the locally influential cadre-official Bamo Erha and later gatekeepers and close collaborators of Professor Stevan Harrell (see Bamo et al. 2007), who significantly contributed to making their (Liangshan) voice heard on the international stage—articulated a need for the urgent preservation of the allegedly diminishing (Nuosu-)Yi culture. Due to the intervention of Liu Yaohua in the early 1950s, the Shynra Yi language variant of Liangshan's Xide County (Nuo. Xiddo Ladda), along with the writing system distilled from the scroll-books of the Liangshan's literate ritualists,

was established as Modern Yi (*Xiandai Yiyu*) for the whole Yi nationality (Kraef 2013). This further accentuated Liangshan's central and to a certain degree privileged position within the discourse on "Yi Culture."

While the establishment of the Yi nationality as an ethnic container for the unification of various Yi populations was from its outset viewed as a political *fait accompli*, its further molding spanned the following decades right up to the present day. Recently, the continuous top-down development of a collective Yi identity has seemed to follow Ma Rong's (2004) state-level holistic methodology proposed as a way of achieving ideal relationships between the nationalities through the de-politicization of the nationality concept. This culturalization found its foothold in China's Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Program (*Zhongguo feiwuzhi wenhua yichan baohu*; CICHP), effectively the PRC's localization of UNESCO's intangible heritage-oriented program. Naturally, both share the same ontological problem, as they place a much greater emphasis on preserving (thus freezing) "high cultures" as living fossils (*huohuashi*; see Mao 2013, 77) than on thinking of culture as the practice of everyday life (Williams 1965, 61–62). With substantial help from (cultural) anthropology, these projects play a significant role in the categorization and hierarchization of cultures (Farquhar and Lai 2014), as per the duality between civilization and barbarism and/or the refinement of the elite vs. the vulgarity of the lower classes (Jenks 2005, 7–8). Undoubtedly driven by good intentions, many Yi scholars seem to unreflexively take part in this project, which benefits a PRC cultural enterprise that generates desirable cultural representations but simultaneously risks glossing over the differences simmering under the holistic Yi ethnopolitical umbrella.

Metaphysical Critique of Yi Cultures: Theoretical and Methodological Orientations

To avoid the constructivism of symbolic and interpretive anthropology, my approach is inspired by a proposal of Mark Hobart (2000) to treat anthropology not as a structuring power behind "culture," but rather as (everyday) practice functioning as a radical metaphysical critique. It is practiced by tapping into presuppositions revolving around the interactions and categorizations—for the purposes of this chapter, the practices of everyday ethnicity (Brubaker et al. 2006, 169) vis-à-vis its official cultural representations—that are material rather than abstract. This then involves an inquiry into what individual people do and say on particular situated occasions to uncover the motivation for their acts. Their consequences then

provide material for an authorial analysis. It is thus essential to write not *about* the culture in particular ways but *with* those who supply us with data (Herold 2000)—in other words, to practice relationality and correspondence (Ingold 2008, 83–89)—which we then turn into our ethnographic artifacts.

This chapter ethnographically analyses the data I collected during my numerous travels to show how the PRC navigates its cultural security concerning the Yi, and how various Yi elites approach the internal differences within the Yi nationality across different regions. It adds to previous studies that mostly dealt with Yi communities in one locality (Harrell 2001; Mueggler 2001; Névot 2014). It looks at everyday discursive practices, in which the different Yi communities creatively utilize essentialist representations of Yi culture. Simultaneously, it explores how writing—a tool of discursive practice *par excellence*—could avoid falling for a particular strain among these power-laden interests. By inquiring into the presuppositions of all sides, my writing uncovers mechanisms of various hegemonic aspirations among the Yi. Simultaneously incorporating all voices encountered along the way and their critical assessment, it thus facilitates a dialogic rather than a dialectical approach—something that can be emulated in other cases similar to that of the Yi.

At the center of the following three ethnographic vignettes assembled between 2016 and 2018 in Yunnan, Guizhou, and Sichuan provinces are the text-reading ritual practitioners, the specialized Yi vocation I usually call "literati-ritualist." Since this chapter does not deal with the Yi vocation of illiterate ritualists, the male shamans and female shamanesses who depend on initiatory illness and visions, I abbreviate this designation to "ritualists." Without being designated as members of the Yi nationality, these culturally and geographically distant individuals would probably never meet each other, and I would never have met them. I connected these localities using a particular ethnographic research practice (Hobart 1996), "performing multiple arrivals and departures, collecting data from incidental conversations and encounters" (Schein 2000, 28). More than "fill[ing] the remaining blank spaces of main research" which would be supposed to provide "equally relevant information" (Schein 2000, 28), this method generated the core data for this text. The following account is not a structuralist quest for Yi culture's "*true* version, or the *earlier* one" (Lévi-Strauss 1955, 435) but rather an inquiry into possible ways to conceive of Yi "cultures" (plural emphasized) without a need to erase their local characteristics.

Depending on the local Yi language variant, the ritualists are called *bimo*, *bumo*, *beima*, *abi*, and various other designations. According to their geographic setting, the ritualists are literate in the local variant of the Yi

script (assuming there is one, as some Yi regions do not have a literary tradition) or at least in the Chinese writing system. Ritualists serve a broad range of needs, from healing and reverting an individual's or a family's life journey that has been influenced by the evil gluttonous ghosts back towards luck and prosperity to performing post-mortuary rites. They are treated with tremendous respect, which endows them with significant power. Therefore, they function as local elites, the spiritual leaders of their communities. As such, they are central to both Yi everyday life and "Yi Culture," with its vital component of "Bimo Culture" (*Bimo wenhua*). Discursively, they are portrayed as village intellectuals, psychologists, astrologers, historians, and, most importantly, carriers of Yi cultural heritage (see Aniu and Jilang 2007; Bamo 2000; Kraef 2014).

Performative Unity through Ritualists: The State's Cultural Security through Materialized Academic Discourse

In mid-March, I attended an event called 2016's China's Yi Nationality Festival of Ancestral Offering (*2016 nian Zhonghua Yizu jizujie*). For the last decade, it had been organized in the capital of Weishan Hui and Yi Autonomous County in the southern part of Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture (Yunnan Province) and advertised as an integral part of the local Weishan cultural and culinary festival. Both activities were presented as "traditional activities of the nationalities" (*minzude chuantong huodong*) with Mandarin Chinese as a *lingua franca*. Upon my arrival in Weishan, I found out that while the food festival is open to the public and every visitor can mingle with locals in the streets of the local "ancient town" (*guzhen*), the offering to ancestors was a separate event for VIPs: scholars, policymakers, journalists, and other guests of honor. This disparity made me remember one of the definitions of official culture as "folk culture from which the folk had been banished and replaced by its perverse double" (Lachmann et al. 1988, 118)—the staged "folklore" that disembowels the "authentic" everyday culture (for more on "staged" and "authentic" culture, see Yang Minghong and Zeng Benxiang's chapter).

The sacrifices were about to be performed in the temple atop the Daoist sacred Weibao Mountain (*Weibaoshan*). Here stood the first in a line of figures from the pantheon of the Yi nationality's primordial ancestors, the locally revered Xinuluo. He is the historically recorded founder and the first ruler of the Nanzhao Kingdom, a multi-ethnic non-Chinese polity co-existing in parallel with the Tang dynasty between 742 and 906 (Backus

1981). Weishan is being represented as its first center. To be allowed to enter, I had engaged in some hasty networking, which led me to get to know the daughter of Mr. Cha—the local authority and organizer of the event, whom she described as "having a heart that beats for Yi culture"—who granted me with a VIP card. The next day, I was driven to the top of the mountain in a van and found myself standing in front of the temple gates as a part of a massive crowd. Security workers prevented individuals without a pass from entering. Others patrolled the forested slopes around the temple to discourage onlookers from peeking inside. At the gate I encountered unforeseen problems: I had a pass, but I lacked a food coupon, which disqualified me from entering. Dismayed, I called my friend Jjihxa, a relatively young ritualist, who was here with a representative group (*daibiaotuan*) from far-flung Liangshan. "You see? This is the power of the leader (*lingdao*)," Jjihxa proudly glossed his order to security to let me in even without the required coupon.

Visitors, organizers, and media representatives found their places and the walls of the temple started to resonate with the voice of Mr. Cha, who welcomed guests from near and far and praised the achievements of the Yi and their ancient culture. Then he smoothly transitioned to a declamation of the names of Chinese Yi Studies Societies (*Yixuehui*) based not only in southwestern cities but also outside the Yi areas—as far afield as Jiangsu Province or Beijing. The declamation of the Yi-related knowledge-production research units was a ritual of its own and took approximately the same amount of time as the main event, which immediately followed it. As five high-pitched trumpet blasts suddenly resonated through the area, a group of seven ritualists entered the stage. As well as the local representative, others came from Liangshan (Sichuan Province), Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture and Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture (both Yunnan Province), and Liupanshui Prefecture (Guizhou Province). After a short performance, the ritualist from Shuangbai County (Chuxiong) presented a spear to the statue of Xinuluo, all under the supervision of the local *abi*. Without any Yi scroll-books, the *abi* held to his Daoist texts written in Classical Chinese. He generally resembled a Daoist monk. The representatives of Chuxiong and Liupanshui worshipped a pig's head with incense, a practice which Jjihxa labeled "purely Han." Only the ritualists from Liangshan, Honghe, and Liupanshui held the scrolls and books written in different variants of Yi script.

After the act of sacrifice, the guests were allowed to come closer and observe the circle of the ritualists sitting in front of Xinuluo's statue. Jjihxa immediately remarked that the representative of Liangshan was

fake because he practiced at Xichang's (in)famous Shimazi Marketplace and did not come from Jjihxa's native Limu Moggu. Jjihxa deemed the rest fake as well, simply because they did not come from Liangshan. "They know nothing. They have like … Two scroll-books! We possess hundreds of them," he remarked. Designating those not coming from Liangshan as inauthentic using labels such as "fake" and "Han" and rhetorically clinging to a particular region, Jjihxa performed his vision of authenticity by emulating the Nuosu-Yi essentialist ideas of purity. He projected them onto the ritualist vocation, suggesting his authenticity and superiority over the others. Set in the lower part of the temple, a sumptuous, open-air dinner followed. Liters of local spirits were poured into tiny glasses from big metal kettles. Mr. Cha went from one table to another and toasted the guests. While doing so, he kept singing a refrain from the "Song of the Yi" (*Yiren zhi ge*), the lyrics of which kept blaring in an endless loop from the speakers in the background. Originally a poem by a famous Liangshan Nuosu-Yi Sinophone poet Jidi Majia, it was later turned into this popular song by the Liangshan Nuosuphone world music group *Shanying zuhe*.

Through several components of this high-profile event, Xinuluo from western Yunnan Province was connected with the Yi mythological ancestor Apu Ddumu, who allegedly lived in the far-flung Wumeng Mountains of northeast Yunnan Province's Zhaotong Prefecture and the northwest of Guizhou Province's Bijie Prefecture. The event thus performatively united all the Yi by bridging the cultural as well as the geographical distances between them. Albeit not explicitly, the event was also connected to a great debate of 1939, when Gu Jiegang feared the dissolution of Chinese territory following the Japanese intervention in northeast China and argued that the Chinese nation should be viewed and talked about as one. Contributing to the debate, Fu Sinian ([1939] 2003, 205) feared that after Siam, a Japanese ally, changed its name to Thailand, it could claim large territories of southwest China—in particular, those regions inhabited by a population that was culturally related to Thailand's ethnic majority. This population was later classified in China as the Dai nationality. Chen Bisheng ([1939] 2016, 115–18) was quick to reassure his colleagues that there was no "national question" (*minzu wenti*) in Yunnan Province (for more on the conceptualizations of the Chinese nation in the Republic of China [1912–49], see the introductory chapter to this volume by Jarmila Ptáčková and Ondřej Klimeš). Two decades later, this view was sealed by ethnologist Jiang Yingliang ([1959] 1992, 234–60). Studying both the Yi and the Dai nationalities, he compiled an essay claiming that historically, the rulers of Nanzhao were Yi and not

Dai.[5] The invented tradition (Hobsbawm 2000) in Weishan thus re-animates the political position of the PRC every year. For this purpose, the cohesion of the internally diverse Yi nationality and their inclusion in the Chinese nation (the "*Zhonghua*" descriptor in the title of the event evidenced this) is a cornerstone of the state's cultural security in southwest China.

A Local Institution and Its Way of Countering the Hegemony

My subsequent tracing of the two Yi cultural threads back to their respective localities sheds more light on the nature, mechanisms, and complex entanglements of the actors participating in the intra-Yi competition. After returning to the city, I met the *bumo* from Liupanshui in front of the local Confucian temple near my hotel. Accompanied by his young disciple, he mentioned that in Liupanshui's neighboring Weining Yi, Hui, and Miao Autonomous County,[6] there is a vocational school for *bumo*. To date, it seems to be the only full-time vocational institution for Yi ritualists. Similar endeavors were reported elsewhere, yet they functioned only on a pop-up basis (see He 2017). In August 2016, I took the only direct slow train from Chengdu to Weining, which picturesquely traversed the ridges and ravines of the Wumeng Mountains.

Guizhou Bijie Yi Language Bilingual Vocational School is located on the top floor of the Guizhou Vocational College of Industry and Trade near Cao Hai Lake. Upon entering, it was very quiet. The school spanned two floors and contained classrooms, a library, and a dormitory. In the classrooms, clusters of students crammed the local photocopied *bumo* books for the upcoming exams, some of them smoking. The walls were adorned exclusively with writings in the local Weining variant of the classical Nasu-Yi script. A poster with a busy schedule was plastered on the wall near the entrance doors of the classrooms. The curriculum ran every day of the week with a reduced workload during the weekends. Mornings were usually dedicated to theory—memorizing the characters and texts—and afternoons were reserved for the practical part, the simulation of ritual performances.

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5   This claim is being modestly contested by the Shan—the same population as the Dai nationality, only using a different ethnonym outside of the PRC's borders—of both Myanmar and Thailand (see Liang 2010; Wyatt 2003). The contestation was very much alive in Shan State of Myanmar during my visit to Hsipaw in early 2014. However, the greater discursive power of the PRC ensures that their claim has almost no scholarly-cum-political traction.
6   Part of Bijie Prefecture in Guizhou Province.

According to Mr. Awi, a graduate of the school and now its employee, the youngest student was sixteen years old and the oldest was sixty-seven. In addition to the majority of the local Nasu-Yi students and a considerably smaller minority from the Yi communities of neighboring Yunnan and Sichuan provinces, there were also two Han students. "The older students come here to deepen their knowledge, as they are already quite skilled in their craft," explained my guide. The founder of the school, whose surname was Lu, introduced himself as a *bumo* who had simultaneously worked for many years in local government. The three-year study program, he explained, is being offered free of charge—including lodging and meals—and without any need to take an entrance exam. Because the institution is connected to the multi-dimensional, state-driven poverty alleviation campaign, it targets young males from rural, income-disadvantaged families. Until today, however, the project has depended every year on financial support from the private sector and donors. The governmental support connected to poverty alleviation efforts comprises only a minor part of its total budget.

Even though there was a demand for teachers from other Yi areas, the majority were locals. One of the older teachers, whose surname was Wang, was a well-respected ritualist from a local lineage. Before the 1960s, he attended a clan school of his relatives and, as he put it, gained his knowledge through very harsh educational methods. The school's founder also managed to amass quite a vast collection of classical texts—the legacy of the local translation-oriented practice, the pride of Guizhou Yi Studies. Mr. Awi remarked that Guizhou focuses on translation because a lot of local classics survived the Cultural Revolution. Now, under Wang's leadership, many of them were being canonized into the local teaching material. Jjihxa, the *bimo* from Liangshan who visited the Weishan rite, told me that he was also invited to become a teacher here. His monthly salary would have been around eight thousand yuan. He turned the offer down. Officially, the biggest issue for him was the long-term commitment and the need to move to Weining. In reality, he did not like the fact that the whole curriculum would be taught exclusively in the local Nasu-Yi language variant. Weining thus did not suit his vision of how the "Bimo Culture" should be represented.

Successful graduates of the school could obtain two certificates. Upon graduation, the school issues its diploma. Moreover, if the graduate passes a separate, higher exam in front of a commission of locally respected *bumo*, he is granted a "*bumo* certificate" (*bumozheng*). Mr. Awi admitted that even though the process of learning is arduous and stressful, it is almost impossible to make a living exclusively by being a *bumo*—even if graduates are often recruited as official performers during events and campaigns promoting

ethnic unity (*minzu tuanjie*) or CICHP-related activities. "The students also need to learn a trade, or some other occupation to sustain themselves and their future families financially," reflected Mr. Awi.

The region of northwest Guizhou thus provided a differently positioned narrative concerning the ritualists and their role in the cultural security of their Yi region. The non-profit institution linked the bottom-up approach of the local *bumo* to the state-driven programs. Simultaneously, it remained deeply rooted in the Nasu-Yi-dominated locality to the point of not only partially rejecting the homogenizing Liangshan-based canon of "Yi Culture" but also exploring ways to subvert it. This became evident during one of my visits to Xinhua Bookstore in Liangshan's Xichang, where I came across a new textbook titled "366 Yi Conversational Sentences" (Pu and Yang 2017). Written under the patronage of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, it constituted one part of the series focusing on the representative languages of all fifty-five minority nationalities in the PRC. The Nuosu-Yi script of Liangshan is treated with a lack of interest when acting as a standard beyond Liangshan. However, the textbook represented a counterculture, since it featured Guizhou's Nasu-Yi language variant written in Latin alphabet-based transcription and was disseminated through bookstores in Liangshan. According to the vendor, I was one of the first buyers, if not the first buyer, to have appeared in the months after it had filled the shelves of the Yi-language book section. The indifference towards each other's language variants was mutual. The Yi regions beyond Liangshan thus strive to maintain their local cultural security by being passive about or outright oppositional towards the Yi official language and script.[7] Remarkably, the school in northwest Guizhou was willing to engage with texts from other Yi areas, but only after their integration into the local curriculum.

Power of the Clan: Everyday Polyphony and Competition in the Marketplace

My 2018 fieldwork concerned the *bimo* practicing in Xichang's Shimazi Marketplace. The ritualists residing in the prefectural center originated

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7   One notable exception was the streets of Mengzi in Honghe in Yunnan Province. I found during my numerous visits that the standardized Yi script derived from Liangshan was increasingly present on the public street signs. However, upon inquiry, no local Yi could read it, as it did not reflect the phonetics of the local Yi language variant. In fact, the script simply uses the phonetics of standard Liangshan-based modern Yi to reflect the pronunciation of the Chinese characters written under it.

from various places in Liangshan and spoke one of the three Liangshan Yi language variants. Because vocabulary and language habits also differed between these variants, the *bimo* had to occasionally switch to the local Liangshan version of Sichuanese Mandarin when communicating among themselves as well as with some of their clients, who did not come from the same area as them. The ritualists used to occupy Binhe Street, which cut through the local lively wholesale Shimazi Marketplace—known among the ritualists in Nuosu-Yi as *bimo nyi dde*, "a place of the *bimo*"—that existed here for decades. Between 2016 and 2018, a wide, four-lane motorway was constructed in the marketplace's original location. Moving to the opposite bank of the local river, the ritualists occupied a place formerly filled with old buildings. After the Xichang authorities tore them down in the city's initial phase of gentrification, the place turned into an empty construction site suitable for *bimo* activities—rituals, text-copying, paraphernalia-making, etc.

Shimazi featured many different *bimo* interacting on daily basis in a very narrow space. Therefore, it functioned as a polyphonic place hosting a plurality of independent and unmerged voices, each of equal validity (Bakhtin 1984, 6–7). As Swancutt (2012, 60–61) points out, invitations to perform rituals from the *bimo* clients constitute a currency reflecting the amount of accumulated power and fame within the Nuosu-Yi "economy of ordeals." This fosters competition between the *bimo*, for which they utilize any accessible resources, including various platforms of the Han-dominated Chinese state. Among many ritualists of different ranks populating the Shimazi Marketplace, Vyvy and Vusa—each speaking the same local Yi language variant but originating from different clans—both received multiple invitations every day. They also possessed dozens of scroll-books written in an ancient script. Therefore, they were perceived as the local "big *bimo*." While some of their *bimo* colleagues praised the standardized Liangshan script, Vyvy and Vusa deemed it "fake."

Vusa possessed two significant advantages over Vyvy. Firstly, like Jjihxa, with whom he shared his clan surname, he originated from Limu Moggu. Dubbed the "Homeland of Bimo" (*Bimo zhi xiang*),[8] this region boasted the highest percentage of practicing ritualists (Cai et al. 2015). When I inquired into the origin of the designation, Vusa explained that it dates to 2005, when the 4th International Yi Studies Conference was held in Limu Moggu.

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8   In a recent turn of events, Limu Moggu's current government, under the somewhat renewed over-emphasis on "resisting feudal superstitions" (*dizhi fengjian mixin*), rebranded the county as "Homeland of Intangible Cultural Heritage" (*feiyi zhi xiang*).

"After Moggu was proclaimed as the Homeland of Bimo, we did not need any more conferences," he reflected, explaining the role of academia in the whole process in response to my question about why few international conferences had followed since. Secondly, while practicing at Shimazi Marketplace, Vusa was simultaneously registered as the CICHP's highest, state-level Nuosu-Yi cultural heritage representative transmitter (*guojiaji daibiaoxing chuanchengren*).

My insight into the relationships between different ritualists deepened further after I learned about a project called "The Sacred Land of Nuosu Bimo" (Nuo. *Nuosu bimo pu*). It had been established on the outskirts of Xichang by three well-connected ritualists with backing from a private company with ties to the local government. From the outset, it was meant to accommodate urban Xichang ritualists following the Shimazi's decline. Those who were willing to take part would get a small office—in reality, a tiny lockable house somewhat resembling a rural structure since it was constructed from building materials usually utilized in the construction of pig pens—where clients and local cultural brokers might seek their services. These could range from ritual invitations to their homes to staged performances across Liangshan. The ritualists with kinship ties to the founders moved there but most of the others preferred to stay at Shimazi's new temporary location. They explained their decision with reference to the lack of a constant stream of potential clients because of the project's unfavorable locality.

After the failure of the *Nuosu bimo pu*, a similar, this time directly local government-sponsored project called "Bimo Academy" (*Bimoyuan*) was planned for Sihe Township on the northern fringe of Xichang. It was supposed to function under the leadership of a "big *bimo*" from the Shama clan, who in a remarkable turn of events happened to be the same person who had represented Liangshan *bimo* during the Weishan ritual, and who had been sneered at by Jjihxa for frequenting the marketplace. Interestingly, Jjihxa never publicly criticized his relative Vusa, even though he also came to Shimazi on daily basis. Shama was directly related to Vyvy. Like the *bumo* school in Weining, Bimo Academy would entail standardization of *bimo* practices according to the traditions of Vyvy's clan to constitute a representative and authoritative sample of the local "Bimo Culture." Unlike in Weining, however, these would primarily target tourists coming right to the premises, with the accommodation of the needs of the *bimo*'s clients only a secondary concern.

Apart from "proper" clothing, the Bimo Academy guidelines would require the *bimo* texts to be in line with their imagined original form:

carved onto bamboo slips. In this matter, the state revealed its presence, as this imperative subtly dragged the representations closer to the nature of ancient Chinese classics (see Lai and Wang 2018). Vyvy was all for Shama's leadership and the project, but others refused to participate for the same reasons as with the previous project and stayed in the perpetually declining Shimazi. The principal problem, again, was that their clan heritages and habits were too different from each other. This development naturally also generated anxiety on the side of the local government, which possessed no justifiable means of pushing the *bimo* away from Shimazi other than simply waiting for the marketplace to disappear altogether under a planned construction project. At the time of writing, the Shimazi has again changed its mode of functioning and moved back to its original location. The Bimo Academy still has not materialized, and currently it seems unlikely that it ever will—at least in its original design.

The academic writing constitutive of "Yi Culture" views the Shimazi almost exclusively as a negative phenomenon. Nuosu-Yi scholars accuse the *bimo* practising in the marketplace of not being genuine (*buzhengzongde*; Mao 2013, 76), "having scanty knowledge" (*yizhibanjie*) or "not practicing according to standards and regulations" (*buzhenggui*; Luobu 2015, 149), meaning breaking several parts of the Nuosu-Yi *bimo* moral codex (Nuo. *bijie*). The crowds streaming to Shimazi Marketplace and seeking *bimo* services, however, contradict this view, and embody the change of this codex that has followed rapid urbanization. The *bimo* frequenting the marketplace are the main actors within this transformation. When I printed out the articles and showed or read them aloud to my research partners in the marketplace, they became furious. It was evident that rivalry was starting to rage even between the Nuosu-Yi scholars and the ritualists—regardless of whether the *bimo* were affiliated with any of the aforementioned institutions. Through the *bimo*, this whole situation was channeled to their followers, clients, and other laypeople, who dwelt in the orbit of their influence. Liangshan-based cultural security was thus mainly tied to the clan affiliations, and thus the kinship ties, of the *bimo*.

Discussion and Conclusions

The way the PRC thinks about cultural security when it comes to the Yi nationality was clearly visible during the rite in Weishan. It animated the discourse that was put together under the supervision of the state by the early Han scholars of Yi culture, who attributed the historical territory of the

Nanzhao Kingdom spanning over southwest China to the Yi nationality. This choice was logical. The Yi are present almost exclusively in Chinese territory, while the potentially problematic Dai, Tai, or Shan—deliberately excluded from the story about Nanzhao's political elite—also inhabit the territories of the neighboring states of Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar. Right up to the present day, the constructs of "Yi Culture" and "Bimo Culture" developed by various Yi ethnologists and ethnohistorians have helped the state with its cultural security. The state strives to repurpose the knowledge of scholars and ritualists to turn the regionally immensely diverse Yi-osphere into the culturally unified Yi nationality with a coherent ethnic group consciousness within the Chinese nation.

However, regionality is the first obstacle to this objective. Liangshan and the Nuosu-Yi were and still are very well set on a road towards hegemony over the remaining regions. Paradoxically, the standard Modern Yi language features neologisms for every PRC nationality but one. Only the "Yi nationality" is translated as "Nuosu" (see Sylu hmanyo 2019, 72). This simple example is the most telling symptom of the Yi nationality's "nuosufication" (Hein and Zhao 2016, 285). Roche (2016, 130) maintains that in the PRC, everybody must have a prescribed ethnicity even though the primary identification of various communities might lie elsewhere than in their ethnic consciousness. Paradoxically, this is also the case for the Nuosu-Yi, whose primary identity is still that of the clan (Harrell 2001, 144). The Yi regions beyond Liangshan also observe the clan affiliations to a certain degree, as the Lu and Wang *bumo* clans evidenced in Guizhou's Weining. However, the Nuosu-Yi regard their clan identity with the utmost seriousness and tie it to the idea of purity. Through this prism, as Jjihxa demonstrated, they perceive those without a strong clan consciousness as impure, and thus not genuine. Nevertheless, as the tactic of language subversion in Liangshan by the Nasu-Yi of northwest Guizhou documented, the regions beyond Liangshan are unwilling to consent to Nuosu-Yi leadership in all Yi matters.

Névot (2019, 196–231) presents the relationship between the Sani-Yi *bimo*-scholars in Yunnan Province who engage with the Chinese state on the one hand, and their peers who are allegedly not interested in ethnopolitics and related power competition on the other, in a bi-polar manner as a sort of "schism." In my perception, the "us vs. them" dichotomy might be too simplistic. The state does indeed intervene in Yi ethnic matters. In Liangshan, it has sought to dismantle bone hardness-based kinship system since the period of high socialism (see Pan 1997) and replace it with the concept of culture. However, the replacement has not fully happened yet, and so the forms of competition have become layered and created a

very complex power landscape. The ritualists naturally seek to attract reputation, fame, and authority. Their mutual competition for power is hard-wired into their vocation. In regions without a strong adherence to the concept of bone hardness-based superiority like Weishan and Weining, they tend to compete by cultural means such as local variants of the language, scripts, and ritual practice. However, as seen in Shimazi Marketplace, in Liangshan the struggle for power raging between local clans, Liangshan's own regions, and even between *bimo* and the Nuosu-Yi scholars derives from the bone hardness. To be a "big *bimo*" is to be well connected to resources, whether local resources or those of the state. Those who do not have access to resources often desire them. The tactics they use to acquire them function from the bottom up, often through institutions such as local research centers or the CICHP. The goal of many is to gain the ability to influence the cultural and political discourse in a top-down manner through these institutions.

In contrast to the situation observed by Stroup (2022) among the Hui or by Névot among the Sani-Yi, the state does not necessarily have the upper hand in *all* local ethnic matters regarding the Yi. Various stakeholders of Nasu-Yi and Nuosu-Yi are opposed to each other's institutions. In some respects, this competition could be productive for the Chinese state. But in the case of the Liangshan Nuosu-Yi, the opposition running through variously positioned clans could turn into potentially unproductive local opposition to a variety of state policies, especially if these policies are associated with a clan that has a lot of adversaries. Therefore, to maintain its cultural security, the state needs to balance the idea of the Yi nationality's cultural coherence with the danger of alienating the Yi regions from each other or incautiously causing the Yi regions of Yunnan and Guizhou to put a wedge between themselves and the prioritized Liangshan. In short, the state needs to offer various regional Yi cultural representations a certain room to maneuver and even allow a certain degree of manipulation by different local actors.

When discussing cultural security for national and linguistic minorities, Carbonneau et al. (2021) see them as competing for resources with a larger society. I have shown that this is not the case among the Yi, who take advantage of larger society's resources in their mutual competition. So, what is cultural security for Yi cultures? Since "cultures" is rendered in the plural, it is clear that for each Yi region, the term carries different overtones. For northwest Guizhou, cultural security means having the possibility to develop its own standard language and script, along with its own curriculum of *bimo* practice. For the Nuosu-Yi, cultural security

means the maintenance of a social order that hinges on essentialist ideas of purity, which then facilitates their desired hegemony over the other Yi regions. But this is exactly the point where the "moral good" (Carbonneau et al. 2021, 52) this concept of cultural security strives to promote runs into the danger of ethnocentrism. While superiority derived from the alleged bone hardness is a part of the moral code for the Nuosu-Yi, from the perspective of Western scholars and even the CCP, there is no moral good in promoting such inequality. It is a great paradox that this puts Western scholars on the same side as the CCP, albeit for different reasons. For the CCP, the parallel social structure potentially undermines its ideology, authority, and stability. For Western scholars, it runs against values that promote the autonomy of the individual. While the CCP seeks to politically unify the Yi nationality through a slow erosion of its internal differences—including the "culturalization" of the Nuosu-Yi primordialist social order—scholarly work could move in a more creative direction. In their writings, scholars can engage in relationality and correspondence with each of the Yi cultures—and the cultures of other similarly dislocated communities in the PRC and beyond—by envisioning the different Yi regions as embodying diverse cultural practices. The practice of writing can weaken aspirations for hegemony—as hegemony further aspires to totality, and culture can be one of its principal devices—by turning towards polyphony, keeping in mind that *all* voices are equally valid. To achieve this, scholars need a holistic understanding of the Yi-osphere, not only of its constituents in isolation. Such boundary-making would cause them, so to say, to "sleep within their own respective cultures." Furthermore, the scholarly authorial voice should approach all actors critically—from the state to the regional Yi cultures.

The cultural security of the Yi cultures thus dwells in their dislocation and a certain degree of disunity, in a situation where each of its cultures fails to achieve hegemony. On the side of the non-PRC scholars, this does not mean that any unity between the Yi cultures should be questioned *a priori*. The Yi-osphere needs to be approached as composed of loosely connected and yet distinctive communities. In an ideal scenario, the Yi could localize the theoretical model of "diverse unity" (*duoyuan yiti*; Fei 1999), an outwardly unified but internally diverse entity, which was originally meant for the conceptualization of the Chinese nation. As scholars, we should focus our inquiry on culture. We should reject its structuring power in our writing and use it analytically as a radical metaphysical critique. Only by doing this can we avoid the slippery slope of the written culture eventually becoming a device of direct or proxy hegemony.

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10. Hong Kong and Scalable Cultural Security

Gabriel Thorne

Abstract: This chapter focuses on recent transformations in Hong Kong, arguing that it provides a rich example of the complexity of cultural security in Asia. Framing the changes in Hong Kong society and tensions over local and national politics, the chapter seeks to consider the epistemological assumptions of the term cultural security. Adopting a sociological perspective, it asks how discussions on cultural security can address the everyday life of citizens pursuing self-determination. The frame of scalable cultural security is proposed in order to capture some of the interpretive meaning-making of citizens pursuing self-determination, and their very own and palpable conception of the term. The chapter addresses the 2019 Hong Kong protests and the 2020 introduction of the Hong Kong National Security Law.

Keywords: Hong Kong, cultural security, Umbrella Revolution, national security, Article 23

Hong Kong (officially the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China) provides one of the most multifaceted examples of the complexity of cultural security in Asia. As the focal topic in this chapter, it also presents an opportunity to consider the epistemological assumptions of the term cultural security. As a political concept it sits in abstraction to the everyday lives of those cultural security is supposed to envelop. In this chapter, I address the notion of a scalable cultural security, one that seeks to capture some of the interpretive meaning-making of citizens pursuing self-determination, and their very own and palpable register of the term. Scale is of direct importance because Hong Kong is problematic in terms of its size. It has been a quasi-citystate with economic and cultural clout

that is disproportionate to China as a whole. Yet, now that clout has been dramatically cushioned in a series of events that speak to the dynamics of China's cultural security rhetoric. The 2019 Hong Kong protests against an extradition bill were entwined with the micro characteristics of cultural security, concerns over self-determination, the preservation of language, and individual rights. Here "micro" relates to the tension between public issues and how they are experienced at a local scale, community wide, individually, and subjectively. Symbolically Hong Kong is "micro," a small quasi-city-state of just 427 square miles. Yet, as always in cultural security issues, the micro scales up to macro concerns. A year after the first anti-extradition protests, on June 30, 2020, Beijing introduced a Hong Kong National Security Law (officially the Law of the PRC on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region) circumventing and quashing the territory's own Basic Law. The law established far-reaching constraints on protest, freedom of speech, and freedom of movement. The demonstrations that were a catalyst for the new law were embedded in the larger political context of greater China and the PRC's defense of its own macro cultural security. Civil liberties were further restricted in March of 2024 when "Article 23," a bitterly opposed security law first tabled in 2003, was finally implemented. Thus, this discussion explores the scalable nature of cultural security, highlighting the inherent flexibility of the term while also revealing some internal contradictions. As the concept is broadly applicable, it can also be charged as lacking purchase, rendering it questionable as a truth-generating or meaning-making concept. It is immediately apparent that protestors in the streets of Hong Kong were concerned about the future of their city, their culture, and their way of life. It is also self-evident that the brutality and disdain for rule of law enacted by the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) is an extension of the PRC's suppression of political critique and social unrest. Both the demonstrating citizenry and the suppressing police are protecting cultural security, just at different scales. One is the macro level of state actors in the sphere of international relations, the other is the micro level of everyday encounters, in the stadia of street and home. Scale in this sense also relates to epistemological frame, either that of the austere language of rational state actors, or the emotive subjectivity of lived experience. This is also a challenge in which a qualitative interpretive researcher tries to engage in the more positivist frame of political science and international relations. To labor this nuance, I refer repeatedly to different inflections of both the micro and the macro, though I urge the reader to consider these as a hypothetical continuum. This chapter attempts to detail the paradox of the Hong Kong protests as an expression of cultural security from a

stubborn and atypical node in the greater PRC. It also performs an audit of cultural security, arguing in conclusion that at its essence the paradigm is tied to, and reflective of, the consequences of cultural and economic globalization. Indeed, in the Hong Kong example the tension between the global and the local is distinct and perhaps the enduring feature of Hong Kong's modern history.

The chapter begins by framing and unpacking the issue of cultural security. With reference to its various conceptualizations, the concept is shown to be scalable, and an adjunct to globalization theory that fluctuates between the local and the global yet always possesses an inflection of each condition within the other. That is to say, all instances of cultural security have both micro and macro expressions, just as all global concerns have local grounding. This addresses the often-overlooked qualitative potential of cultural security that is frequently obscured in the positivist epistemological assumptions of international relations. However, such a perspective is also offered as a contribution to the diversity of work on security studies that adopts a post-structuralist, feminist, and critical traditions stance.

To give these articulations of cultural security purchase I then present the 2019 anti-extradition law protests in a short but comprehensible timeline. This gives context to the demonstrations, clarifying how they emerged and why they were so different to previous protests. This overview highlights how Hongkongers were, and still are, fighting for the preservation of their culture while being minority citizens (micro) of a nation that robustly protects its own cultural security at both the national and international levels (macro). This chapter explores how Hongkongers are in the midst of protecting their language, popular culture, economy, legal system, and territory. Yet all the more perplexing is the fact that Hongkongers are also typically wealthy, highly educated, and loaded with cultural capital simply unimaginable to other minority groups. Hongkongers are, it would appear, entirely different to Uyghurs, who had been a focus of international concern for much longer than the Hongkongers (for more on the cultural security of Uyghurs, see the chapters by Hacer Gonul and Julius Rogenhofer, Giulia Cabras, and Michal Zelcer-Lavid) and have little autonomy left with which to fight. Yet, Hong Kong demonstrators insist that their fates are the same as that of the Uyghurs. A further level of complexity is that the Hong Kong identity is itself contested, not essentialized by Chineseness, and claimed by locally born ethnic minorities such as Indians, Pakistanis, Nepalese, Filipinos, Indonesians, and in lesser numbers Europeans and Africans. It must be noted that Chineseness is itself a deeply contested category both within China and throughout East and Southeast Asia (Gladney 2004; Tong 2011).

The techniques and strategies of protest form the final discussion of this chapter and bring the PRC's competing narrative on cultural security into sharp relief (for more on the CCP's official concept of cultural security, see Mohammed Turki Alsudairi's chapter). This discussion registers the scalable by applying micro, meso, and macro focuses on cultural security. I conclude that the Hong Kong example is a stubborn and untidy expression of cultural security, hybrid and paradoxical at times. This, I argue, is important to address as it highlights an enduring challenge to the concept. Cultural security is itself an epistemologically scalable concept that is ultimately paradoxical when competing groups pursue it in the same regions.

Cultural Security Unpacked and Scaled

Security is a topic that has broad relevance in the social sciences. It has tended to be normatively discussed by political scientists at state level in terms of physical threat, while sociologists may use both more abstract and more localized understandings in concepts like existential security (Giddens 1991). A range of contemporary security studies have diversified and deepened discussion on cultural security. Alagappa (1998) has explored this in terms of the Asian context, and Bajpai (2003) has brought the focus to the security of the individual. Ole Wæver (1995) cuts to an even more acute and important distinction: that between the security of the nation and the security of the people. This provides a schema that is scalable. The spirit of such discussion is explored in the work of Zehfuss (2002) who demonstrates the facility of a constructivist approach to International Relations. I work with these influences and have adopted the scalar approach due to its relevance to the particularities of Hong Kong and the tension between scale of nation and city.

It is helpful to think of scalability as being like a zoom function, able to focus on micro details (the individual scale) or macro ones (the scale of the nation or, more precisely for the PRC, the state). Whilst one can feel part of a nation state, an individual is not the same as a nation state. In its fullest sense the nation state is imagined, a premise of shared affiliation of countless individuals who will never meet or interact (Anderson 2006). The individual is qualitatively different from the nation and thus when talking of security can never fully have the same interests. Similarly, the nation has its own unique concerns about security that recognize individuals but are not analogous to the interests of the individual. The distinction I wish to make here is that national security has internal and external concerns, and

its interest can be scaled. In contrast, people are communities representing forms of similarity or difference and thus can be grouped together in terms of their security needs. If the nation and the people are aligned or congruent in their demands, both the nation and the people can be imagined to have security. However, if the security of the people is threatened in terms of their cultural expression, freedom, and self-determination, then personal security is likely to also become an issue of security for the nation. If the interests of the people and the nation move in opposing directions, perceptions of insecurity will increase.

It is not difficult to conceive how actions in one realm can create insecurity in another. The notion of scalable cultural security highlights that there can be no singular, essentialized cultural security. However, as the various conceptions of security proliferate, there remains ambiguity about just what state, personal, or other manifestations of cultural security pertain to (Wæver 1995, 47). This is not to suggest other frames are not relevant or helpful, but only the Hong Kong context requires often bespoke tools. The real salve of the frame for the discussion on Hong Kong is that there is a continuity between the city state and China writ large, thus we are looking not at different situations, but security as it exists nested in different elements of the same continuum.

A key concern in contemporary debates about security is the disruption caused by globalization, again an issue problematic for the context of our discussion. As individuals within a state start to become insecure in response to immigration, volatile economies, and policies of austerity, their recourse to challenge the state becomes increasingly weak as it is immersed in a global system and often compromised in how it controls its borders, economic policy, and welfare. In response to such threats, identity and culture can become polarizing resources to fight with, and in turn ones that politicians prey on in populist politics to distract from issues they are unwilling to engage with. Culture then becomes an issue of security for both the nation and the people. Or, as Michel Wieviorka (2018) argues, in an era of globalization, culture becomes an issue of insecurity. Cultural identities have become commodities of defense for people and collectives who are overlooked or disregarded by the state, with the nation's sovereignty dependent on global integration. During the 1990s these threats were framed in ethnic terms and resonated with the clash of civilizations thesis (Huntington 1993). In the 2000s the alter-globalization movement and issues of precarity have seen new expressions of insecurity amongst citizens and increasingly denizens within states (Standing 2016; Friedman and Randeria 2004; Maeckelbergh 2009; Nederveen Pieterse 2004; Turner 2016; Klein 2010).

The appeal of the concept of cultural security is that it is malleable, lending itself to application in a variety of scenarios. Erik Nemeth (2015) addresses art and antiquities as cultural items with security ramifications. What happens, for instance, when a nation owns the art and artifacts of another and uses them as part of its own cultural currency in museums that draw revenue and attract numerous tourists? On another level, what happens when cultural artifacts become issues in conflict? The Taliban's destruction of the Buddhas of Bamyan in 2001 and the trade in antiquities by ISIS pose this question. A more prevalent understanding of cultural security is, however, born out of minority rights and recognizes that cultural security includes the ways in which communities may feel threatened by the erosion of their means of production, geographical territory, language, and citizenship (Tehranian 2004).

Cultural security is thus tied to insecurity and focuses on the importance of cultural elements that distinguish sometimes heterogenous communities, not typified by a homeland, common religion, dialect, or ethnicity. The innate fluidity of the term has been expanded upon to highlight that cultural security is not particular to minority groups. Cultural security is in fact scalable, just like the broader notion of security. It can be focused at one level on micro issues of individuals and communities, but also expand to attend to the national and international levels (Nowicka 2014). More than any other state, the PRC has deftly expanded cultural security into a national concern, in effect scaling it up from the micro to the macro. For the leadership of the PRC, issues of cultural security can be both internal and external threats. The latter ultimately escalate state cultural security into a matter of international relations, as the Hong Kong protests highlight (Yuan 2015, 18–19). To clarify what is macro and what is micro requires the application of scale, i.e., provincial protest can be regarded as micro up to the macro state concerns of national cohesion. Yet scale is fluid and the way the provincial issues are dealt with nationally may make national cohesion a micro issue in comparison to international affairs, which can then be understood as macro.

The issue of cultural security has been embraced by the PRC, with the CCP making continued and growing remarks about its importance. Cultural security, along with political, economic and information security, is one of the four strands of the nation's security agenda (Renwick and Cao 2008). The PRC's focus on cultural security operates at the state level as part of a realist approach to International Relations. Cognizant of the rapid economic and social change sweeping through China in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the state has sought to promote an official version of Chinese culture

as a unifying force for stability. Cultural security is for the PRC leadership both a domestic strategy to maintain stability and a form of leverage that can be used to increase their power internationally. On the international stage and through the global growth of identity politics, Chinese culture can be sacrosanct and defensible even if the PRC's political regime and human rights abuses are wholly unpalatable. Domestically, cultural security works as a motif to downplay and homogenize internal diversity. The PRC has long sought to render ethnic diversity static, little more than a series of exotic and archaic motifs to be consumed in tourist villages and ethnic theme parks (Gladney 2004; Oakes 2016). Cultural security also becomes a premise by which separatism and political autonomy can be suppressed, the logic posited by the PRC authorities being that these threaten the contiguous culture and values of the Chinese people, and socialism with Chinese characteristics. The PRC's increasingly assimilatory treatment of Uyghurs and growing suppression of their cultural practices in Xinjiang since 2016 is but one recent example of this process.

The national cultural security paradigm becomes most problematic when various forms of autonomy are used withing the PRC, a term that simply obfuscates different forms administration. Take, for instance, the various Special Economic Zones and Special Administrative Regions, Autonomous Regions, and also Taiwan. Although Taiwan is not a region in PRC administration, Beijing does, to an extent, shape international conversation about this territory. In all these cases the CCP offers different legal and political systems, yet it claims sovereignty over each. In the most independent of these regions, Hong Kong and Taiwan, there are competing narratives about both national security and cultural security that conflict with the CCP's narrative of national cultural security. If, as can be seen above, the notion of security is inherently flexible, being both personal and national, a territory like Hong Kong becomes problematic in terms of what scale of cultural security to apply.

Recent Social Processes in Hong Kong

In order to provide the understanding of Hong Kong's history which is necessary for our discussion, I present a brief overview of its history and recent rising social unrest. There is a robust literature on Hong Kong studies which has charted these transformations in acute detail. As a colonial venture, Hong Kong was always a commercial outpost for the British. It grew in both economic and political significance as China developed in

the twentieth century (Carroll 2007). Hong Kong established wealth and opulence by the 1980s, bolstered by substantial British investment in social housing and welfare (Goodstadt 2014), but the Sino-British joint declaration of 1984 paved the way for Hong Kong's return to China on July 1, 1997. The Tiananmen Square protests and suppression in May and June of 1989 had a profound effect on the psyche of Hong Kong society, in some ways further galvanizing a long-nascent Hong Kong identity and culture.

The post-handover period has seen a distinct transformation in Hong Kong society. Initial surprise at the "business as usual" transfer of sovereignty in 1997 was bolstered by confidence in Hong Kong's own Basic Law, which provides a fifty-year window for the territory to retain its freedoms with quasi-autonomy under the "one country, two systems" model. This optimism was driven in part by the Mainland's own transformation under Jiang Zemin (1989–2001) and then Hu Jintao (2001–11). The SARS pandemic of 2003 and a failed attempt to introduce the State Security legislation popularly named Article 23 saw huge protests by Hong Kong citizens (Lui 2005). By 2012 tension had grown surrounding issues of mass immigration of Mainland Chinese into Hong Kong (10 percent of the population since 1997) and the number of cross-border tourists, which swelled from approximately 6.8 million annual visitors in 2002 to 47.2 million in 2012 (Prideaux and Tse 2015). These issues became more controversial with rising numbers of birth tourists straining Hong Kong's public health system and school provisions. These and other issues resulted in new waves of public protests and the widespread vilification and humiliation of Mainland Chinese on Hong Kong streets and social media.

Student protests in 2012 were largely successful in pushing back against the introduction of Ethics and Civics Education. These demonstrations marked a new era of militant protestors prepared to engage in brinkmanship with the Hong Kong government. Remarkably, efforts to integrate Hong Kong with the Mainland in terms of business and culture have backfired in terms of identity, with Hong Kong's youth claiming the weakest identification with China and the strongest attachment to Hong Kong as a culture and identity (Wu 2017). The now defunct Hong Kong University Public Opinion Programme (2019) noted in its final report in 2019 that 71 percent of the population did not feel pride in being Chinese citizens. This was the highest proportion since the 1997 transfer of sovereignty. Rising calls for democracy in turn resulted in a compromised concession to universal suffrage, which gave way to the eighty-seven-day Umbrella Revolution protests in 2014 (Richardson 2017). These peaceful protests were ultimately seen as a failure by many of the young Hong Kong protestors, as the increasing authoritarian

reach of Beijing made its way into Hong Kong public life. In 2016, booksellers critical of the PRC were abducted inside and outside of Hong Kong and transported illegally to the mainland (Reuters in Hong Kong 2016). Many hoped that political change could be crafted through local elections and the transition to a new Chief Executive (Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor) in 2017. Yet disillusionment and frustration mounted and the flashpoint of the anti-extradition law as a catalyst for renewed protest in 2019 could be regarded as almost arbitrary.

The 2019 protests stemmed from a legal loophole that emerged with the murder of a Hong Kong woman in Taiwan. The Hong Kong government sought to introduce new legislation to give the Chief Executive the power to choose, on a case-by-case basis, who should be extradited to territories that Hong Kong has no existing treaty with. This legislation proved to be hugely unpopular with the Hong Kong public, who treated it with great suspicion and as a further erosion of the Basic Law, which was intended to be observed without alteration until 2046. Seen in the context of the 2016 abductions, the extradition law was regarded by many as a furtive way to legitimize Beijing's suppression of political discontent in Hong Kong. Rising animosity about the indifference of the Hong Kong government to people's opinions resulted in large-scale demonstrations, initially peaceful marches which morphed into increasingly militant civil disobedience. Hong Kong protestors adopted a five-point manifesto of demands which remained the rallying cry of the protests into early 2020. These five demands were: (1) the complete retraction of the extradition bill, (2) the retraction of the government labeling protestors as rioters, (3) the release and exoneration of protest prisoners, (4) the establishment of an independent commission into police brutality, and (5) the resignation of the Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam with universal suffrage for the Chief Executive position and Legislative Council.

Additional context to this overview resonates with the micro issues of cultural security. Certainly, since 2008 the confluence of rising Chinese wealth and stunted political autonomy in Hong Kong has coalesced into a perfect storm. This process has been exacerbated by the authoritarian turn of the PRC under the leadership of Xi Jinping. Hongkongers, unable to impact domestic politics and economic development in any meaningful way, have been at the mercy of increasing integration with Mainland Chinese politics (Veg 2017; Dirlik 2016; Dapiran 2017; Chu 2013). One major impact felt acutely is the erosion of Cantonese as the lingua franca in Hong Kong, a measurable impact in terms of the visual coding of the territory. Hongkongers speak Cantonese and read traditional Chinese script. Mainland Chinese speak

Mandarin and use a simplified version of Chinese script. As businesses and schools have, through various measures, sought to cater to Chinese interests, Hongkongers have increasingly felt removed, absent, and overlooked in their home. The growing use of simplified characters across the territory has transformed Hong Kong's visual coding. This is accompanied by the growing use of Mandarin, altering how the city sounds. One of the most popular slogans of protests since 2012 has been the prosaic claim for cultural security that, "Hong Kong is not China." With the passing of the new National Security Law, this slogan is now illegal, in itself an act of sedition under PRC legislation (Hong Kong Government, 2020).

Cultural Security in the 2019 Hong Kong Protests

The Hong Kong protests that began in June of 2019 continued in stunted forms following the introduction of the National Security Law. Following on from the background to the protests provided earlier, the five demands provide a backdrop to the following discussion, which analyses examples of micro, meso, and macro cultural security. It can be seen that micro concerns regarding security are expressed in the concerns of protestors. Their focus is on maintaining Hong Kong identity and the values and norms of the territory. In contrast, the meso debate on cultural security is founded on the perception of Hong Kong's sovereignty and how this is contested by pro-government supporters and those who support the protestors. Finally, the macro focus explores the way in which the Hong Kong protests have become a threat to the PRC's national cultural security, and one from which its authorities are prepared to defend it internationally.

Micro Cultural Security
Many of the micro issues that underpin the 2019 protests are related to longstanding discontent about the transformation of Hong Kong. As previously noted, the Ethics and Civics education, large-scale Mainland Chinese migration and cross border tourism, and a gradual testing of the rule of law have made many Hong Kong Chinese increasingly hostile to the PRC. The extradition bill is fundamentally an issue of sovereignty and the rule of law, but culturally it has been enmeshed in these broader concerns. While not entirely autonomous, Hong Kong retains a legal system founded in British Common Law and has its own Basic Law (Hong Kong: One Country Two Systems Economic Research Institute 1991). Freedom of speech, freedom to protest, and freedom of religion are all legal rights in Hong Kong and are

regarded as part of Hong Kong culture and identity (Dapiran 2017; Goodstadt 2014). The proposed extradition bill was seen as compromising these issues. Thus, the protestors' first demand for the entire retraction of the bill can be read as part of a suite of concerns pertaining to cultural security scaled to the micro level, individual rights, and freedoms.

The second and third demands—for the government to withdraw its characterization of protestors as rioters and for prisoners detained during the protests to be released—are in part issues of semantics. They indicate the nuance between freedom fighters and terrorists. Many of the Hong Kong citizens who support the protests regard the youth who have challenged and battled with the HKPF as simply exercising their rights in accordance with the Basic Law. Ultimately, they fear that in being compliant, as protestors were in the Umbrella Revolution in 2014, they will lose another slice of freedom and the Hong Kong way of life. In direct contrast, pro-government supporters argue in a similar vein that the territory is a peaceful place, and that these dramatic and volatile clashes between protestors and the HKPF go against Hong Kong culture. At the micro scale a polarized public becomes an issue of cultural security—an issue to which populist politicians seem recklessly indifferent.

The fourth demand—that an independent enquiry be launched into brutality by the HKPF—relates to events on June 12, 2019, when protestors were dispersed outside of the LEGCO (Legislative Council) building. This date marks a point at which there was an escalation of force by both police and protestors. Again, this demand strikes at the heart of Hong Kong values regarding policing. The territory's police have long been regarded as fair and just. The establishment of the ICAC (Independent Commission Against Corruption) in 1974 was an historic landmark in the accountability of public servants in the territory. However, the actions of the police in the 2019 protests appear to have permanently altered public perception and trust of the police. Perhaps the greatest cultural charge against the police is that they are actually agents of the PRC, and there has been widespread debate regarding how many police officers are actually imports from the Mainland—and, some speculate, even PLA. In part, these debates reflect general disbelief that the police could react so violently and indifferently to other Hongkongers. One acute example of this reduced to a cultural conflict was an exchange between a reporter and a female police officer who did not recognize Stand News as a media company. In a video of the exchange the reporter challenges the HKPF officer, and she admits she is not from Hong Kong (@WETHENORTH 2019). The cultural signifier of language is another flashpoint in the conflict, with many HKPF officers in the protests

supposedly being caught speaking only Putonghua, supposedly identifying them as not Hongkongers (Li 2019).

The last of the five demands, that the Chief Executive resign, can similarly be read as a cultural issue, a potent attempt by a disenfranchised public unable to elect their leader to have some say in self-determination. Quite remarkably, Hong Kong culture, despite never having had democracy, appears to identify as a democratic culture. This is in part a colonial hangover, since Hong Kong was at least previously ruled by a democratic state. For many Hongkongers, the principles of transparency, accountability and rule of law are standards for the territory that anticipate an inevitable evolution into a fully democratic society (Dapiran 2017). It comes as no surprise that these same principles have guided Hong Kong's ascent as a business and finance hub. Protestors are bemused that the government does not listen to the millions of people on the street, and similarly they expect to be able to challenge their leader when they are unsatisfied.

I have tried to argue that the five demands all have connections to cultural security at its micro level, pertaining to an understanding of everyday life, culture, identity, and values. Similarly, pro-government individuals are also able to frame these cultural positions as flawed. One might argue that Hong Kong is peaceful (people shouldn't riot) and that Hongkongers follow the rule of law (obey the police) and support their leader. These competing notions of Hong Kong culture create cultural insecurity.

Meso Cultural Security

I adopt the meso focus in order to distinguish a middle ground between purely cultural complaints (micro) during the 2019 protests, and also the large macro debates surrounding the PRC's national cultural security. To clarify, this scale can also correspond with epistemological assumptions. For example, the subjectivity of cultural complaints in the everyday lives of citizens comes under an interpretive paradigm which is qualitative, with room for negotiated meaning. Macro issues present as positivist assumptions about the rational motives and actions of the state. Meso is used to refer to the in-between scale—liminal, and perhaps at times hybrid, post-positivist. The meso recognizes the transformation from micro to macro issues—that human subjectivities impact and form state policy. I frame these points mostly as issues of ambiguity in the cultural security of sovereignty. Indeed, the micro focuses noted above are salient because they touch, in part, upon legal status and political autonomy. Primarily, public distrust of the introduction of a new extradition law was founded on the sovereignty of Hong Kong and its rule of law. Critics have therefore argued

that the extradition bill, which could pave the way for Hong Kong citizens to be extradited to the PRC, where human rights and due process are not protected, represents a threat to the security of the Hong Kong legal system and the sovereignty of the territory. One could argue that for Hongkongers, this is an issue of their own communal, common, local, collective security, yet due to the hybrid political nature of the territory it cannot be framed as such, hence our meso focus.

More directly, the extradition bill posed a threat to the freedoms that are part of Hongkongers' everyday lives. It has widely been perceived as an attempt to further erode Hong Kong culture, bringing the territory more tightly under the control of the PRC. Here, the political self-determination of Hongkongers coalesces in culture, pertaining to "freedom" and "way of life." The legal threat of the extradition law is not, at the Hong Kong level, a minority issue. It would come to affect all the territory's 7.4 million people. However, Chief Executive Carrie Lam has insisted repeatedly that the law is a niche concern, would only be used in the rarest of circumstances, and requires her personal consent on a case-by-case basis. This government-speak effectively casts objections to extradition law as a minority concern, against the broader issue of the territory's sovereignty. This is itself a crucial point as it highlights the scalable nature of cultural security. Carrie Lam seeks to render the conflict as a minority issue protecting Hong Kong sovereignty from a niche criminal fringe, while the millions who have protested against the law perceive it to be an affront to their culture and sovereignty—in effect outside intervention in domestic affairs. Part of the surprise of the widespread rejection of the extradition bill is that it came from all sectors of society, including the normally pliant business sector (Pepper 2019). However, the extradition law has proven to be so unpopular at a meso level precisely because it appears to be an overt erosion of Hong Kong's legal system and the due process of the Legislative Council (Lum 2019). Key examples of the extent of the threat can be demonstrated in the swiftly introduced legislation to outlaw facemasks (Bradsher 2019), a paradox when the COVID-19 pandemic began, and similarly the tendency of HKPF to not wear identification (Cheng 2019) in combination with mass arrests and secret detention centers (Pang and Saito 2020).

In contrast, the condemnation and protests of Hongkongers in the face of the extradition bill can be seen as a threat to the PRC's cultural security. Although it has never been admitted, the bill has been perceived at best as fawning to Beijing and at worst as a direct order from Xi Jinping to be implemented by Carrie Lam. Protests have thus adopted a rhetoric that emphasizes Hong Kong's difference, "Hong Kong is not China," and countless

inventive banners and memes have been shared in protest and on social media lampooning the PRC and its leadership. Thus, the scalable paradox of cultural security becomes apparent based on this one topic alone. Hong Kong sovereignty poses a threat to the PRC's national cultural security, implicitly critiques socialism with Chinese characteristics, and represents a failure of the territory to fall in line and become a compliant, homogenous part of the motherland. This threat is ardently expressed by Hongkongers because they see that their territory (legally part of the PRC) is having its sovereignty dismantled. Thus, the extradition bill represents the pursuit of the contiguity of the PRC's cultural security as defined by its leadership at the expense of Hong Kong's cultural security.

Macro Cultural Security

In scaling up the concept of cultural security, the term becomes synonymous with the cultural security of the nation. The PRC's rhetoric of cultural security makes this association apparent. While in the early days of the protest the authorities were careful not to be too vocal about Hong Kong affairs, they have increasingly been more pointed in their criticisms. However, the most remarkable part of the PRC's policing of cultural security at the state level has been on the international stage. On October 4, 2019, Daryl Morey, the manager of the NBA team the Houston Rockets, tweeted "Fight for Freedom. Stand with Hong Kong." The tweet quickly caused an international uproar that struck at the heart of China's commercial reach and choking of free speech in defense of its own cultural security. Morey was quick to delete the tweet and post an apology backtracking on his support for Hong Kong, claiming the issue is more complicated than he first suggested.[1] Chinese sponsors were quick to withdraw their support for the Houston Rockets, the Chinese Basketball Association broke ties, and the Chinese embassy in Houston released a public statement of anger (Alexander 2019). In the days following the tweet, NBA merchandise and banners were withdrawn from Chinese shopping malls, while in the USA debate broke out about freedom of speech and commercial interests. The concept of the PRC's national cultural security is thus vast, extending well beyond the PRC and being enmeshed in the commercial interests of American basketball teams. Hongkongers were widely disgusted at the double standards of NBA

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1   "I did not intend my tweet to cause any offense to Rockets fans and friends of mine in China. I was merely voicing one thought, based on one interpretation, of one complicated event. I have had a lot of opportunity since that tweet to hear and consider other perspectives" (@dmorey, October 6, 2019, 02:18).

players such as Lebron James who, while quick to speak out about injustice domestically, effectively turned a blind eye to the PRC's human rights abuses of Uyghurs and the suppression of protests in Hong Kong (Block 2019). A number of other corporations have similarly sided with China over the Hong Kong protests, including Vans shoes, Blizzard games, and the Apple app store (Nguyen 2019). Each of these companies silenced protest by either withdrawing political art, censoring forum and chat comments, or blocking apps used by protestors.

Hongkongers have, however, used the defensiveness of the PRC as a tool against the state. Learning lessons from the cultural production of the Umbrella Movement, in which DIY tactics of protest and self-defense became distinct (umbrellas, goggles), protestors have been active in producing art, filming video, and devising creative ways of protesting. There is a consistent effort to put these products online, utilizing Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Reddit—all notable as popular English-language forms of social media. Hong Kong protestors have thus mounted a savvy culture war in which Xi Jinping is mocked in cartoons depicting him as Winnie the Pooh and customized Vans shoes decorated with umbrella wielding protestors (Yeung 2019), and street art around the territory is photographed, uploaded, hashtagged, and frequently goes viral. These forms of protest are a threat to the CCP's cultural security and borrow from the alter-globalization movement's technique of culture jamming (Syvertsen 2017; Cusack 2010, 95). They also promote Hong Kong culture as different to Chinese culture, hip, multicultural, and self-aware. Street art recasts the ubiquitous prohibitive street signage of Hong Kong in line with the five demands. One result of this is to garner sympathy on the international stage with the same audience that the PRC seeks to control in their aggressive defense of their state's cultural security. Hongkongers exercised the freedom to critique the government—a freedom Mainland Chinese do not have, and a freedom that was finally taken from Hongkongers in June of 2020. The outspoken and punitive reaction of the PRC and some Chinese firms to criticism highlights that cultural security can become a global concern. More pointedly, it demonstrates that the aggressive defense of cultural security as a matter of state security can come to bear on the cultural security of other communities, nations, and states.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to highlight how discussions on security can often be ambiguous. In the case of the concept of cultural security, I have argued

that the concept is scalable and, in reference to the Hong Kong protests, paradoxical. It is at once a signifier for micro issues of identity and a forum to cultivate soft power and wield international economic clout. Cultural security, in seeking to attend to nuances in security dynamics, becomes a flawed mode of analysis for the globalized era. In many ways, cultural security has been co-opted by a sophisticated rhetoric of identity politics at the state level, making it uncritically hybrid. Protecting something as amorphous as cultural security gives one the agency to argue against any perceived slight regardless of its validity. This effectively results in the characterization of valid comment and debate as attacks, violence, and pernicious attempts to undermine culture and identity (Baehr 2019).

The Hong Kong protests reveal an increasingly urgent rift between the particular and general in international politics. A challenge to all states in the current era is that they can be considered both too big and too small when meeting the challenges of globalization. Ironically, if the CCP were to address Hong Kong's cultural security as worthy of protection, the PRC might well preserve the territory as a commercially vibrant and free niche within the PRC. While arguing that cultural security poses a paradox, I am here, in conclusion, asserting that there is a further anomaly. I argue that the preservation of Hong Kong's culture and social and economic freedoms could work in concert with the PRC's objectives of national cultural security. Any analysis of the last fifteen years in Hong Kong will highlight that it is not only a lack of democracy that has caused rising discontent in the territory. More prosaically one might argue that the transformation of the territory into an adjunct of the PRC, a commercial playground for mass tourism, and a city time deposit for China's *nouveau riche* has been far more corrosive to Hong Kong than its stunted democracy. Yet without some trial democracy, this is purely hypothetical. While animosity towards the CCP has been rife in Hong Kong and has at times even flared up into anti-Chinese racism from Hong Kong Chinese, these phenomena are not the fault of the CCP alone. More directly, they are the rapacious cultural effects of unfettered capitalism, housing oligopoly and globalization. The protests are not to be simply framed as resistance to authoritarian reduction of freedoms, but more fully the result of a suite of discontents. Domestic concerns encompassing language, economy, education, and standards of living are at the mercy of larger global processes. This is not to say that Hong Kong is not worthy of democracy, but it underlines that a democracy that is partial, or constrained, will be unfit to offer redress to the mounting issues Hongkongers face. Many democracies throughout the globe are struggling with similar complaints, and populist politics are amplifying

cultural tensions. In time, the PRC's long-term internal security may face challenges from similar discontent.

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11. Cultural Survival and National Identity in Contemporary Mongolia

Mei-hua Lan

Abstract: Mongolia adopted many Russian and Soviet cultural elements during the twentieth century. When Mongolia recovered its de facto independence in the 1990s, it began to emphasize Mongol ethnic and cultural identity. Cultural revival became an important task because it brought a sense of cultural security to Mongolia. Besides China and Russia, Mongolia has also absorbed cultural elements from existing developed countries. This is due not only to the effects of globalization but also to those of Mongolia's foreign policy of "the third neighbor," applied to secure its independence. This policy allows Mongolia to participate in a broader global network while creating a new identity. This chapter discusses the shifts of contested Mongolian identity and cultural security in the era after Mongolia adopted its new constitution in 1992.

Keywords: Mongolia, national identity, cultural revival, globalization, third neighbor policy

Living at a crossroads of cultures, Mongols have been receptive to new knowledge and innovations since ancient times. After the abolition of the one-party dictatorship in 1990, the Mongolian government quickly introduced the political and economic system of developed countries. The Mongolians also display an open attitude towards different cultures and innovations. Through a large number of real and virtual interactions, they have quickly learned many new things from what they consider developed and progressive societies. Riding the tide of globalization, Mongolia has reconstructed the recognition of Mongolian tradition on the one hand and the new face of diversity and innovation on the other. Traditional cultures are important for reviving the Mongolian ethnic identity and strengthening

cultural security, but various global influences voluntarily accepted by the Mongolians also have impacts on their identity. The country can be simultaneously nationalist and internationalist. Such a combination of identities does not affect Mongolia's sense of cultural security as long as it retains the right to choose.

According to the classic definition of Edward B. Tylor (1920, 1), culture or civilization is "a complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." Mongolian culture is certainly such a complex whole, with pastoral nomadism as the core and the results of interaction with neighboring cultures as its inseparable parts. As underlined in the introductory chapter to this volume, culture is a set of markers descriptive of a certain group. These markers are the core of the group's cultural identity that helps to establish a sense of common affiliation and also boundaries with the cultural "Other." Cultures and cultural identifiers are under constant external influence and are also continually being adjusted and prone to incessant transformation. In their day-to-day form, cultures are better described as "ultimately hybrid" constructs.

Mongolian culture was greatly influenced by the Turks, Tibetans, Chinese, and Russians. Turkic nomadic culture was easily absorbed by the Mongols, who appeared later in history, due to their similar economic system and lifestyle as well as their historical and geographical closeness. Tibetan influence came to Mongolia mainly after the Mongols accepted Tibetan Buddhism as their major religion. Chinese influence was a natural historical product of interactions between Mongols and Chinese over the course of centuries. While the influence of the Turks, Tibetans, and Chinese was absorbed by the Mongols after centuries of interaction, Russian influence came mostly with political supremacy and accelerated its impact in a relatively short period. Mongolian culture has thus been shaped by multiple elements. In modern times, China and Russia have had a great impact on Mongolia, which was once part of China and later under Russian and Soviet dominance. Mongolia adopted many Russian and Soviet cultural elements in the twentieth century. When Mongolia recovered its de facto independence in the early 1990s, it began to emphasize Mongolian ethnic and cultural identity. Cultural revival became an important task.

This chapter discusses the shifting of contested Mongolian identity and cultural security in the era after Mongolia adopted its new constitution in 1992. It pinpoints that cultural revival and transformation promoted top-down by the Mongolian authorities or bottom-up by the Mongolian people have helped the Mongolians to build their national identity and cultural security, and thus their self-confidence.

Cultural Changes during the Soviet Period

In his book regarding Sinophobia in Mongolia, Franck Billé (2015, 121–50) expounds the influence of the Soviet Union on Mongolian thought and the modernization of Mongolia in all aspects of architecture, health, education, customs, medical treatment, and gender roles. While Russia represented a condensed form of a broader concept of Europe and modernity, Soviet forms of education and curricula, cemeteries and funeral rituals, hygienic concepts and facilities, and hospitals and medical technologies were introduced to Mongolia after its independence in 1921. Soviet concepts and manifestations were also present in the design and planning of Ulaanbaatar and other cities as well as in the encouragement of women to accept education and gain employment as professional and technical personnel.

The many elements of so-called modernization or Westernization introduced to Mongolia by the Soviet Union simultaneously changed many of the country's traditional cultural elements strongly identified with the Mongols, i.e., "Mongolness," Mongol ethnic identity, and their cultural security. The most significant cultural changes during the Soviet period were the reinterpretation of Mongolian history, especially the role of Chinggis Khan, the replacement of the traditional script with the Cyrillic alphabet, the prohibition of religious practices and the weakening of Mongol ethnic identity. All these changes were related to the Sovietization of Mongolia, an inevitable trend under the guidance and control of the Soviet Union. After Mongolia regained its status as an independent state at the beginning of the 1990s, it did not hesitate to revive or reuse these important symbols of Mongol identity.

Cultural Policies after Mongolia Regained Its Independence

In Mongolia's constitution of 1992, Article 7 of chapter one on the sovereignty of the state stipulates that "the historical, cultural, scientific, and intellectual heritage of the Mongolian people is under the protection of the state" (The Constitution of Mongolia 1992). The first Law on Culture after Mongolian democratization approved in 1996 states that "Mongolian culture is the guarantee of the country's independence and security, the national pride of the Mongolian people, the foundation of national unity and the foundation for development" (Gombo 2016). The fourth item of Article 4 states that a citizen of Mongolia shall have the cultural right to inherit and develop their mother tongue, literacy, customs, history, and cultural traditions. Article 5 on

civic duties on culture in the Law on Culture as amended in 2002 stipulates that a citizen of Mongolia shall have the following obligations regarding culture: (1) to protect and develop historical and cultural traditions; (2) to study, inherit and pass on the mother tongue and literacy; (3) to respect and develop family culture and a traditional Mongolian upbringing, to know one's ancestry and to keep genealogies; (4) to protect cultural values from any kind of attack (Soëlyn tukhai khuuli 2020; Soëlyn tukhai 2020).

Besides the Constitution and the Law on Culture, Mongolia also passed related laws regarding culture. Legislation was tightened and national cultural security was guaranteed in accordance with the law. Since the 1990s, due to the great internal and external changes in the country, Mongolia has updated key laws and regulations that are important for the country's general security. Many of these laws relate to the protection of national culture. After the adoption of the new constitution in 1992, the State Great Khural (Parliament) published documents such as the Law on State-Church Relations in 1993, the National Security Concept of Mongolia in 1994, and the Foreign Policy Concept of Mongolia in 1996. Many documents have been approved, such as "Mongolia's National Development Concept," "Mongolia's Cultural Policy," and "Mongolia's Ecological Policy." Thus, the country's cultural security is legally protected (Gombo 2016). All these were done top-down by the Mongolian authorities. The process was little contested because Moscow was busy dealing with its own troubles, and Ulaanbaatar tried to distance Mongolia from its Soviet past.

In the document titled "Approval of the State Policy on Culture" adopted by the State Great Khural in 2012, the opening words indicate that "The government values the preservation and protection of traditional culture, which is a source of intellectual development and well-being of the Mongolians, a guarantee of the existence, security, development and progress of the Mongolian nation, and ensures sustainable development." The third part of the fourth section regarding the main directions of cultural policy and its implementation measures concerns the preservation, inheritance, and enrichment of the cultural heritage of Mongolia. The law mandates the state to protect ancient and modern Mongolian and Mongolia's minorities' cultural heritage, history, and customs as a national treasure, to safeguard the legal environment for studying, training, preserving and developing the mother tongue, script and history, and to guarantee the position and inviolability of the mother tongue in state and civil relations and make it a component of education at all levels (Töröös soëlyn talaar barimtlakh bodlogo 2020). The document connects traditional culture to the security of the Mongolian nation and points out the importance of mother tongue, script, and history.

During the Soviet period, the Russian language was learned in schools, the traditional script was replaced by the Cyrillic alphabet, and history was written according to socialist historiography. All this was significant for building the ethnic identity and cultural security of the Mongolians.

The Return of Mongolian Script

After the 1921 revolution, the Mongolian script (*Hudum Mongol bichig*) was used until 1941, when an adapted (thirty-five-letter) Cyrillic alphabet was adopted, helping to almost eliminate illiteracy by the end of the 1950s (Buyanjargal 2017). In the 1990s, Mongolia was transformed into a democratic system. People regained their appreciation for tradition and cultural renaissance was in the air. A new movement to abolish the Cyrillic alphabet and restore the Mongolian script arose. There were many comments and initiatives to make the national script of Mongolia the official script. In May 1991, the Mongolian parliament issued a resolution to resume the use of Mongolian script from 1994. However, the decision was not implemented due to insufficient funding and other factors (Gombo 2016). In September 1992, education in Mongolian script from the first year of primary school was launched. Unfortunately, when these children reached the third grade, Cyrillic was adopted once again. In the face of harsh economic reality, the budget could not stretch to train teachers and educate students in the vertical Mongolian script (Moon 2013).

In 1995, the parliament and the government approved the "National Program for Mongolian script" and a ten-year program for the restoration of Mongolian script, reviewing the reasons for the failure to restore it. Although the program expired in 2005, the goal of reviving the Mongolian script throughout the country was not achieved, and it remained only a symbol of Mongolian culture. At that time, the Mongolian script was used only for the seals and symbols of government ministries and agencies (Gombo 2016).

There were also Mongolians who asked for the Latin alphabet to be used throughout the country. Supporters of Romanization, citing the worldwide use of English, called for the adoption of several different Latin alphabets to transliterate the modified Cyrillic script in current use. In June 2003, the Mongolian parliament approved the National Latin Script Program for Romanization of Mongolian Cyrillic. A "state standard" for this was drawn up, and a timetable for its introduction was published. However, serious disagreements emerged over the transliteration key and spelling reform, and the standard was abandoned (Sanders 2010, 640). The National

Standardization Council adopted a new Romanization standard in February 2012, but the revised standard was hardly remarked upon and certainly not enforced (Sanders 2017, 747). On March 1, 2005, the newspaper *Khumuun Bichig* (The Human Script), printed in Mongolian script, campaigned against the use of the Latin alphabet for business names and signs. The appeal was intended to be a part of "Traditional Mongolian Script Day" on May 1 (*The UB Post* 2005).

In the new millennium, Mongolia attempted to revive the Mongolian script once again. On June 25, 2003, the Mongolian president N. Bagabandi issued a decree to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the use of the Mongolian script in 2004. In accordance with the decree and to honor the mother tongue and promote the national script, a National Literacy Festival is organized annually (Tuguldur 2018). In 2004, the president decreed that, for the first time in Mongolia, an event would be organized to mark the 800th anniversary of the use of Mongolian script. The purpose of this event was to introduce the cultural history of Mongolia to the world, to revive the national consciousness and pride of the people, and to revive the Mongolian script. In 2004, the government decided to keep a copy of all the presidential decrees since 2001 in Mongolian script, leaving it as a cultural heritage for future generations (Gombo 2016). All these efforts were considered legitimate and broadly accepted.

On July 6, 2010, President Ts. Elbegdorj issued a decree to increase the official use of Mongolian script, coming into effect from July 1, 2011. According to the presidential decree, official documents and letters of the president, prime minister, chairman of parliament, and members of parliament sent to foreign high officials would be written in Mongolian script with a translation attached in the current language or in one of the UN's official languages. ID, passports, birth and marriage certificates, documentation, and diplomas from educational and training organizations and centers would all be written both in Mongolian and Cyrillic script (Official Documents to be in Mongolian Script). At the opening of the National Literacy Festival in 2017, Minister of Education, Culture, Science and Sports J. Batsuuri remarked during the opening ceremony that Mongolia had set a goal to convert to a dual-script system of Mongolian script and Cyrillic script by 2025 (Aminaa 2017). According to *Montsame*, the state news agency of Mongolia, Mongolian script has been taught in schools since the 1990s, and now nearly half of all Mongolians can read and write it (Buyanjargal 2017). However, more than twenty years after democratization, the Cyrillic alphabet is still used as the national script in Mongolia. The use of Mongolian script has been increasing and it is taught in secondary school, but there is little opportunity to use

it. In the bookstores of Ulaanbaatar, there are still few books written in Mongolian script. Whether the goal of converting to a dual-script system by 2025 can be achieved remains uncertain.

The Rehabilitation of Chinggis Khan

As a communist country from 1924 to 1990, Mongolia was under overwhelming Soviet influence in all areas, including historiography. Historical materialism was the norm, certain research topics and interpretations were censored, and independent historiography hardly existed. Since democratization, intellectual discourses have boomed and topics that were previously prohibited have been open for discussion. The collapse of the Soviet Union encouraged the growth of Mongolian nationalism. Historiography in Mongolia after 1990 obviously reflects this new trend. The publications in post-communist Mongolia offer new interpretations of Mongolian history. Discussion of the most prominent Mongolian national hero and cultural icon, Chinggis Khan (ca. 1162–1227), which had been censored in the socialist period, is now omnipresent and has become the core of Mongol identity. The Mongolian independence movement of 1911 is now considered the first modern nationalist revolution of Mongolia. Different topics, aspects, methods, and interpretations have won their space to develop. New trends in historiography bring new meanings for Mongolian historians and their fellow Mongolians.

The past prohibition of the worship of Chinggis Khan is a good example of how the Soviet-era modernization simultaneously led to the suppression of some aspects of traditional Mongolian culture. The Mongolian communist government, under the influence of Moscow, forbade anyone from even mentioning the name of Chinggis Khan, who had subordinated Russia under the "Mongol yoke" and was considered a mass murderer by the Russians. The celebration of the 800th anniversary of the birth of Chinggis Khan in 1962 seemed an excellent chance for the Mongols to revive their national consciousness. Mongolian scholars and intellectuals were ready to organize a celebration after the proposal was approved by the leadership of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP). The date of the anniversary was set for June 10, 1962, and a monument was erected in the birthplace of Chinggis Khan. Other activities included a scientific conference, the issue of a special series of postage stamps and the printing of books and articles. However, due to the conflict between Mongolian nationalism and the chief principles of proletarian internationalism challenged by heightening

East–West tensions over Southeast Asia, Berlin, and Cuba, by August 1962, the Mongolian government began to take firm steps to forestall the nationalist movement. Later the major organizers of the Chinggis anniversary were forced to make self-criticisms of their actions. In the end, the energy and effort put into the anniversary were squandered. The historian J. Boldbaatar (1999, 237–46) points out that the communist leader Yu. Tsedenbal (1952–84) used the struggle between nationalism and internationalism to increase his own power. By the mid-1960s, he had overpowered his opposition and put himself firmly in charge of the Mongolian government.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, there was an economic crisis in all the former parts of the Soviet Union, as well as in Mongolia. At that time, the Mongolians were desperately searching for a redeeming figure who would remind them of their old greatness, someone who they could rally behind. The most preferred choice was certainly Chinggis Khan, who was credited as the world conqueror. Chinggis Khan is now a ubiquitous hero in Mongolia and a recurring motif in Mongolian culture. You can find his image on everything: postage stamps, beer bottles, hotels, and even banknotes. He is the subject of numerous films, television series, poems, novels, short stories, songs, and video games. There is even an opera in his name at Ulaanbaatar's famed Mongolian Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet. Chinggis Khan is almost a cult in Mongolia (Discover Mongolia 2015). Even some Mongolian scholars do not accept this kind of excessive praise. Although they agree with the heroic role of Chinggis Khan in history and in the national identity of present-day Mongolia, they suggest that objective evaluation based on historical documents is a more appropriate approach.

Research and propaganda regarding Chinggis Khan are being intensified. According to the new interpretation, Chinggis Khan is a famous historical figure and a world-renowned great man of the millennium. He not only united the Mongolian steppe, but also created the Mongol nation and had a great influence on many Eurasian nations and peoples. He also played an unprecedented role in East–West cultural exchanges, political changes, and the development of world history.

Chinggis Khan returned as a hero of the Mongolian nation, and Mongolia has been intensifying archaeological research and advocacy to prove that it is the successor to the Great Mongol Empire founded by Chinggis Khan. Mongolians do not agree with the common Chinese scholarly narrative that "Chinggis Khan is one of the ancestors of the Chinese nation" and "Chinggis Khan is a hero not only of the Mongolian nation but also of the Chinese nation." From the perspective of the Mongolian scholars, China was only a part of the Great Mongol Empire. Since 1990, Mongolia has collaborated with

Japan, the United States, South Korea, Turkey, and Russia in archaeological endeavors to locate Chinggis Khan's gravesite. The aim is to prove that Chinggis Khan was not only born in Mongolia but was also a Mongolian sovereign worshipped there. In 2004, the President and Prime Minister of Mongolia signed a decree to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the founding of the Great Mongol State in 2006. In December 2005, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, the "Greater Mongolia 800 Fund" was established, and the funds for the 2006 commemorative event were collected by the foreign and domestic branches of enterprises and by individuals. Its purpose is to sever cultural ties with China (Gombo 2016). With the return of the cult of Chinggis Khan, the Mongolians have pursued and consolidated their new national identity related to their lasting struggle to establish an independent country of their own.

The Rewriting of History

As the Mongolian democracy movement got into full swing in the 1990s, history became one of the political battlegrounds. Protesters put forward a history and historical figures that were different from the official versions. Mongolian society urgently pursued "true history," which often referred at that time only to "history" that was different from the official version of the late socialist period and met the people's subjective expectations. A history of Mongolia in five volumes, *Mongol Ulsyn Tüükh*, was published in December 2003. It is a monumental work with an editorial team that reads like a who's who of Mongolian historiography: A. Ochir, Ch. Dalai, N. Ishjamts, Sh. Natsagdorj, B. Shirendev, J. Bolbaatar, L. Jamsran, Ts. Ishdorj, D. Tseveendorj. The five volumes cover Mongolian history from the earliest antiquity to the end of 2000. This is one of the most important official historical works since the democratic transition and provides different viewpoints concerning the history of the thirteenth century and modern times.

Unlike previously published history books, this five-volume work was written by Mongolian scholars on their own independently from Soviet oversight. It also has a great deal of new content. First, according to the results of archaeological research, the history of human habitation in Mongolia goes back 750,000 years, 450,000 years earlier than previously thought. Mongolia is considered one of the first places in the world where people lived and where animal husbandry was developed. Second, it rewrites and evaluates Chinggis Khan's contribution to Mongolia and the history of

the world from different angles. Chinggis Khan was the founder of today's globalization, the founder of Mongolia, a great leader, a Mongolian national hero, and a great man. The book argues that the ancestors of the Mongols had their own territory from ancient times and established their own country 2,000 years ago; that the present Mongolian state is the heir to the Hunnu and the great Mongolian empire; that Chinggis Khan was the founder of the Mongolian empire; that the 1911 and 1921 movements are the "National Revolution" and the "National Democratic Revolution." It suggests that the Manchus were invaders and that the Qing emperors were colonial rulers. Mongolia has been relentlessly reinterpreting its history and trying to deny its ties to China. The intention is to strengthen Mongolian cultural security and to establish a clear "boundary" that distinguishes it from neighboring countries in terms of culture and history (Gombo 2016).

The changes to ancient history are focused on the abolition of the historical materialism of the socialist period and the re-evaluation of historical figures (especially Chinggis Khan). The writing of modern and contemporary history has changed greatly, and the opinions and evaluation are more objective. When discussing the politicians of the twentieth century, there are more objective evaluations of the three heads of socialist Mongolia (Kh. Choibalsan, Yu. Tsedenbal and J. Batmonh), and figures who have been deliberately ignored by previous historiography, such as D. Bodoo and S. Danzan, the real leaders of Mongolia's independence movement of 1921. However, Buryat figures such as E. Rinchino, who, as a Russian citizen and a Communist International representative, played a leading role in Mongolia in the 1920s, are still ignored because of Mongolia's desire to maintain friendly relations with Buryatia, historically a part of Mongolia and later a region of Russia, where Rinchino is now considered a hero. In addition, the great purges of the 1930s, the independence movement of 1911, the Sino-Russo-Mongolian Treaty of 1915, the relations between the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party and the Soviet Union and the Commintern, and relations with China are focuses of discussion with new viewpoints. Even though Sh. Bira, the famous Mongolian historian and academician, remarked once at an academic conference that this *History of Mongolia* was still not new and progressive enough, the content of the five-volume history offers more objective facts than the various versions of the socialist period. This rewriting of Mongolian history is surely significant, but it certainly has the smell of Mongolian nationalism revived after 1990.

The Mongolist Christopher Kaplonski studies the interaction of truth, history, and politics in post-socialist Mongolia through the discussion of

three historical heroes, Chinggis Khan, G. Zanabazar, and D. Sukhbaatar. He compares the interpretation and evaluation of their roles in Mongolian society during two different periods of socialism and democratic transition, and then extends the discussions to social memory (Kaplonski 2004). He points out that the official, approved narratives of history in the socialist era somehow help propagate and preserve unofficial histories (Kaplonski 2004, 11). For example, although Chinggis Khan was criticized during the socialist period for his wars of domination against other lands that created significant obstacles to future development, the fact that he united the scattered tribes, established a new regime, and stimulated Mongolia's economy and cultural development was also mentioned. The positive image of Chinggis Khan before the socialist period was reaffirmed even more pronouncedly after 1990 (Kaplonski 2004, 108–9, 131–32).

The communist revolutionary Sukhbaatar, a founding member of the Mongolian People's Party (MPP, later the MPRP) and leader of the Mongolian partisan army, was a hero in socialist times and was called the "Lenin of Mongolia." However, Mongolian people in the 1990s knew that he was not the most important figure for the success of the independence movement in 1921. S. Danzan and D. Bodoo were the real leaders at that time. Danzan and Bodoo were also founding members of the MPP. Danzan later served as chairman of the Party Central Committee and Bodoo became the country's first prime minister. Both of their roles were masked or distorted in the history of the socialist period because they were from the noble class and later lost their lives in political purges. Sukhbaatar was promoted as the most revered figure in the socialist period because he came from a commoner family, in line with the socialist respect for the proletariat, and he died early, without getting caught up in later power struggles. Although there was a re-evaluation of Sukhbaatar's deeds in the 1990s, his image in the history of the new period remains positive. After all, his contribution at that time should not be extinguished. Kaplonski indicates that Sukhbaatar is still seen as having played a key role in Mongolian history, but his links to the socialist period were largely ignored. Despite his role as the "Lenin of Mongolia," the Mongolians attribute the evils of socialism not to him but to the Soviet Union, especially to E. Rinchino, the Buryat Mongol influential in the early days of the revolution (Kaplonski 2004, 163).

The rewriting of history and the re-evaluation of historical figures demonstrate a new interpretation of Mongolian history. The tracing of the country's history back to the Hunnu Empire, the Great Mongol Empire and Chinggis Khan reminds the Mongolians of their long tradition and past

glory. The redefinition of the 1911 and 1921 movements as the "National Revolution" and the "National Democratic Revolution" decorates Mongolia with nationalism and democracy. The reintroduction or reinterpretation of annihilated or masked figures signifies the rehabilitation of history. All these factors were important as Mongolia sought for its national identity after the democratic transition.

The Changing Landscape of Ulaanbaatar

Ulaanbaatar's central square was originally named in honor of Sukhbaatar. The Ulaanbaatar city council made an abrupt decision on July 15, 2013 to rename the square after Chinggis Khan. This decision was strongly opposed by the Mongolian People's Party (formerly MPRP), as well as the descendants of Sukhbaatar. The issue went to court in 2014. However, the Administrative Cases Court did not make a final ruling to overturn the 2013 resolution until mid-August 2016, shortly after the MPP rose to power. The city council made the decision to change the name back to Sukhbaatar Square on September 15 (Bayarsaikhan 2016; Amarsaikhan 2016). The decision to change Sukhbaatar Square's name was not only an attempt to signal ideological departure from socialist Mongolia but also an effort to erase the memory associated with it and to instill a new memory. However, many of the locals did not support the new name (Myadar 2019, 67). After the name had been officially changed, the decision was not popular, and most of the inhabitants of Ulaanbaatar continued to use the original name of Sukhbaatar Square (Dillon 2020, 186). Although Chinggis Khan returned as the founder of the Great Mongol State, Sukhbaatar remains a nationalist hero.

However, the grand mausoleum of Sukhbaatar and Choibalsan was demolished, and in its place there now stands a massive statue of Chinggis Khan erected in 2006 in commemoration of the 800th anniversary of the establishment of the Great Mongol State and the enthronement of Chinggis Khan. The statue is not seen as a mere architectural ornament, but rather treated as the undeniable symbol of the state. Besides, the statue of Lenin, which had stood near the center of Ulaanbaatar for several decades, was also erased from Ulaanbaatar's symbolic landscape in 2012. It became a victim of the state's efforts to cleanse the city landscape of the remnants of the socialist period. The material expressions of socialist ideology are fading in post-socialist Mongolia (Myadar 2016). The statue of Marco Polo, a long-time trusted envoy of Khubilai Khan, designed by architect B. Denzen, was unveiled in 2011. Marco Polo remains a symbol of the global reach of

the Mongol Empire and the historical ties connecting the East and the West under Mongolian hegemony.[1]

The National Museum of Mongolian History was established after the merger of the historical, archaeological, and ethnographical departments of the State Central Museum and the Museum of the Revolution in 1991. It was elevated in status to National Museum of Mongolia in 2008. The present building of the museum was built in 1971, when it was constructed as the Museum of Revolution. Exhibits of the museum show the history and culture of the Mongols from as early as the Stone Age up to the present day (The National Museum of Mongolia). From my personal experience, the routine exhibitions of this museum have changed several times since its establishment. The most striking change for me is the large increase in the number of modern historical objects, photographs, and documents, especially those concerning democratization.

Religious Revival

In addition to the reinterpretation of Mongolian history, the revival of shamanism and Buddhism is important for the consolidation of Mongolia's national identity. The Mongols were well known for their religious tolerance in the thirteenth century. The practice of religious tolerance was not only a demonstration of the self-confidence of Mongolian leaders like Chinggis Khan, but also a positive factor that helped them create the Mongol world empire. Besides shamanism and Buddhism, Islamism and Christianity were also practiced among the people within the Mongol empire. With the return of Buddhism, the Mongols became devoted Buddhists from the sixteenth century.

When the Mongols entered the Soviet era in the 1920s, Russian atheism and materialism had a profound effect on Mongolia. Religious practice gradually became taboo, resulting in a decline in the people's commitment to Buddhism. However, Buddhism was not gone. With the democratization of the 1990s, Mongolian traditional culture began to regain its importance. The revitalization of Buddhism and shamanism is part of this process. The Mongolian government makes use of some traditional metaphors to

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1   Khubilai Khan (in power 1264–94) was one of the great khans of the Mongolian empire. He founded the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), which ruled all of China and had its capital in modern-day Beijing, established under the Mongol name Khanbaliq (Ch. Dadu). Marco Polo traveled to the city and other regions of China, but not to present-day Mongolia.

emphasize Mongolia's genuine independence, and common people likely embrace Mongolian Buddhist heritage to help themselves cope with the difficulties that followed the enormous change in the early 1990s.

In the period of transition, Mongolia began to support Buddhism and pursue a religious policy based on this religion. In addition to the rapid recovery of traditional religions in Mongolia, many new denominations were emerging. Buddhism, which entered Mongolia from Tibet and became popular from the sixteenth century onwards, has played an important role in Mongolian history. Faced with the coexistence of many religions, Mongolia passed the Law on State-Church Relations in 1993, which states that "the Government of Mongolia shall respect the dominant position of Buddhism in Mongolia in order to protect the life and cultural traditions of its people. It does not prevent people from practicing other religions" (Tör, süm khiidiin khariltsaany tukhai 2020). In order to maintain the primary position of Buddhism, the government funded the reconstruction of the statue of Avalokiteśvara in Gandan Monastery in Ulaanbaatar in 1996, and heads of state and government go there every Mongolian New Year for worship (Gombo 2016).

The 14th Dalai Lama has been allowed to visit Mongolia several times since 1990, promoting Mongolia as a Buddhist country. The government has supported invitations to monks from India, where the Dalai Lama lives in exile, and from other countries. It also works closely with many Tibetan Buddhist sects and Buddhists in other countries, as well as with international peace organizations. In September 2003, a Buddhist television channel was launched (Gombo 2016). Buddhist temples were under construction and reconstruction. While visiting Amarbayasgalant Monastery in northern Mongolia in the 1990s, I was told that Taiwanese Buddhists had made donations towards the reconstruction of temples there.

After the mass destruction of Buddhism in the 1930s, only Gandan Monastery was allowed to function as a token homage to traditional Mongolian culture and religion. According to the Mongolian Statistical Yearbook of 2017, there were 136 Buddhist temples (forty-three of them in Ulaanbaatar), 2,091 temple employees (1,051 of them in Ulaanbaatar), 1,303 monks (610 of them in Ulaanbaatar), and 143 students studying in Buddhist schools and colleges (sixty-six of them in Ulaanbaatar). Compared with the 2005 statistics, these figures are declining year by year (Mongolian Registration and Statistics Office 2017, 201–5). Although the numbers of temples and lamas are far lower than before the mass destruction in the Soviet era, the revival of Buddhism has been obvious in Mongolia, especially in the early years after the democratization.

Democratization also opened a door for Christianity to enter Mongolia. According to the international Christian organization Serving in Mission, Christian radio programs originally opened Mongolia up to Christianity. Some Mongolians become Christians because they accept the teaching of God, but some do so because they want to build a connection to the outside world, especially with the West (Lan 2006, 109–11). In the official census in 2010, 53 percent of individuals aged fifteen and above self-identified as Buddhist, 3 percent as Muslim, 2.9 percent as Shamanist, and 2.1 percent as Christian. Another 38.6 percent stated they had no religious identity. The ethnic Kazakh community, located primarily in the northwest, is majority Muslim (U.S. Department of State 2016). Although shamanism is obviously less supported by the government, its re-emergence as a part of Mongolian cultural heritage is apparent. Many individuals practice elements of shamanism in combination with other religions, particularly Buddhism. Mongolia is again a country of religious tolerance. Buddhism has regained its status as the most important religion in Mongolia, and it serves as an element of "Mongolness," though perhaps a historical one.

Mongol Nationalism, Music, and Rituals

The Mongolian cultural revival and national identity discussed above have also contributed to changes of mentality and normative behavior. Many Mongolians are nationalistic, with a feeling of pride in their country and traditional culture. Traditional Mongols were nomads living close to nature, the land, and livestock. Today's Mongolian people define "Mongolness" partially based on such an existence. They think that the Mongols should live in Mongolia, breathe Mongolian air, and eat Mongolian food. Once they are uncomfortable or sick, they will get better after returning to the land of their birth. Although many Mongolians live in cities and have lost their traditional knowledge, they still consider themselves a nation on horseback, defining "Mongolness" through nomadic tradition and the steppe lifestyle. The Mongolians in the city have contradictory views about the countryside, feeling that it represents the true Mongolia, but at the same time, they see it as dirty and uncivilized. After going to the countryside for a few days, they return to the city, feeling relaxed. Although the Mongolians embrace both urbanity and internationality, they try to maintain their unique and traditional culture that is deeply rooted in symbiosis with nature (Billé 2015, 98, 106–7, 115–17). The tremendous change from socialist internationalism back to Mongolian nationalism in the global present has had a strong impact

on Mongolians' mentality and behavior, encouraging them to choose to be Mongols.

The ethnomusicologist Peter K. Marsh pointed out that in the mid-1980s, the popular singer D. Jargalsaikhan broke the Soviet taboo and praised Chinggis Khan with his own songs. In the street demonstrations from 1989 to 1990, the pop-duo Khonkh (Bell) also used their self-created songs to oppose and satirize the government and officials under one-party rule. After the democratization of Mongolia, music was no longer regulated by the government and could be freely created. In the 1990s, many pop singers and groups appeared. They were greatly influenced by popular music in the West (especially the United States), but they also used traditional elements of Mongolian music to gain more acceptance. They developed their own unique musical and presentational styles. Most said that their audiences preferred more "Mongolian" sounding versions of them. This meant finding a compromise between Western and traditional folk music. The members of the rock band Hurd (Speed) explained that when they performed for audiences of non-Mongolians or older generations of Mongolians, they tended to perform heavy metal songs with a "more traditional" sound to them, for example by using folk musical instruments or folk song techniques. The popular music market has gradually expanded, singers and groups have received sponsorship from companies, and some have established close relationships with politicians and even participated in election campaigns. Hip-hop or rap music was not accepted by the Mongolians at first, and it was not until the early 2000s that it received acclamation from the audience (Marsh 2010, 346–50, 355). After democratization, Mongolian pop music found its own voice. Its techniques and content also fully expressed Mongolia's change and identity in the post-socialist period.

Yi-fan Hsiao believes that in the cases of Altan Urag (Golden Family) and other Mongolian pop bands, the music that flaunts Mongolia is presented as a mixture of tradition and modernity. This phenomenon shows the impact of globalization and modernization on Mongolian music and exemplifies the imagination of a new Mongolia. On the one hand, under the cultural and economic influence of Europe, the United States, Russia, China, Japan, and South Korea, the Mongolians have been trying to improve their position in order to counter these external influences. On the other, from the development of popular music, the music that the Mongolians recognize and feel proud of is no longer confined to the pursuit of pure traditions. While being able to claim Mongol roots and present their integration with the world and innovation, the Mongolians have found the "Pan-Mongolia" pursued by the post-Soviet generation (Hsiao 2013, 13, 39, 69).

Mongolian pop music has incorporated Western music and European and American pop music and blended them with what is considered to be Mongolian, such as traditional musical instruments, long songs, lyrics and content regarding nature, parents, history, love and affection, stage ornaments taken from natural landscapes, animals, yurts, and Mongolian costumes. It is loved and recognized by Mongolian locals and makes a splash in the international arena. Hsiao points out that whether it is in the context of Asia or the world, Mongolia is a country with cultural self-creation and its own voice, and cannot be underestimated (Hsiao 2013, 31–32, 93, 96).

Mongolia has also been reviving traditional customs and intensifying research on traditional culture. In the socialist period, some traditional Mongolian ceremonies and rituals were abandoned or forgotten. Since the 1990s, Mongolia has done much to revive its culture and customs through intensifying research. The Mongolians celebrate the New Year (*Tsagaan Sar*) according to the Mongolian calendar. Government officials wear national costumes for major celebrations, such as the Mongolian New Year and the anniversary of the victory of the People's Revolution, offer snuff from small bottles to greet each other, and raise a silver cup of milk. During inauguration or handover ceremonies, the seals are put on the *khadag* (traditional ceremonial scarf) and handed over between the heads of state and government.

The President of Mongolia personally participates in mountain rituals. The worship of the traditional black *suld* (banner) in the army and the white *suld* of the state and government has been revived. Mongolia has established ritual halls for military units and allowed them to invite Buddhist monks to chant sutras. The traditional customs of the people have been gradually revived and the government has paid great attention to national cultural heritage, successfully organizing the registration of *morin khuur* (the horse-head fiddle) and *urtiin duu* (long song) as examples of UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage and investing in preserving the craftsmanship of artisans (Gombo 2016). All these actions show the significance of cultural revival and its impacts on the construction of the national identity of Mongolia.

Voluntary Acceptance of Foreign Influences under Democratization and Globalization

A language is not only a crucial component of cultural security and a system for communication or a culture carrier but also a symbol of power. Knowledge of English has become a necessity mainly because the United States is the most powerful country in the world. In order to detach from

the Russia-China context, derived from the geographic location of Mongolia, and find an adequate position in the new capitalistic and global era, the Mongolians are trying hard to learn other foreign languages. This is not a new phenomenon. Many of their ancestors in medieval Inner Asia used other languages besides their mother tongue. In the thirteenth century, the Mongols interacted regularly with Turkic and Iranian peoples, and thus different languages were spoken to meet the needs of communication. Although the Mongolians are still interested in learning foreign languages after democratization, they do so voluntarily. It is different from the enforced use of the Cyrillic alphabet and the Russian language in the socialist era. Foreign influence is welcome as long as it is not coercive. Coercion or compulsion brings no sense of cultural security.

Since the democratic transition in Mongolia and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the official policy of using Russian as a second language has been abandoned. English has replaced Russian and is taught at the elementary school level. English is also popular outside of school. As a result, and following socio-political changes, Mongolian has borrowed various words from English, some of which have gradually evolved as official terms: *menejment* (management), *computer*, *fail* (file), *marketing*, *kredit* (credit), *onlain* (online), *mesej* (message). Although this is a product of globalization and has helped Mongolia take part in global networks, it is also clear evidence of Mongolia's choice to distance itself from Russia. It is related to Mongolia's "third neighbor" policy, through which Mongolia has been trying to find partners to balance the impacts of China and Russia, which are still its major foreign partners. This was an active choice of Mongolia but may destroy local cultural elements as the impact of globalization on Mongolia increases.

The "third neighbor" partnership seeking to balance China and Russia aims at expanding cooperation with the United States, Japan, the European Union, India, South Korea, Turkey, and other countries and alliances. The "third neighbor" policy also helps Mongolia create a new identity, which is not only nationalist but also global and international. Such an identity is similar to that of the Mongols of the Great Mongol State in medieval times. Therefore, this is not totally new but traditional in some way.

According to my experience of watching movies in Ulaanbaatar in the early 1990s, the cinema was simple and crude, and the American movies shown were very old. The Mongolian dubbing of a film was done in an outdated way by only one male and one female. The audience knew only the content and none of the artistic aspects of the film. At that time, they played more Indian movies, likely due to the lower cost. Nowadays, the cinema in Ulaanbaatar today is up to date, playing new Hollywood films,

and the original sound of the movies is preserved with Mongolian subtitles. The theatre also sells popcorn, snacks, and drinks, just like theatres in the United States. Some Mongolian friends told me that they had never watched any Hollywood movies in the socialist period. However, like young people in other countries, Mongolian young people enjoy Hollywood movies and are greatly influenced by them.

Besides Hollywood movies, Western fast food and American NBA games are accepted by Mongolians. Fast-food restaurants, with burgers, fried chicken, and fizzy drinks, have opened in Ulaanbaatar. There are also chain restaurants selling dumplings, buns, pies, pasta, set meals, and soups. In recent years, Western fast-food restaurants such as Burger King, Pizza Hut, and KFC have finally opened stores in Ulaanbaatar. Although the price is quite high compared to the average Mongolian salary, there are many customers, especially young people. Basketball is not a traditional Mongolian sport and was not popular during the socialist period. Even today, Mongolians are not good at playing basketball. However, with the commercial marketing of NBA games across the globe, Mongolian young people have become passionate about basketball.

In addition to the strong influence of Western cultures, the products and cultures of Japan and South Korea are also popular in Mongolia, with the "Korean wave" in particular proving influential in recent years. Japan has a lasting and strong interest in Mongolia and is committed to expanding its influence there. It sponsors Mongolian students to study in Japan and provides long-term economic support for Mongolia. Most Mongolians have a good impression of Japan. The four "Asian tigers" (Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore) are also regarded by Mongolia as progressive East Asian countries from which it could learn. Although Mongolia remains a member of the nomadic culture of Inner Asia and maintains traditional friendship and cooperation with Turkey and Central Asian countries, it also hopes to bond with East Asia because of the region's progressiveness and likely future prospects. Mongolia wants to play a role in East Asia to demonstrate that it is on the road towards democracy and progress.

Conclusion

Since its democratic transition in the 1990s, Mongolia has faced increasing transculturality (see also the chapter in this volume by Jarmila Ptáčková and Ondřej Klimeš), accepting various cultural elements such as sumo wrestling from Japan, kimchi from Korea, Bollywood from India, and popular music

and public ideas from American and European countries. While embracing globalization, the Mongolians have simultaneously tried to revive some aspects of their traditional culture, such as the Mongolian script or the cult of Chinggis Khan, in order to secure their cultural identity. Strengthening the "Mongol" consciousness seems to be at odds with Mongolia's embrace of various cultural elements from foreign countries besides Russia and China. On the contrary, voluntary acceptance of outside cultural influences can lead to cultural development, without endangering the chosen cultural identity of the Mongolians. It is now Mongolia which formulates its own ethnic and cultural policies. Neither Russia, China, nor any "third neighbor" can force it to be a cultural satellite.

Mongolia's foreign policy of the third neighbor can actually help to balance Russian and Chinese political and cultural influence and provide more choices and confidence for Mongolia. Some ways of approximation are more pragmatic, such as increasing interest in learning Chinese caused due to the growing economic influence of China, although part of the Mongolians rather dislike the Chinese. The vitality of a culture comes from new elements introduced or generated by interactions with other cultures. When new elements are used for a long time, they become part of a tradition. Cultural rejuvenation and innovation are actually two sides of the same coin, contributing both to the survival and the revival of the country and the nation.

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Cultural Security in Contemporary China and Mongolia applies the term "cultural security" not exclusively to state- or institution-implemented processes, but also considers the indigenous, bottom-up, and inside-out mechanisms of establishing and maintaining the communal cultural security of an ethnic group. Markers of cultural identity differ according to intrinsic and extrinsic perspectives and can be re-defined according to prevailing circumstances. Their importance increases when a community feels that its cultural existence is endangered, and diminishes when a community's cultural identity is not questioned. The dynamics shaping cultural security are illustrated using examples of ethnic groups in the People's Republic of China and Mongolia.

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