

DOĞU TÜRKİSTAN VAKFI

Millet Caddesi No.26/3b Aksaray, İstanbul

Telefon= 524 41 21

I. MİLLETLERARASI

DOĞU TÜRKİSTAN KÜLTÜR ve TARİH SEMİNERİ

(6-8 Nisan 1988)

Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, Taksim

İstanbul.

MY LAST VISIT TO EASTERN TURKISTAN A SLIDE PRESENTATION

BY

EDEN NABY

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN, MADISON

and

CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION:

Following the removal in 1979 of the Gang of Four from the political scene in Beijing, changes have been taking place in the People's Republic of China that make it easier for outsiders to conduct research in many parts of Han China. In the period since 1981 it has become possible to conduct research also in what are called minority regions such as Chinese Mongolia, the Hui or Tungan areas, and slowly in East Turkestan. Thus for the first time since 1949, East Turkestan is becoming accessible not only for those deemed sympathetic by Beijing, but for scholars in general. Field work, study and even archival work in the Turkic areas is shifting the basis of our knowledge of this area from ancient to modern history.

Travel to the area is further facilitated by the opening of the Khunjarab pass between Pakistan and East Turkestan for four categories of people:

1. citizens of China
2. citizens of Pakistan
3. persons that Beijing considers overseas Chinese
(those who themselves emigrated from Chinese areas or whose family did)
4. third country nationals

An additional route directly connecting the outside world with East Turkestan has been the air connection between Istanbul and Urumchi. Though a relatively expensive flight, this means allows easier official contact between East Turkestan and the part of the free world with which it shares a heritage. Whatever its intentions, Beijing has allowed access to East Turkestan by outsiders on an hitherto unprecedented scale. The travel into this area has increased from a handful of student backpackers and invited guests to large group-tours of Europeans, Americans and Japanese invariably led by Chinese or Chinese speaking tour guides. In a matter of less than ten years, an area that was sealed from the rest of the world has been opened from at least two directions, south and east, with prospects for its opening from the west as well in the future also possible.

Overall, the opening of East Turkestan to the outside world is a positive step for the Turkic and other indigenous people of area. Contact allows for the monitoring of events, world knowledge of the people and their culture, and the nourishment of Turkic culture through contact with those who share their heritage. But the

opening of the area also holds two kinds of dangers. Both relate to the increased presence of the Chinese and Chinese culture.

The first danger comes from the necessity for accommodation of a large number of foreigners so desired by Beijing for the hard currency that they bring into the economy. To service the booming tourist industry, large numbers of trained personnel from travel facilitators to waitresses to road maintenance crews are needed. Evidence points to the heavy involvement of the Chinese rather than local people in this activity. Therefore, the tourist industry shows evidence of becoming yet another of the modern industries introduced into East Turkestan, like petroleum exploration and refining, salt and other mineral resource exploitation industries that are manned almost exclusively by non-Turkic people. The need for specially trained personnel for the tourist industry therefore creates the opportunity for increased immigration into East Turkestan of Chinese personnel. The ever-increasing Chinese physical presence is the greatest threat to the maintenance of local language, culture and preservation. Thus the tourist industry lends to the increase of this threat.

The second problem is related to the first. Because of the high level of participation by Chinese elements in the tourist industry, many travellers have no opportunity to experience local culture. Travel to East Turkestan consists of stops at Buddhist sites, such as Bezaklik and Kizil, the lake resorts developed solely

along Chinese cultural patterns, and the Islamic monuments at Kashgar and Turpan. Even the latter where we might expect local culture to shine are so distorted in their presentation to visitors that they enforce Chinese insistence on the historical subservience of East Turkestan to China rather than introduce the visitor to the rich, independent heritage of the area. I illustrate this problem in the slide presentation. But it is important to remember that Chinese personnel and especially the Chinese language dominate travel in East Turkestan for most visitors. The limited participation by local people in this industry distorts the image of East Turkestan and leaves most visitors with a false picture of Turkestan as a living culture and instead encourages its appearance as an odd, but integral part of Chinese culture.

When you consider that most visitors spend no more than four to ten days in East Turkestan, it is easy to see that they cannot penetrate beyond the Chinese facade even if they realize that their tour guides present a distorted and one-sided image of the area.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF OUR VISITS

With these introductory remarks, let me begin a slide showing of two extended visits, the first in 1985 and the second in 1987. Both visits were funded by scholarly institutions for the purpose of preliminary research and contact with colleagues in the academic world. Thus we spent much time in locating Uighur and

Kazakh intellectuals with whom to establish contact as well as at branches of the Academy of Social Sciences, the museums, and educational institutions. This official schedule was heavy but we also had many opportunities for unofficial travel and meetings. On the second visit, because we spoke "Turki," attempts were made to monitor and control our contacts. Although we realize that the attempt may represent overzealous and outdated partisanship on the part of individuals, nevertheless, official visits can be jeopardized by such pitfalls.

As a result of our contacts, several Uighur and Kazakh students have come to the United States for graduate education and we expect to work with others in the future. These trips also have led to the beginning of serious collection of library materials in Uighur and Kazakh. We began a library at Harvard University and hope to do the same at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. On both trips, my husband and I travelled together and we supplemented each other's knowledge of "Turki," Persian and Arabic, all languages necessary in various contexts for understanding local culture.

SLIDES

Our trip in 1987 began in Beijing as it had in 1985 because of the official academic nature of the trips. It is significant that Beijing, like Moscow, insists that research and official visits by outside scholars originate in the state capital. From Beijing we

flew to Lanchow, the capital of Gansu province. By our deliberate choice, the rest of the trip was overland all the way to Islamabad, Pakistan over the Khunjarab Pass. (The only exceptions were our flight between Khulja and Urumchi.) We made this choice in order to see the countryside, make detours, and spend our time outside the usual tourist places. We are grateful to officials in Urumchi who facilitated our visits to non-tourist sites in the Ili Valley, especially outside Khulja, to Kucha, Bai and Aqsu and to Tashqurghan.

I shall concentrate on sites in East Turkestan and compare changes evident between 1985 and 1987. I shall divide my slides into three sections: Public life and culture, Religious practice, and Scenes from the everyday life of Uighurs and Kazakhs.

I. Public life and Culture

Public life and culture may be divided into official culture promoted by the state in the form of arts, education, public buildings, and public activities intended to promote state objectives. In the following slides I will concentrate on public activities that effect the local Turkic community. I will not show those public places and events that are intended purely for the Chinese: public performances (such as visiting Western performers), parks and pagodas frequented only by Chinese and foreign visitors, purely Chinese towns in East Turkestan, and other such evidences of

public culture. Instead I shall concentrate on places and activities that are specifically intended to maintain a real or artificial sense of Turkic culture.

A. Urumchi buildings and structures

1. The Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region Theater building combines the domed profile of a mosque or shrine within a purely secular building. To further the Uighur character of the building, stylized statues of dancers and musicians are added as are geometric designs on the sides of the building. Performances here are purely professional by Beijing trained youths who undergo the rigors of study at the Central Minorities Institute. Here the instruments, the folk dances are brought into conformity with Chinese and international styles. These are the performers and performances seen on public electronic media.

2. The Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region Museum architecture similarly is domed. The museum personnel however, are fiercely Uighur and view theirs as one of the few institutions that guards the heritage with integrity.

This museum is divided into two sections:

- a. ancient: rich in newly discovered materials from sites on the silk route

b. twentieth century exhibits devoted to the post
1949 history of East Turkestan

3. New construction in Urumchi includes many new buildings planned for the 35 year anniversary of the formation of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. Practically all of these buildings carry one or more domes. The official reason for this is to add minority character to the buildings by representing yurts but shrines and mosques also come to mind.

In addition to buildings, the streets are being widened in the style of Beijing. This requires the destruction of old traditional housing with yards and the construction of high-rise apartments. Many Uighurs prefer to move to the outskirts of town and build family houses with small gardens.

4. The Chinese presence in Urumchi is very heavy. Chinese are take many kinds of jobs, from the head of the Communist Party to street sweepers. Uighurs prefer other, more traditionally prestigious jobs such as entering the bureaucracy, the ranks of the intelligensia, the merchants, or farmers. The willingness of the Chinese to undertake low prestige jobs means that their numbers and the need for their services grows rapidly.

5. The official dual language policy in public life means the appearance of Uighur and Chinese on almost all public signs trash boxes, official invitations, and scooter races.

Encouragement of the one child policy for Uighurs and for Chinese is indicated by this poster. One child policies are unevenly enforced. Uighurs appear oblivious to it.

Friendship of China's minorities, a frequent theme in public discourse appears on this Urumchi poster. Personal observation indicated considerable tension between Uighurs and Chinese which broke out into fist fights among youths.

stages of Iranian and Turkic Buddhism. The site is

6. In the traditional decorative arts the trend is toward greater use of architectural decorations from Middle Eastern patterns. This trend may be seen here on public buildings (a high school), a hotel in Turpan, new bazaars and private buildings (esp. Turpan and Kashqar). This trend is in contrast to old 1950s Soviet style architecture

7. Lenin and Mao statues are few, as is statuary in general. This bust of Lenin stands at the entrance of the hotel compound in Khulja. This compound housed the old Soviet consulate. The 20 ft. Mao statue in Kashgar has been moved back from the street and is known locally as the pidgeon roost.

8. The pre-Islamic sites pose a problem because pre-Islamic Turkestan is very important to the heritage of the area but the subject is controversial due to Chinese claims of political and cultural control in the area from ancient times. The two most important sites are:

Bezaklik: a Manichaean (Uighur kingdom) and later Buddhist site near Turpan which is exclusively excavated and studied by Chinese from Beijing.

Kizil: a cave site near Kucha showing the many stages of Iranian and Turkic Buddhism. The site is very important in demonstrating the syncretism along the northern silk road.

Both sites, and other pre-Islamic sites appear to attract Chinese and foreigners rather than local people.

9. The natural beauty of area around Urumchi is being organized into park and tourist facilities. This land, traditionally Kazakh grazing area is undergoing considerable environmental damage due to Chinese and foreign trash.

The delicate pine forest and rare high altitude undergrowth are being ruined through the sheer stamping around of vacationers. Kazakh children collect useable trash for recycling.

The government uses area for organized vacations for Chinese working in factories around Urumchi.

So far I have shown slides of official government-sponsored public culture that represents the kinds of activities that have a general form, but with the exception of the contents of the museum, carry no strong sense of the heritage of East Turkestan in ways that would appeal to the general public of Turkic background.

Now I will show some places and activities that convey very strong collective emotions for local people.

10. The monument at the tomb of Mahmud al-Kashgari

A young Uighur scholar, Qahar Barat, has transmitted to a Western audience for the first time, the information about the discovery of the burial site of Mahmud al-Kashqari, the author of the 11th c. DIVAN-E LUGHAT-E TURK, a milestone in the cultural heritage of all Turkic people. Mahmud al-Kashqari conducted his major work in Baghdad under patronage of the Abbasid Caliphate. But he was born in Opal, a fertile farming community outside Kashqar. And he apparently lies

buried there. The discovery of his tomb demonstrates the importance of oral history and the diligence of Uighur scholars.

Following the discovery, state money was used to erect an elegant and graceful shrine/museum at the site. This place, previously used for local pilgrimage in the Kashgar area, now is a site of public culture for Uighurs from many parts of the world.

It is a site to be included on the itinerary of students of Turkestan and all those who revere this early Turkic man of letters.

(A shrine to Yusup Khas Hajip is now being planned in Kashqar)

11. The memorial to Ahmadjan Kasim and the other members of the East Turkestan Republic who died in the fateful plane crash in 1949 brings emotions of another nature. The memorial is located in the Khulja city park and it is composed of the tombs, the trilingual inscription tower and a photo museum.

Nowhere is the name of the Republic that was proclaimed in 1945 ever mentioned. The name is whispered by those who know it and the reason for the crash is similarly carried from person to person orally rather than in the pages of any book published in China today. Among the Kazakhs there have been some protests at the burial of Muslims in a non-Muslim memorial.

12. The next memorial important to local culture is that built in 1986 for Abidu khaliq "Uighur" (1901-1933) outside Turpan. Uighur was murdered by the agents of Sheng Shi Tsai, the Chinese warlord of East Turkestan during the late Republican period. Uighur was eliminated because he was a progressive, nationalist Uighur and a very effective poet. Recently, his work was collected, mainly from oral sources, and published. After the release from prison of major Uighur writers, during the 1970s, Uighur also has been slowly rehabilitated through the efforts of young Uighur intellectuals. His tomb will be moved to a cultural complex near the great Turpan mosque.

13. Other expressions of local public culture, rather than officially proclaimed public culture are amateur dancers and musicians a wonderful group of whom performs at the Turpan Hotel. This hotel was built

under local inspiration and continues to cater to many kinds of guests from back-packers to tour groups. The setting is very traditionally East Turkestani with the performers serving at the hotel in various capacities during the day. Turpan has become a desirable tourist spot. As a result, the government has built a new hotel, on the western international model, to which higher paying tour groups are steered rather than the Turpan Hotel. This change from 1985 means that many foreigners never get to see the real Uighur town but rather an internationalized version of it at a facility that offers airconditioning, Chinese rather than Uighur meals, the conventional Chinese products at the hotel store, and virtually no Uighur personnel.

I have not shown examples of purely Chinese public culture in East Turkestan. But here is one monument that can serve as an example of the kinds of Chinese monuments as well as example of the nature of the Chinese presence.

14. At Hueyuan in the Ili Valley is this drum and bell tower built to commemorate the Chinese victory over the Jungars in the 18th century. The tower commands a view of the entire plain and around it used to be a Chinese garrison. Today the tower sits in the middle of an Uighur town, a symbol of the military might of China.

II. Religious Practice

In discussing religious practice I will concentrate on the activities in and around mosques. The number of mosques throughout China have grown but the growth in East Turkestan is remarkable. There are some mosques however, that have fallen into disrepair and the chances of their restoration are slim.

15. The Uzbek mosques, in Khulja and in Urumchi suffer from lack of support. In fact the mosque in Khulja has been converted into a school. The reason for this loss of Uzbek mosques is the reduced Uzbek community. This community appears to have taken advantage of offers from Australia for resettlement and also to return to West Turkestan following the break in Sino-Soviet relations in 1960. Thus while there continue to be active Uzbek intellectuals in the Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences, the population base of the community has dwindled to the point where a separate religious life appears to be on the wane.

16. Mosques in Khulja differ because of the Chinese pagoda style of architecture, even of the local Uighur mosque. The main Iman of the mosque was away on haj during our visit. But the Juma'a service the day of our visit attracted such a large group of worshippers that carpets were laid outside for prayers. An estimated 2000 men worshipped here. As this poem at Rawaq masjid demonstrates, not all Uighur writing is uniformly in the modified Arabic alphabet.

Rawaq masjid 'ala maqam 'alida fakhir

Alahi banisigha 'izzat u rahmatini qil dhahir.

Ustah Ahmad birla Mahmud Gul karini qildi tamom,

Allahning lutfi ila ulmish muyassir wa 'l salam.

Rawaq (Pure) mosque, proud in its high position,
May the Almighty grant to the builder honor and
mercy.

Master Ahmad and Mahmud Gul completed the work,

With God's grace may there be success and Peace.

17. Also in the Chinese pagoda style, or in a combination of this style and Uighur style are a large number of Hue/Tungan mosques in major towns such as Khulja and Urumchi. Particularly zealous in the study of Arabic and

Koranic texts are Tungans from Chinghai, the province just east of East Turkestan.

18. Impressive new mosques are being built everywhere in East Turkestan. From Turpan to villages along the roadside new construction is apparent. The mosque at Opal, Mahmud al-Kashqari's home town, rises impressively in baked brick and tile inscription (1986). In Bai, a prosperous town nestled in the southern foothills of the Tegr'i Tagh, a new mosque complex with exquisite brickwork and earth-tone tiles has an aiwan that remains true to the quality of the craft, colors and traditions of Turkestan.

19. Urumchi mosques too are quickly showing the result of increased freedom and funds to reconstruct Muslim public culture. The large Cathedral (Jama'a) mosque we saw in 1985 now has competition from a new mosque. In 1985 we visited the Namin mosque, set in a busy square across from the theater in a part of town with a heavy Uighur population. The mosque entrance carried a plaque (in Persian) dating it to 1929.

In 1987, we were shocked to see the mosque gone. An old gentleman assured us not to worry. Rising on the same site, but set back from the street a magnificent new mosque, several times the size of the previous one gleamed with

tiles under scaffolding. Completely contemporary in style, a tour of the new mosque and meeting with neighborhood workers and supporters revealed areas for teaching, abolitions, gender separated worship and modern plumbing and electrification. Construction had temporarily halted while more funds were secured. But the plans called for a lavish, if non-traditional building that would tower above the theater by many feet. The third storey is ideal for photography of that part of town!

The plaque from the old Namin mosque is preserved to set into the new structure.

20. Best known of all the religious buildings in East Turkestan are the Hiyatgar Jamasi in Kashqar and the Apakh Khoja shrine complex outside the town. Composed of the Apakh Khoja mausoleum, a graceful aiwan, a mosque and several lesser domed crypts, the complex is a site of religious pilgrimage for many Turkic people of the area. Currently it is also overrun with tourists and their Chinese guides. Little of the value of the place is conveyed to the tourists who are simply told that this is where the feudal families were buried in splendour. The religious solemnity of the site, its importance to Uighur culture receive no attention.

This is the most striking example of the stifling of Uighur culture in order to gain hard currency.

Exemplified in this rush for dollars is the haphazard way in which the site has been restored. Tiles have been glued back with no regard to the original design and meaning. The long Persian inscription of the aiwan is unreadable due to the misplacement of the tiles. There are no guidebooks for the site.

There is a clear difference between the importance of this site for Uighurs and for the state. Many Uighurs visit the site as a holy place, especially during the Eids. Many tourists are brought to it because the architecture is distinguishedly Muslim Middle Eastern. It does not appear to attract Chinese tourists.

21. The interior of mosques also provides a glimpse into Turkestani material conditions. While richly carpeted, mosque decorations are painted rather than tiled. The simplicity and colorfulness of the mosques contrast with interiors elsewhere in the parts of the Middle East where Islam is not restricted. These interiors too may undergo change as money and interest increases in the this part of the world.

22. The site of young children studying the Koran or Arabic may be met with in many Muslim communities in China. Among the Tungan education in Arabic is closely tied to both religion and to preservation of ethnic distinction. Uighur children appear to attend Koranic schools on Saturdays. But this may be changing. In Tungan areas, we observed large classes held in mosque schools for boys and girls at many levels.

23. Also reflecting the increased freedom of religious expression is the rebuilding of tombs, crypts and graveyards in general. From Turpan to Kashqar, families that had not been prevented from honoring their deceased, are doing so now with simple and elaborate structures.

24. Critical in all the religious activity is leadership. From Muhammad Saleh, the translator of the Koran into Uighur, and new head of the Institute for Islamic Studies to the village akhund, a new pride and openness is apparent. This gentleman, after offering us the hospitality of his village home, posed for a picture with my husband... but only after he agreed to his wife's insistence that he put on his turban and coat.

III. Scenes from the everyday life of Uighurs and Kazakhs

25. The land of East Turkestan is varied and each part has its own natural beauty. Especially prized are the foothill regions where Kazakhs graze their flocks. The area around Sairam Kul offers spectacular vistas of wildflowers, rocky mountains and a splendid blue lake.

26. South of the Tengri Tagh, you can always tell when you approach a settlement by the columns of tall poplar trees planted on either side of the road. Poplars are being used to reclaim ever larger areas for agriculture by preventing soil erosion. They also help to keep sand drifts off the road.

27. Chinese government checkpoints manned by Chinese militia members in 1985 to inspect all traffic (especially freight) appeared to have been removed on the internal roadways in 1987.

28. Overnight stops on the road from Turpan to Kashgar and on to Tashgurghan were run by Chinese rather than Uighurs at every stop except in Kucha where some Uighurs were working in the small hotel. Kucha, however, is not on the tourist route. Travellers usually stop at petrol stations to rest and take advantage of running water to wash off the dust.

29. Street sites vary greatly between towns and villages. Urumchi looks increasingly like an international city. Bus traffic, official vehicles, private cars and trucks and even taxis clog its streets. Vendors line the squares. Even street performances may be seen such as this performing monkey.

30. Food markets of Muslims and non-Muslims are separate. But Chinese will buy from anyone who will sell to them as may be seen in this vending scene in Khulja. Certain Uighur specialities such as raising melons has also been adopted by Chinese rural settlers who compete for sales.

31. Traditional breads continue to be baked by men and boys and sold in large flat cloth covered woven trays carried on the head. Brush from the desert, and even coal serve as fuel.

32. Generally though, Chinese do not frequent the dry goods bazaars that function in all the towns except Urumchi where the dry goods trade is done inside stores that line streets. The reintroduction of traditional bazaars is new under the present regime. While many bazaars are makeshift, in Turpan and Kashgar, permanent brick structures with roofs, quarter (mahalleh) mosques are being erected. Vendors also operate

from donkey carts, and used and out of print Uighur books and journals are sold on the sidewalk.

33. The post offices are very busy places as more Uighurs have access to outside relatives and friends. But the alphabet barrier to Soviet areas, and even Turkey create the need for scribes who line the areas around post offices. Here my husband was enlisted into their ranks and spent about two hours addressing envelopes. Letters apparently are less of a problem than the envelopes which must meet state postal requirements.

34. A revival of traditional crafts may be seen not only in the fine quality carpets manufactured at government plants (and sold at double the prices of 1985), but also in traditional crafts that are valued in traditional Uighur homes. These include decorated chests, poplar wood cradles and infant equipment, dupa (hats) and traditional brown headcoverings for women. Whereas we saw these only in Kashqar in 1985, now they may be seen in Uighur sections of Urumchi as well. The new agricultural wealth of Uighurs permits city visits to relatives and the veiling in Urumchi is a reflection of these country cousin visits.

36. In this last series of slides, I want to show some portraits of Kazakhs, Tajiks, and Uighurs. Three generations of Kazakhs pose here outside their yurt. A school teacher and his friends pose here with the Kazakh vice-president of the Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences, Mirza Jakub Khan, a well-known historical novelist.

Our bus companions for four days were all Uighurs who shared stories, cigarettes, tea and melons with each other and us. This family got off outside Aksu. The children were charming. Here is a mother and child who patiently posed for me outside of the Uighur traditional medicine hospital in Kashqar.

Uighur intellectuals, some shown here in Turpan, work in radio and television, on journals and in publishing houses. Their position between Chinese authorities and the general public places a burden on their shoulders which is heavier because they have so few outside contacts.

Finally, on the way out of East Turkestan over the Pamirs on the Karakorum highway, the last minority you meet are the so-called Tajiks. Isma'ili Iranian language speakers, here they are represented by three women: Two Sarikolis and a Wakhi in the center.

Thank you for your time. I hope that by reviewing with you through slides some aspects of my travels, I will have encouraged many of you to make the same journey, and especially to let the people of East Turkestan know that you care about their culture and their future.