

ON THE FRINGES
of the
HARMONIOUS SOCIETY

Tibetans and Uyghurs in Socialist China

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*Thinking beyond harmony: The 'nation'
and language in Uyghur social thought*

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Introduction

'What do Uyghurs think?' is a deeply problematic question, yet it is one that a scholar of modern Xinjiang is liable to be asked quite frequently. Whom, exactly, does the questioner mean by 'Uyghurs': the people identified by the People's Republic of China (PRC) as Uyghurs, or those who identify themselves as Uyghur? Within either category, one can readily perceive social cleavages, reflected in outlook and concerns, between urban and rural residents, educated and less-educated individuals, women and men, and those who come from different subregions of Xinjiang (Rudelson 1997). Age, as elsewhere in China, is an important factor in Uyghurs' opinions (Smith 2000), as individuals' lived experiences can have exposed them to several different hegemonic discourses produced for their consumption not only by a changing China but by the Soviet Union and its successor states and by pan-Turkic nationalists seeking the unity of Turkic peoples across Eurasia. Since the surrender of the remaining Nationalist forces in Xinjiang and its addition to the Chinese Communist state in 1950, Uyghurs have experienced and taken part in political campaigns such as collectivization, the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, and Reform and Opening Up, along with the accompanying state discourses that were central to these projects. Each of these successive periods has left its traces in memory and worldviews. It is worth exploring the degree to which the Chinese state has colonized the minds of its Uyghur subjects; I do so in this chapter by focusing on the work of Uyghur public intellectuals, those writers who intend in their published work to address and influence popular opinion about society.

Since 2005 when PRC President Hu Jintao announced the new value orientation, the Harmonious Society (Chi.: *hexie shehui*; Uy.: *inaqliq jām'iyät*), the state has again deployed a hegemonic discourse in Xinjiang directed at Uyghurs. Yet, even more so than in China proper, where the idea of 'harmony' has been turned ironically against the state and its censorship apparatus, the propaganda seems to be falling on deaf ears in Xinjiang. In this chapter, I explore the articulation of 'harmony' in Uyghur scholarly writing and works by public intellectuals and argue that the concept has failed to gain acceptance among precisely those people who are meant to be its conduits into Uyghur popular discourse. Instead, Uyghur intellectuals have continued to pursue a set of concerns about social maladies and their resolution that can be traced back at least to the 1980s. While these concerns arose in dialogue with state discourse and in response to the 'harmonious society', they have begun to add a discordant note to the textual chorus conducted by propaganda and censorship, as they ignore or cynically manipulate the concept of 'harmony'. Whereas in China proper the state is concerned mainly with disharmony arising from economic inequalities, in Xinjiang it refigures harmony in ethnic terms, most especially through the metaphor of language and belonging to a linguistic community. However, while authors writing in Chinese have readily taken up the idea of 'language harmony', Uyghur scholars writing in Uyghur barely mention it. I argue that, apart from the general vagueness of the term 'harmony', Uyghur intellectuals have rejected the discourse because it is incompatible with the worldview and idea of the process of history that they have developed over the past century.

In order to approach intellectuals' worldviews and concepts of progress and national development as suggested by their writings, I take as my object of study their depictions of the 'process of history' (Chatterjee 1986: 38), the historical understanding of time and cosmology that informs modern and nationalist thought. I think it is clear that the PRC's leadership takes and propagates a theory of history as a process of unfolding and epochal development, and that such a view is also central to any narrative of national liberation that presupposes the future historical outcome of the liberation struggle. The process of history is therefore both central to the national imaginary and a potential object of comparative analysis.

The conspicuous absence of 'harmony'

Formulating an answer to the question raised at the beginning of this chapter ('What do Uyghurs think?') poses particular challenges, especially in view of the absence of reliable survey data on current issues and the difficulty of conducting fieldwork on popular opinion. Therefore, in order to address this question and do justice to the emic perspective, I have collected a sample of writings from Uyghur public intellectuals from published scholarly and popular journals from 2005 through mid-2012. The sample included six bimonthly literary and cultural periodicals, six scholarly journals of philosophy and social science produced by Xinjiang universities, and the collections of essays by individual writers cited below.¹ As scholarly journals in Xinjiang have parallel Chinese-language and minority-language editions, the contents of which can differ greatly, I have also consulted the Chinese versions.

The differences in content and discourse between the Uyghur-language and Chinese-language sources, first of all, are startling: in every case where a university journal produces parallel series in Chinese and in Uyghur, the Chinese-language editions are replete with the language of harmony, while in Uyghur-language editions the term 'harmony' (Uy.: *inaq*) or 'harmonious' (Uy.: *inaqliq*) occurs only rarely, the exception being early 2008, when the 'harmonious society' was introduced most forcefully into the Xinjiang propaganda apparatus following occasional references to it in previous years. The discourse is almost entirely absent from Uyghur-language-only publications, even though articles in them regularly draw on other state discourses, notably the 'scientific development concept' that Hu Jintao introduced in 2002. 'Harmony' is conspicuous by its absence.

Whence the Uyghur rejection of 'harmony'? Ethnicity may not be the most important factor: one only has to look at the way that 'harmony' has become a joke among ordinary Chinese to understand that the term is not taken seriously nationwide. Unlike 'science', 'democracy', 'socialism', or 'development', 'harmony' in popular Chinese discourse is understood

1. The sample included the following scholarly publications: *Shinjang Universiteti Ilmiy Zhurnili*, *Shinjang Pedagogika Universiteti Ilmiy Zhurnili*, *Qāshqār Ma'arip Instituti Ilmiy Zhurnili*, *Shinjang Ijtima'iy Pānlār Munbiri*, *Shinjang Ijtima'iy Pānliri*, and *Til wā Tārjimā*. It included the following literary journals: *Tarim*, *Shinjang Mādāniyiti*, *Bulaq*, *Miras*, *Tangritagh*, and *Yengi Qashteshi*. Chinese publications consulted included: *Xinjiang Daxue Xuebao*, *Xinjiang Shifan Daxue Xuebao*, and *Yuyan yu Wenzhi*.

to stand for no positive ideas. Rather, many Chinese people take it to be an empty slogan that euphemizes censorship and political oppression. One cannot study contemporary China without being aware that, in place of ‘harmony’, Web users frequently type the homophonous phrase ‘river crabs’, since even discussing the word ‘harmony’ might get them ‘harmonized’ – that is, censored. I am not aware of a similar Uyghur pun, which may suggest that even the terminology necessary for this kind of cheeky *détournement* is by and large absent from the Uyghur-language media that Uyghurs consume.

Uyghur writers, who are familiar with their own literary heritage, as I will discuss below, as well as with the history of Chinese thought, may find little appealing in the Confucian origins of the term ‘harmony’. Unlike in the Soviet Union, where many Central Asian intellectuals came to regard the Russian cultural heritage as part of their own, the PRC has had little success in making the Chinese heritage appeal to some of its minorities. Close cultural links between Uyghurs and Central Asian Turkic Muslims were institutionalized by a Soviet-backed administration beginning in the 1930s, so it should come as no surprise that the older generation especially feels a closer kinship with the Soviet tradition and the model of national modernity it provided (Schluessel 2009). Indeed, it is normal to find translations from Russian authors in Uyghur literary anthologies, but works originally written in Chinese are rarer. ‘Harmony’ is thus presented not as an international or progressive ideal akin to socialism or science, but as a concept linking social and political priorities to essentialized Chinese cultural and therefore nationalist imperatives.

The word ‘harmony’ itself sounds awkward in Uyghur and communicates no immediately clear meaning. *Inaq* generally describes the idea of getting along well; it does not in itself carry the Confucian cultural and intellectual connotations of *hexie*. The derivations of *inaq* include *inaqliq* (‘harmonious’ or ‘harmony’ [abstract]), *inaqlashmaq* (‘to be harmonious’), and *inaqlashturmaq* (‘to cause to be harmonious’, i.e. ‘to harmonize’). A Web search for these words across their morphological paradigms in both the Arabo-Persian script and different romanizations confirms that *inaq* and its derivations are found almost exclusively on government websites and in contexts where the term has been translated from Chinese. Thinking beyond *inaq*, there are alternative translations available

that would more clearly describe a process of accommodation and getting along: *qoshulush* ('agreement') and *maslishish* ('mutual suitability') are both verbal nouns that suggest flexibility and an effort to work together. Older dictionaries give these words, and not *inaq*, as translations of *hexie*, but the PRC has not adopted them in official discourse (cf. Peng et al. [1989]1995: 744). Morphologically, the use of *inaq* and its derivational suffixes indicates a focus not on the social acts of being harmonious, but on the abstract concept. Moreover, to comprehend *inaq* presupposes an understanding of what the government means by *hexie*. The term therefore seems pretentious and alien, as it immediately indexes the distance of its meaning – and thus its speaker – from common discourse.²

What comes out in translation, then, is not the ideology of 'harmony', but the vagueness of the concept. One could call 'harmony' a 'super-sign', 'a hetero-cultural signifying chain that criss-crosses the semantic fields of two or more languages simultaneously' and is actually dependent on that translanguaging to have meaning (Liu 2004: 11–13). In introducing a set of vocabulary and ideas across linguistic varieties, the state is attempting to regulate semiotic practices and to establish consciously a hegemonic discourse the form of which presupposes a translanguaging consciousness. That is, the PRC expects Uyghurs to do the symbolic work to understand 'harmony' in and through translation with reference to its significance across ethnic boundaries within a unified China; doing that work is itself a symbolic act of submission to the state and acceptance of its hegemony. To speak of 'harmony' as an Uyghur is to express a pan-Chinese identity and complicity and engagement with the state project to construct that identity. If 'harmony' is a super-sign, however, it is either an incipient or a failed one. By expecting Uyghurs to handle translation, PRC ideologues forget the 'thrown-togetherness' of a symbol, that the term 'harmony' presents itself as natural and fully-

2. In place of 'harmony', then, one frequently finds the well-established terms 'unity' (Uy.: *itipaqliq*, translating Chi.: *tuanjie*) and 'stability' (Uy.: *muqimliq*, translating Chi.: *wending*) (cf. Tömür and Yasin 2009). In the wake of the Ürümchi riots of July 2009, stability and unity, rather than harmony, comprised the main discourse deployed in Uyghur-language essays encouraging Uyghurs to remain loyal to the government. It is possible that the 'harmony' discourse is being deployed gradually and will only become more pervasive in Xinjiang once the government believes that certain conditions have been met. The terminology appears in Uyghur on propaganda posters and banners, but it is far less common than more familiar exhortations, such as 'Minorities and Han Chinese depend on each other' and 'Construct a civilized Xinjiang'.

formed but is actually subject to momentary redefinition. This state discourse is not truly hegemonic, since meaning and ideology are not transmitted unproblematically through orphaned items of vocabulary as part of the linguistic signal, but depend on the acceptance both of ideas and of their formal expressions.

A positive outcome of the undersignification of ‘harmony’ is that it provides an opportunity for some authors to present their ideas through the terminology of state discourse without adopting its tenets.³ Examples of ‘harmony’ in Uyghur scholarly writing are comparatively rare, and they appropriate its meaning in ways that appear either cynical or instrumental. Gülzäpär Muhämmät (2008: 5–7) is one author who has appropriated ‘harmony’ to advance a feminist agenda. The theoretical machinery of ‘harmony’, however, is active in her work only as a metaphor. Her argument relies, firstly, on a smattering of quotations from European writers; secondly, on a series of assertions about psychological differences between men and women; and, thirdly, on an appropriation of the term ‘harmony’ away from its meaning in official discourse and into a context where it stands simply for a notion of feminine peacefulness relative to male rashness. As I will demonstrate below, these three strategies – an eclectic borrowing of Western ideas, psychology, and reappropriation of terminology – comprise the three common threads connecting Uyghur popular intellectual writing.

The emergence of Uyghur nationalist thought

If Uyghur intellectuals are not writing about ‘harmony’, then, what are their concerns? Since the beginnings of modern Uyghur thought in the early twentieth century, the overriding concern of Uyghur intellectuals has been the ‘nation’ (Uy.: *millät*). Today, *millät* is used to translate the Chinese term *minzu* (‘nation, ethnic group’), but the act of translation masks the etymological complexity of both terms.⁴ The concept of

3. This is a phenomenon familiar from other parts of China, where scholars often apply state-approved boilerplate to the introductions and conclusions of their works, but leave the content largely unchanged.

4. The term *millät* has a complex etymology and is difficult to translate. I render it as ‘nation’ here in part because the English term is similarly ambiguous in its scope and claims to territorial and political independence. *Millät* derives ultimately from Arabic *millat*, associated with a religious creed. The Ottoman Empire institutionalized *millät* as a system of governance for different religious communities. In the nineteenth century, *millet* was increasingly used to communicate the idea of a nation or ethnic group in a range of senses, from the romantic na-

millät has been at the centre of a range of different national imaginaries, and it will be helpful to review them here. Because the following is the first general history of Uyghur nationalist thought published in English, it is preliminary and directed to the concerns of the present day.

Uyghurs today can look back on a rich history of modernist intellectual and cultural production: from at least the 1910s onward, Uyghur authors have looked abroad for guidance in engaging with modernity as a society, and have implemented plans to bring about modernization in their homeland. Most such figures were idealists in the sense that they were concerned more with psychological or spiritual conditions than with material progress. They engaged with the modernisms then popular in the Turkic and Muslim worlds and wrote literature, translated books, built modern schools, and printed newspapers to spread their ideas.

Central Asian and Tatar thinkers usually referred to as *Jadīds* were also very influential in eastern Xinjiang. The word *jadīd* simply means 'new' in Arabic, and Jadidism, broadly construed, referred historically to Islamic modernism, particularly those strains of thought that emerged in the Tatar and Ottoman *milieux* of the nineteenth century.⁵ Beginning in the 1910s, Tatar students of the Jadid poet Abdulla Toqay began to work in the area around Turpan and gradually populated a network of schools throughout northern Xinjiang under the patronage of the trader Mäxsut Muhiti (1885–1931). It was from these communities that the famous poet Abdukhaliq Uyghur (1901–1933) and the Turkic Islamic Republic of East Turkestan (TIRET, 1933–1934) leader Mahmud

tionalist to the Stalinist. While in modern Uyghur *millät* carries connotations inherited from the above history, it is also a translation for the equally fraught Chinese term *minzu*, which has a complex etymology and semantic field. The initial borrowing of the term into Chinese late in the nineteenth century came through Japanese, which used the neologism *minzoku* to translate concepts ranging from ethnicity to race and nation borrowed from contemporary Western discourses. Chinese writers continued to use *minzu* to translate a variety of foreign terms while simultaneously articulating a range of definitions within an internal Chinese nationalist discourse. Finally, in the 1950s, facing a vast country populated by many *minzu* that apparently differed greatly from each other in terms of their cultural and economic development and common identity, the PRC confirmed the use of the term *minzu* to label any ethno-national or pre-ethno-national formation. Today, *minzu*, like Uyghur *millät* or its adjectival form *milliy*, implies 'minority ethnic' and has gained a range of use in everyday Chinese parlance akin to that of 'ethnic' in American English.

5. The literature on Jadidism has grown quite rich, and a general understanding of the topic of this important strain of thought in the Turco-Muslim world is essential to thinking about Uyghur intellectual history. The now-classic work in English is Khalid (1998: 4–9), and the most thorough discussion to date about Jadidism in Xinjiang is Brophy (2011: 168–221).

Muhiti (1887–1944) emerged. This group seems to have developed overt ideological affiliations only strategically and not to have articulated a distinct vision of the *millät*, save for its strong emphasis on the importance of the ‘mother tongue’ for the realization of popular, practical education oriented towards industrial skills. Of course, these ideas did not develop in a vacuum, either, but drew on a range of influences from the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds.

To this we may add the presence of Ottoman Idealists, followers of the Ottoman thinker Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924) who came to southern Xinjiang beginning in the 1910s, peaked in their influence at the beginning of the 1930s, and whose ideas continued to impact some circles through the late 1940s.⁶ Gökalp’s theory, derived from the sociology of Émile Durkheim and Auguste Comte, holds that the *millät* is not a primordial entity, but rather an emergent psychosocial phenomenon.⁷ Gökalp’s ideas motivated the corporatist popular educational movements centred around the ‘Turkish Hearths’ of the late Ottoman period, as well as pan-Turkist literature that aimed to use mythology to spread the ‘ideal’ (Ott.: *mefkûre*, Gökalp’s neologism) of nationalism. At least four Ottoman Turks present in Xinjiang during this period are identifiably part of Gökalp’s circle, the best-documented of whom was Ahmed Kemal Ilkul (Habibzâde [1925]1996), who established a school in Artush at the invitation of a family of well-travelled businessmen who later employed several other Ottomans at institutions across Xinjiang (Seyit et al. 1997: 23–30). One Kurban Koday pursued pan-Turkic national awakening in Khotan, Keriya, and eventually in northern Xinjiang as well in a career spanning the period from the 1910s through the 1940s. (Turan 1984: 8; Turan 1989: 27–28) Several Uyghurs, including future provincial governor Mäsud Sabri (1886–1952), had extensive contact with Idealists and those who espoused this philosophy. The latter included the Turkestani diaspora community in Turkey, which actively rejected Marxist materialism and so held fast to Idealism long after it had lost favour in Kemalist Turkey.⁸ Ottoman Idealism found expression in articles published in the early Uyghur newspapers produced before the fall of the TIRET (1933–1934), and its political programme

6. The following section briefly summarizes Schluessel (in preparation).

7. For a detailed discussion of Gökalp’s thought, see Parla (1985).

8. For an example of Idealist discourse in the Turkestani diaspora in Turkey, see Kırimer (1937).

influenced educational movements, most notably Turkish-educated activist Mämtili Tokhtaji's (1901–1937) popular schools and Ottoman-inspired 'scouts' (Uy.: *izchi*). In short, this variety of nationalism was Ottoman modernist, pro-European, and bourgeois in its cultural orientation, rejected the centrality of material progress, and focused instead on education in pursuit of modern consciousness.

At the same time, Chinese nationalist thought was translated into Uyghur. Isa Yusuf Alptekin (1901–1995), later known as a leader of the short-lived East Turkestan Republic and of the Uyghur diaspora in Turkey, published an Uyghur- and Chinese-language newspaper in Nanjing that made its own contributions to Uyghur nationalist thought. The articles in *The Voice of Chinese Turkestan*, produced under the patronage of the Chinese Nationalist Party, reflect Sun Yat-sen's ideology based on the Three Principles of the People, translated into Uyghur by way of English. Alptekin's *millät* is a translation of Chinese *minzu* and ideally coterminous with the state – indeed, his texts describe national formation in almost strictly geographical terms. Although it is difficult to know how widely Alptekin's periodical may have circulated among Uyghurs at the time, his own importance as a nationalist leader is unquestionable.

Finally, as David Brophy demonstrates conclusively, Uyghur nationalism owed its origins in large part to the action of Xinjiang workers' associations in Soviet Central Asia in the 1920s (Brophy 2011: 222–255). It was there that the ethnonym 'Uyghur' first gained its modern currency. Because of these groups' embroilment in complex politics on both sides of the Sino-Russian border, their shifting affiliations were more instrumental than ideological. This was an under-articulated, perhaps even premature, nationalism, but it was central to the development of modern Uyghur nationalist thought.

Literate Uyghurs, then, had access to a range of different conceptions of nation and nationality in the early twentieth century. The political and military domination of Xinjiang by the Soviet Union in the 1930s and 1940s, however, brought much greater numbers of young people into contact with Soviet ethnological theory. A government-issued pamphlet from 1936 claims to be the first authoritative discussion of the idea of *millät* in Xinjiang (Abdulla et al. 1936): it first argues against other interpretations of the term, and then explicates the primordialist,

materialist, and teleological theory of national formation then current in the Soviet Union. This was the prevailing theory expressed in official textbooks and propaganda through the early PRC, until the state engaged in the widespread destruction of Soviet-produced materials following the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s. Meanwhile, other streams of nationalism continued to persist in the Uyghur diaspora, including Gökälpien idealism (cf. Rūhī 1955).⁹

Uyghur intellectuals, 1949–present

The period from the 1950s to the early 1980s in China presents a number of challenges to the intellectual historian, as the demands of the state on culture workers, especially strict censorship and the practical requirement of participation in writers' unions, changed intellectual production in ways that are difficult to understand without thorough biographical study. During the Cultural Revolution, writers were forced to postpone projects, sometimes for many years. A younger Abdurehim Ötkür (1923–1995) had once collaborated with Mäsud Sabri in writing the novel *Niyaz Qiz* (Turan 1988: 42). Yet, it was only after the Cultural Revolution that he continued to work on historical novels. The events of these decades also broke down regional and intellectual boundaries: internal divisions, such as oasis affiliations, became weaker as people were moved around the region, and, with the conscious effort to eliminate the past, intellectual foundations were shaken. Abdushükür Muhämmät'imīn (1934–), the editor of several books on philosophy, dramatizes this effect vividly in the finale of a collection of short philosophical and literary vignettes penned between 1967 and 1977 (Muhämmät'imīn 2000: 241–2): in a chaotic vision, writers familiar from the Turco-Persian world appear alongside mythic and intellectual figures from a range of other traditions. His vision neatly describes the eclecticism of the post-Cultural Revolution intellectual field, exposed to global influences and international currents as well as the uncertainty of how to come to terms with these intellectual trends.

Following this traumatic break with recent intellectual developments, Uyghur writers in Xinjiang began to re-engage not with the modern

9. Muḥammad Rūhī was a diaspora author whose works displayed a continuing dedication to the Gökälpien conception of national 'spirit' (Ar./Uy.: *rūh*), here reflected in the author's own pen name.

thought that had emerged and developed in such a complex way through the mid-twentieth century, but rather with pre-modern Turco-Muslim writings. The thinkers of the early twentieth century were not forgotten, and indeed they continue to be memorialized in writing and praised as progressive heroes, but their ideas make almost no clear contribution to new arguments. In the PRC, and particularly since the early 1980s, Yūsuf Khāṣṣ Hājib's *Qutadghu Bilik* (1069/70), Maḥmūd Kāshgharī's *Dīwānu l-Lughat at-Turk* (c. 1077), and Alisher Navā'ī's (1441–1501) Turkic-language works all gained a new status not just as literary classics, but also as repositories of a distinctly Uyghur philosophy.¹⁰ The first issues of revived or newly founded Uyghur-language literary and scholarly journals published in 1980 and 1981 universally included lengthy essays on the centrality and importance of these works. Despite the regular publication of still more texts in the journals *Bulaq*, a bimonthly available primarily by institutional subscription, and *Miras*, a literary journal sold in bookstores, most Uyghur writers draw their primary points of reference from this canon, particularly when making comparisons with other, similarly reified philosophical traditions.

One of the earliest examples comes from Abdurehim Ötkür's 1980 essay, published in the very first issue of *Bulaq*, on Navā'ī's *Muḥākamat al-Lughatayn* ('The Judgment of Two Languages'), a polemic that declares the superiority of the Turkic language over Persian (Ötkür 1980). Uyghur writers take his disputation very seriously, as Navā'ī appears to argue passionately for the unique expressive power of Turkic vocabulary and morphology. Similarly, the *Qutadghu Bilik* has taken on the role of an Uyghur classic to match ancient Chinese and European thought.¹¹ Older linguists who had extensive exposure to the intellectual currents of the pre-1949 era have generally worked on lexicography and histori-

10. Although modern Uyghur writers lay claim to the heritage of the historical Buddhist Uyghur states and the art of pre-Islamic Xinjiang, they rarely draw on it as a source of inspiration, suggesting that Islamic intellectual history has been refigured in ethnic terms. Nevertheless, some Uyghurs, following the trend towards an archaeology of national essence discussed further below, hold the opinion that conversion to Islam weakened the Uyghur nation.

11. The *Qutadghu Bilik* belongs to the Persianate genre of didactic literature known as 'mirror for princes', while Navā'ī's *Muḥākamat al-Lughatayn* is a *munazara*, a form of poetry that presents a contest or 'debate' between two things and that was particularly important in pre-modern Turco-Persian literature. The suitability of either variety of literature for comparison with a Chinese classic such as the *Daode Jing* or Aristotle's work on ethics, in terms of genre and methodology, is debatable. Cf. Ämät (2010) for a commentary on the moral value of the *Qutadghu Bilik* contextualized in terms of European philosophy.

cal linguistics and avoided social commentary, as in the case of Ibrahim Muti'i (1920–2010), whose writings focused on Kāshghari's work and the Turkic languages of medieval Xinjiang.¹²

Simultaneously, in Uyghur intellectual historiography, the writers active in the early twentieth century have been classified according to the Chinese Communist conception of the stages of China's modern cultural development, being associated with literary and political trends in distant Chinese urban centres, such as the May Fourth Movement (Dawut 2010). This canon has come to obscure the more complicated intellectual history of the twentieth century, even as some figures from this history have been recast as Chinese Communist heroes. As in the Soviet Union, the term *Jadid* has been applied variously as a term of derision and of praise, depending on inscrutable political circumstances, and it is difficult to know exactly where one stands as an Uyghur intellectual in relation to one's forebears. Given the difficult task of discussing the Uyghur intellectual past publicly without fear of censorship and official criticism, it is no surprise that today's authors refer mostly to the distant and safely apolitical past. The result is an internationalization of Uyghur authors as progressive Chinese heroes and a nationalization of pre-Uyghur authors as uniquely Uyghur.

Contemporary Uyghur social thought

Having introduced the foundations of modern Uyghur public intellectual writing, I will return to exploring contemporary Uyghur social thought. Since the 1980s, and especially since the mid-1990s, a small number of public intellectuals have produced a body of literature on social thought that strives to be systematic, enlightening, and pioneering. Moreover, Uyghur intellectuals aim to create a literature and scholarship that is both national (Uy.: *milliy*) and 'global' (Uy.: *dunyawi*) (Ablät 2010), uniting the national essence with the apparent chaos of the modern world. Their visions of the process of history, in turn, are consumed by an interested public, mostly comprised of educated Uyghurs.

The writers who are most widely read and influential today come from different backgrounds, but they have all made it their business to comment on society's ills. One, Abduqadir Jalalidin, originally from Kashgar, is a professor of literature at Xinjiang Normal University. Apart

12. Cf. Muti'i (1990). For Muti'i's life, see Clarke (2011).

from several collections of poetry, he has produced Uyghur-language translations of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Nietzsche 1999), Machiavelli's *The Prince*, and Plato's *Dialogues*, as well as many essays on a wide range of topics. From early in his career, he has been interested in making social-theoretical statements: 'The world of meanings', he wrote in the introduction to a 1993 collection of poetry, is in 'constant dialog' with the 'world of people' (Jalalidin 1993). It is not peculiar, in the Uyghur context, for a literature specialist to be an all-around intellectual with a wide range of interests. Indeed, Jalalidin's work, like that of other Uyghur intellectuals, is philosophical in that it seeks to make fundamental assertions about major questions on the basis of the author's creative reflections.

Jalalidin's essayistic work matured over the course of the 1990s. Broadly speaking, he can be characterized as an idealist, in that he asserts the primacy of thought and of 'knowledge' in processes of social change. 'A poverty of knowledge', he writes, 'is the reason for political, economic, and civilizational poverty. Every error in history is related to [stages on] that ladder of knowledge' (Jalalidin 1998a: 54). His purpose, however, is to relate knowledge as a systematic, rational understanding of the world connected indirectly to 'feeling', which is a direct, irrational, sensual disposition towards the world, a kind of *Weltanschauung*. Philosophy, then, is the sign of the 'awakening' of both 'feeling-poetry' and 'knowledge-science', which are necessary in equal parts for the 'complete construction of a civilization'.¹³

To reach these conclusions, Jalalidin quotes a number of Western thinkers as diverse as Emerson and Einstein, whom he believes to be just the sort of systematic thinkers necessary to the development of a *millät*. He characterizes the great poets of the Uyghur literary past as people who once drew their nations forward, but whom people in the present merely 'worship' (ibid: 53). Students today, he argues, for all their interest in the arts, have difficulty paying attention to and understanding philosophy, without which a *millät* cannot give rise to great

13. This concern with 'construction' in Jalalidin's work is not the same as that of authors writing on the 'construction' of a harmonious society. The latter is a translation from the Chinese *goujian* as *bärpa qilish*, the meaning of which is closer to 'to establish', 'to create', or 'to bring about', and has a very active meaning. Jalalidin's 'construction' is in Uyghur *qurulush*, a passive verb which indicates the more or less natural emergence of internal structure, as in the gradual accretion of a person's or a nation's psychological makeup.

historical personalities. Following Nietzsche, he expands on the role of outstanding individuals in bringing about social change in a 1999 essay entitled ‘Where Will We Find the Supermen?’ (Jalalidin 2000). Here, he draws more specifically on the German experience of intellectual development as an example of ideas, but especially ‘national consciousness’ (Uy.: *milliy ang*), leading the way to development and strength. He then poses the question of why, when so many young Uyghurs are studying literature and the arts, they have been unable to bring about the beginning of a new high culture. His solution is to open up the analytical and creative power of every member of the *millät* in order to bring forth a new era of thought. This formulation is both individualistic and national, and in this sense resembles Gökalp’s Idealism, even if it lacks a direct genealogical connection to it. Firstly, it reflects a common metaphor of the nation as person, an idea that appears in the author’s memoirs of his time in Japan, an experience that led him to consider his own national identity and come to a sense of national crisis (Jalalidin 1998a: 180–1). Secondly, he connects the individual and the nation on the level of consciousness. Jalalidin’s writings on the crisis of the *millät*, then, are idealist and hardly mention material conditions at all, contrary to what one would expect from a professor in the PRC today.

This is not to say that Uyghur writers do not draw on Chinese official discourse. When they do, however, they may reinterpret decontextualized statements about China and material progress in idealist terms. Islamjan Sherip’s book *Krizis wä Bärpachiliq* (‘Crisis and Creativity’) (2001: 1–5) begins with a problematic formulated by Jalalidin in a 1998 essay (Jalalidin 1998b: 293), namely, that the Uyghur people are the heirs to millennia of complex cultural development – they have been simultaneously an island of original civilization, akin to Mesopotamia, and a depository of world culture. In their present state, however, Uyghurs’ ‘creativity’ (Uy.: *ijadiyät*) has been internally repressed and must be opened up again. Sherip’s solution involves a strange trick of translation: he responds by quoting Jiang Zemin’s 24 November 1998 statement that ‘Creativity is the soul of a nation’ (Chi.: *chuangxin shi yige minzu de linghun*, my emphasis), which originally referred to the ability of a country to compete in the field of science and technology. Whereas Jalalidin speaks of ‘creativity’ as *ijadiyät*, which suggests literary production, Sherip translates Jiang’s ‘creativity’ as *bärpachiliq*, which

implies a will to make things. Sherip thus reinterprets Jalalidin through Chinese, specifically through Jiang Zemin, and thus makes a rare appeal to the authority of official discourse. This allows Sherip to reinterpret all human action as a form of material production (Sherip 2001: 293), even as he reapplies Jiang's statement to Uyghurs specifically and agrees with Jalalidin's basic conclusion that 'talented people' are the key to the nation's success.

Although Abdurehim Ötkür is known best for his historical novels published in the 1980s, his first essay appeared in the *Xinjiang Daily* in 1942, and many more followed (Ötkür 1996: 308). In the late 1980s, he began again to discuss social questions. His 1989 essay, 'Traditional culture and the development of the *millät*', begins with a distinctly idealist statement:

The history of human society has proven that, if a *millät* that dares to reflect on itself, that is expert at reflecting on itself, has a high level of conscious self-recognition, that *millät* will be successful and have the chance to create itself anew. Thus it will be able to create the conditions to advance its own development. If it is otherwise, that *millät* will easily become wrapped up in itself and will fall behind other *milläts*. (Ibid: 256).

It is difficult to say, however, whether this is a statement about the importance of the ideal of the nation or, instead, a statement about national consciousness in the sense of class consciousness, or even the consciousness of a colonial people in the world capitalist system. Ötkür's vocabulary is ambiguous, but it includes direct borrowings from Chinese. The rest of the essay is a jumble of ideas. Most of them are explicitly Marxist, referring to the role of geography in the development of a *millät* and its traditional means of production. Obviously, Ötkür was under great pressure to produce writing that was in agreement with state ideology, but one cannot reject the possibility that, over the course of decades living in the PRC, he had come to accept many of these ideas. Elsewhere, Ötkür refers to the 'spirit' (*roh*) of the Uyghur *millät* as manifested in tendencies to accept or reject good or bad cultural practices (ibid: 265–7). Like Jalalidin, then, Ötkür finds the crisis of the Uyghur *millät* in its lack of creative energies in the contemporary world.

It is in this tradition, then, that another contemporary Uyghur intellectual, Äsät Sulayman, proceeds to excavate that spirit of the Uyghur

millät. In *Täklimakangha Dümlängän Roh* ('The Spirit Buried under the Taklimakan'), his first book, he quotes Ötkür and follows his assertions regarding the importance of historical and geographical circumstances in the formation of a 'cultural psychology' (Sulayman 2000: 2–4). His innovation, at least in vocabulary, consists in drawing a distinction between the 'spirit' (Uy.: *rohiyät*, Sulayman's neologism) of a *millät* and its 'intrinsic nature' (Uy.: *mahiyät*). The 'intrinsic nature' of a *millät* is unchanging and 'primordial', but is itself psychological. Cultural change is reflected in the metamorphosis of the spirit, something that is between Jalalidin's 'psychology' and Hegel's 'Spirit', which Sulayman refers to directly.

The discourse of 'spirit' deserves some comment. Sulayman's 'spirit' is distinct from the 'spirit' invoked by Gökalp's Idealists, for whom it stood for an emergent national consciousness. Nor is it 'spirit' in Alptekin's terms from 1932, when it was something like public opinion, nor 'spirit' as the common psychological aspects of an ethnic group, as the Soviet-influenced authors understood it. Sulayman refers to Hegel's 'spirit' – it is not uncommon for Uyghur authors to make passing reference to Hegel and to the dialectic, but Sulayman is unique in that he takes it up as an analytical tool and narrative device. That is, he takes seriously those things that other authors, Uyghur and Chinese, only refer to without discussion. However, Sulayman's spirit does not in content or action resemble Hegel's, but rather the romantic and patriotic 'spirit' of Herder that is the cornerstone of so many nationalist movements. Here, Sulayman betrays not only a philological method that recalls Chinese scholarship, but also that one of his central concepts is derived from the Chinese nationalism that animates Chinese Communism. What the discussion of spirit and psychology in these works represents is a reinterpretation of Chinese Communist ideas about national formation, reiterated here in idealist terms in order to deny the centrality of the material or the validity of materialism.

However, Sulayman's collection of essays, *Tarim Qowuqini Chekilgändä* ('Knocking on the Tarim's Gate'), published in 2002, puts forth a sociology that is dramatically different from that produced by early Idealist thinkers. The Idealists saw the *millät* as a psychological phenomenon that gains social relevance, a product of conscience that can achieve self-realization in the world. Sulayman, in contrast, unwaveringly depicts

ethnic groups as primordial entities that must come to recognize their basic faults and contradictions in order to affect progress. Ethnic consciousness is a desirable secondary phenomenon of material conditions; nevertheless, this consciousness is achieved through the excavation of real or material ethnic culture. Sulayman utilizes a recurring geological metaphor in his work to illustrate the structure of national psychology: the spirit or psychology is formed through ‘accretions’ produced by the interaction of two layers closer to the surface of reality, material culture and society (Sulayman 2002: 4).

Having abandoned ‘intrinsic nature’ for a more primordial sense of ‘spirit’, Sulayman begins the work of intellectual excavation. His method is simultaneously philological and penitent. He works through the accounts of the European explorers who once visited Xinjiang and observed its people, and notes their universal condemnation of the backwardness of the natives. Przhhevskii’s impressions of the primitiveness of the inhabitants of Lop Nor become a metaphor for the actual cultural state of the whole Uyghur people. The process is reminiscent of the ‘investigation of principle’ pursued by Neo-Confucian scholars, particularly of the school of evidential learning, who searched through old texts to discover the essential truth of a matter. Sulayman borrows a peculiar metaphor to talk about Xinjiang as a place: he calls it the ‘chamber of penitence’ (Uy.: *istighpar hujrisi*), borrowing the title of Republican-era Xinjiang governor Yang Zengxin’s (1867–1928) collected writings, *Records from the Studio of Rectification* (Chi.: *Bugu zhai Wendu*) (Sulayman 2002: 6, 28).¹⁴ He also refers to Xinjiang as the ‘Chamber of the Seven Sleepers’, simultaneously evoking not only the ancient pilgrimage site with pre-Islamic origins in Tuyoq, near Turpan, but also Lu Xun’s metaphor of the people asleep in the iron box in ‘Diary of a Madman’, a short story universally familiar to Chinese citizens.

Sulayman develops his sociology through a kind of social psychology of the nation. A 1999 essay entitled ‘A psychological diagnosis of the structure of contemporary Uyghur psychology’ (ibid: 348–71) presents an interesting adaptation of Marxist dialectical materialism in idealist language: the world is entering a new era, which requires every *millät* to

14. Sulayman’s translation of the Chinese *buguo* (‘rectification [of the self]’) as Uy.: *istighpar* (<Ar.: *istighfār*, ‘request for forgiveness’) is another example of the peculiar politics of translation between Uyghur and Chinese across both languages and cultures.

engage in a critical self-assessment and face the internal contradictions that bring them to the edge of revolution. Sulayman defines these contradictions in terms of a reified cultural complex, part of which is essential: 'The sunken stratum of a *millät's* culture necessarily constitutes the hidden internal essence of that *millät's* psychology' (ibid.: 353). Uyghur national psychology, he writes, has been shaken, and its 'balance', which he leaves undefined, has been upset by the imposition of movements for international cultural unity in China and Central Asia (ibid.: 357). This has given the non-essential stratum of Uyghur psychology a 'passive' character that he defines elsewhere as both 'Oriental' and 'feminine' (Sulayman 2000: 4). Indeed, given Sulayman's frequent reference to such Chinese modernist touchstones as Lu Xun's self-deceiving ne'er-do-well Ah Q, as well as the sense that the encounter with the foreign is a moment of crisis, it seems that he may have appropriated the Chinese narrative of national humiliation for the Uyghur people as well.

In his later work, Äsät Sulayman further develops the question of the relationship or 'dialogue' between the Uyghur people, homeland, and the world. While his earlier writing does not articulate a theory of nationality outside of the historical process of national formation as it is usually advanced in China, *Özlük wä Kimlik* ('Ego and Identity') (Sulayman 2006), a memoir of a year's research in Sweden that achieved remarkable popularity in Xinjiang and continues to be printed, reconsiders this position. Like Jalalidin, Sulayman found his ideas of nationality and ethnicity challenged by his experience of life in a foreign country. As in his earlier work, however, 'dialogue' does not describe the content, but rather the theme of the book, as he finds commonality with other immigrants and, feeling obliged to constantly explain his own hybrid identity, begins to see identity as variable and constructed in the process of observation. Where Sulayman previously found national essences in archaeology, he now perceives the role of other forces in shaping national identities, particularly print culture. Still, he writes in terms of cultural essentials and national 'character'; ultimately, the dialogue is more about coming to a more complete understanding by gaining knowledge of another culture.

One contemporary writer, Setiwaldi Kerim, inherits some of the ideas of the Idealists. Kerim, a schoolteacher in the city of Artush, is defensive of Mämtili Tokhtajı's legacy, and he perceives a crisis of Artush's local culture in the loss of the old spirit of educational reform. In his 2000

essay *Düz Kätäkän Änggüshtär* ('The Cracked Diamond Ring') (Kerim 2000: 54–76), he presents education and trade as a pair of jewels that once informed the traditions of Artush's culture and granted its people a special place in Uyghur society (ibid: 56). Kerim articulates a need for the people of Artush to rediscover their traditions in their true form and so regain that position (ibid: 76). Like Sulayman, Kerim speaks of culture as a multi-layered system, as well as one with distinct origins, although not in a primordial *millät*, but in the thought and practices of certain spheres of cultural activity: while a series of modernist educational movements have produced a strong educational culture in Artush (ibid: 62), economic globalization has weakened the area's economic culture (ibid: 57). In order not to 'fall behind' other peoples, a point that Mämtili himself once expressed in poetry (Alip Tekin 2000: 3), both of these cultural roots must be revived and treasured again through proper education.

From the sprouts of modernism among pre-Communist Uyghur thinkers to its more tentative expressions today, both connections of intellectual authority and disjunctures of perspective are apparent. Throughout, the texts of the Turco-Persian tradition have remained icons of a golden age of national literature ready to be revived. The pre-Revolutionary era is remembered by many as a second period of florescence in Uyghur thought, and the textual records reflect the expression of a range of ideas. Uyghur authors from the early twentieth century are revered selectively. Yet, those who survive from the early days have changed their stances significantly. Their identities from before 1949 or 1966, as well as their literatures, are suppressed, while their stature as writers remains. It would be difficult to demonstrate a clear connection between the social thought of the 1930s and that of the 2000s, but perhaps a trace of anti-materialism lingers on in contemporary intellectuals' predilections. Across the century, one common theme in Uyghur social thought has been the centrality of language and education to ethno-national survival; I will focus on this issue in the next section in order to tease out some of contemporary Uyghur intellectuals' more specific concerns and proposals.

'Harmonious language': an official discourse

Before discussing Uyghur writers' ideas about language, it is reasonable to consider the discourse currently promoted by the PRC and XUAR

governments. Since 2004, when the XUAR announced a new policy of ‘bilingual education’, language politics have taken on a disproportionately important role in policymaking and public opinion (see also Hann, ch. 7 in this volume). In China, generally with specific reference to Xinjiang and Tibet, language policy has been shoehorned awkwardly into the ‘harmony’ framework: language, the argument goes, is the basic tool of human communication. Therefore, in order to create a harmonious society, it is first necessary to bring about a ‘harmonious language environment’ nationally, regionally, and locally (Chen 2007: 119).

The formulation of ‘language harmony’ first appeared in a 2005 article by Zhou Qingsheng, an influential scholar of minority language policy (Zhou 2005: 24–6). His argument is based, firstly, on Chinese exceptionalism, the uniqueness of the Chinese linguistic situation and tradition of thought about language; secondly, on the need to allow free-market economic forces to determine the value of a given linguistic variety; and, thirdly, on the idea that every language has its assigned place in a society, which the state is responsible for maintaining according to the needs of the market. Language harmony, then, means mobilizing different social groups on the basis of linguistic competencies through state capitalism. Moreover, Zhou defines a ‘harmonious’ relationship in this context as one in which one party yields to another; the idea of ‘harmonious language’ euphemizes the subordination of minority languages to Mandarin Chinese. This formulation, which departs from official ideology but perhaps reveals the intentions behind it, has practical implications both regionally, where this idea stands for a continued policy of teaching through Mandarin language to non-Han Chinese, and in the classroom itself, where teachers are instructed to create ‘harmonious’ language environments for student interaction in order to minimize ethnic tensions.

The notion came into official usage in Xinjiang in 2007, where it first appeared in the official record in a speech made by XUAR Chairman Nur Bäkri at that year’s meeting of the directors of the XUAR Language Committee (Baikeli 2007: 3–8). In this speech, Nur Bäkri reiterates the freedom of all minorities to use and develop their mother tongues as stated in the 1982 Constitution, but declares that ‘the social function of each language differs greatly according to history, geography, and distribution of its population’. The vision of harmony in language is superficially one of a great social machine in which each part has its purpose, but it is

difficult to say what the function of a given minority language might be when compared to that of Mandarin Chinese, the official language of the entire country, the native language of the majority of its population, and a variety that the PRC hails as the key to the advancement of knowledge and development in minority areas. ‘Language harmony’, then, differs from the ‘scientific view of development’ paradigm only in its formal justifications for value judgments regarding language. Previously, government officials and many academics in China described languages as bodies of knowledge reflected in lists of vocabulary, as expressed in utilitarian statements that Chinese ‘contains more information’ than minority languages (Dwyer 2005: 37). ‘Language harmony’ takes a corporatist position whereby linguistic varieties stand for distinct social solidarities, and acts simply as a rubric for the differential valuation of linguistic varieties.

From the sample of Uyghur- and Chinese-language journals consulted for this study, it appears that official discourses are overall much more pervasive in Chinese-language work. That is, while a certain number of articles in either language are overtly written using the terminology and framework of current ideology, the proportion of Chinese-language articles written in this way is much higher. This suggests either tighter official control of the message in Chinese-language media than in Uyghur-language media or the greater complicity of Chinese scholars in transmitting and normalizing ideology. Uyghur authors use the expression ‘harmonious language’ and all that it implies when writing in Chinese; the division is a linguistic one, not an ethnic one. Indeed, I have only encountered this exact expression in Uyghur journals in translations from Chinese of speeches made at government meetings. One could conjecture that ‘language harmony’ is an expression that seems alien or inappropriate to intellectual writing in Uyghur. But why would that be the case? Uyghur writers have certainly adopted much from Chinese-language work. As I will show in the next section, the discursive space of language and education is already occupied by a vigorous Uyghur-language written conversation – perhaps it leaves no room for new and awkward conceptions of language’s role in the process of history.

Language in Uyghur writings on society

Uyghur public intellectuals today also hold to the idea that the Uyghur nation and its fate are inextricably linked to the institutions of language.

Yet, their ideas seem completely dissociated from official discourse and the very notion of ‘harmony’. The most direct contemporary critic of language policy in Xinjiang, and perhaps the most influential, is Ilham Tokhti (1942–), a Minzu University professor originally from Artush whose reasoned criticism of ethnic policy has earned him domestic admiration and international attention. His now-revived website, *Uyghur Online*, includes a category devoted to ‘bilingual education’. The theme in Tokhti’s criticism is familiar from other Uyghur public intellectuals: although he never denies the status of Uyghurs and of Xinjiang as constituent parts of China, he avoids the issue of Chinese exceptionalism entirely and casts Uyghurs as a nation on a par with any independent, self-realized modern nation globally (Tu-he-ti 2012). He engages in an international discourse, as many Uyghur intellectuals aspire to do.

Setiwaldi Kerim presents a dramatic allegory of language loss and liberation through his own experience with brain damage, which caused him to lose the ability to talk. He draws an explicit parallel between the individual and the nation: ‘In today’s world, whether a person or a *millät*, in order to guarantee one’s own ability to stand firmly, one must work for the purpose of liberating oneself’ (Kerim 2000: 118). He comes to see his own struggle to regain the power of speech as a metaphor for a mute people who have forgotten their mother tongue (Uy: *ana til*), and draws inspiration from the story of Mämtili, who himself had difficulty in becoming a good orator, as well as the lives of Hitler and Helen Keller – again, Uyghur intellectual tastes are quite eclectic. He frames his gradual recovery as a ‘rescuing’ (Uy: *qutquzush*); similarly, Uyghurs will be liberated, he asserts, when they too find their voice and remember how to speak their language.

Others see language, as expressed through the lexicon, as symptomatic of intellectual deficiencies. In a 2010 essay, one writer singles out Sulayman’s *Özlük wä Kimlik* as an example both of the tendency for Uyghur public intellectuals to generalize personal experience and to create impenetrable neologisms or borrow indiscriminately from archaic Arabo-Persian vocabulary (Oghuzkhan 2010: 2–19). This writer’s background is clearly different from that of most popular writers: he is an official at an electrical power station, and he writes in the language of epochal material progress while criticizing the widespread characterization of poets as leading figures in society. Oghuzkhan argues for the

primacy of ‘science and technology’ in the liberation and success of a nation. Still, his proposed solution for the ‘poverty of thought’ he observes relies on the awakening of consciousness and greater self-criticism when it comes to word choice, both among intellectual elites and those who consume their writing. Nevertheless, Yalqun Rozi, a well-established scholar and contributor to such periodicals, issued a strong rejoinder in the following issue (Rozi 2011: 31–32). Rozi asserts, contrary to Oghuzkhan, that science and technology are not always capable of solving society’s central problems, including the problem of personal and national freedom. Rather, he writes, people have surpassed the era of physical illness in an era of ‘spiritual illness’ that can only be attenuated through psychological satisfaction.

Apart from these more prominent writers, others regularly advance pet theories and recommendations concerning the future of the Uyghur language. These ideas similarly reflect, on the one hand, the lack of a single coherent ideology among secular authors and, on the other, the tendency of Uyghur intellectuals to produce new interpretations of ideas from Chinese-language literature or to invent new ones outside of established Chinese paradigms. Some of these are quite novel, such as one linguist’s suggestion to represent gender graphically, as is done in Chinese, when writing Uyghur, a language in which gender is not otherwise marked (Zunun 2005: 38). This sparked a debate as to which diacritics ought to be employed. Others are concerned with the revival or purification of the Uyghur lexicon; their proposals recall the national language movements of the early twentieth century.

Conclusion

Popular Uyghur intellectual writings in Xinjiang reflect a complex and eclectic field of ideas about society and progress to which interested readers have access. It would be difficult to argue that the corpus of contemporary Uyghur intellectual writing represents a coherent or innovative school of thought. Yet, these texts are interesting for their expression of ideas of what it means to write as an intellectual, particularly the sense of a duty to address social problems. From this *mélange* of ideas grasping for a philosophy, it is possible to discern two general concerns: firstly, there is a sense of crisis in Uyghur society, or at least among those who read and produce these texts, that comes both from a feeling of loss

and distance from the past and from a lack of direction for the nation. The writings discussed here reflect a desire to engage with the outside world on an equal footing and as part of a community of nations, but they also indicate that Uyghur authors feel inadequate or ill-equipped to do so individually or as members of a nation. Secondly, the proposed solutions rely on a modernist vision of progress that is primarily idealistic: public intellectuals diagnose Uyghurs' problems as psychological or creative. They express, therefore, that what Uyghurs need most is a higher level of education through the medium of the Uyghur language and 'international' languages, and that such a change would produce a greater number of heroic artistic figures capable of driving the nation into a new era of cultural florescence.

This is not to say that Uyghur public intellectuals are strictly idealist in their outlook; rather, their ideas have emerged in a period when Chinese official discourse provides a mixture of Marxism and nationalism that often blurs the distinction between materialist and idealist theories of progress. What has happened in the Uyghur case is that contemporary intellectuals have tried to create something new out of the components provided by a Chinese education. Despite the close alliance of this new discourse with the official dogmas of the recent past, Uyghur writers have come to treat it as something distinct – external to PRC dogma, if not strictly opposed to it. Materialist writers who affirm the official stance on ethnic issues are common, of course, but they do not seem to enter into the debates in the pages of the Uyghur periodicals and books examined here.

Although both the new Uyghur intellectual discourse and the official stance on progress are overtly concerned with education, the ideal forms and goals of that education are entirely different in the two cases: the PRC's plan for education, even as presented through the framework of 'harmony', is basically aimed at the creation of a single national community coextensive with the state through the erosion of linguistic boundaries and devaluation of creative production in favour of culture-neutral material progress. Uyghur public intellectuals, in contrast, envision a national community brought to its full cultural development through self-reflection, national and personal confidence, and literary production in the native tongue. These two stances reflect sets of radically different values, as well as interrelated but distinct understandings

of the process of history. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that they coexist on the page, but never interact meaningfully in text – each has its function, as it were, in a harmonious society. Perhaps this disjointedness is the authentic expression of harmony or its absence.

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