

in order to consolidate Tibet's autonomy. In 1958, India reiterated its position not to support Tibet either militarily or politically. It, nevertheless, welcomed the Dalai Lama in 1959.

Volume Four of *A History of Modern Tibet, In the Eye of the Storm, 1957–1959*, is a sum of scholarship and historical events, which concentrates, in 502 pages, on three years that were decisive for the future of the Tibetan identity and nationhood. Beyond the facts, it shows the complexity of relations within the Tibetan administration, between the latter and the Chinese administration in Lhasa, and within the Chinese intelligentsia in Tibet itself. From Beijing, Mao remained faithful to his political line, which, according to the author, was to pursue a gradualist and gentle policy in order to bring Central Tibet and its government to spontaneously adhere to the policy of the so-called motherland. By collecting the disparate memories of witnesses and actors of the events of the years 1957–1959 at key moments in their lives (the 1990s and early 2000s)—that is to say, when everyone took a step back, led their own lives, and became aware of the stakes inherent in transmission—Melvyn Goldstein became an “entrepreneur of memory.” He converted the disparate memories from each member of their common past into more homogeneous memories and allowed them to acquire a historical visibility unequalled until today.

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Negotiating Inseparability in China: The Xinjiang Class and the Dynamics of Uyghur Identity. By Timothy Grose. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2019. Pp. xii + 146. \$45.00.

The work under review, *Negotiating Inseparability in China: The Xinjiang Class and the Dynamics of the Uyghur Identity*, by Timothy Grose, examines recent educational policies toward Uyghurs, a Turkic-speaking Muslim ethnic group with ties to Central Asia living in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of northwestern China. It focuses on the Xinjiang Class, a programme of boarding schools that supports four-year courses in senior high schools in developed cities in eastern and central China (*neidi* 內地 [inland China]), where Han Chinese constitute the majority. In these boarding schools, students from Xinjiang, mainly Uyghurs, are taught in Chinese and are prepared for the final school examination, with the aim that they will then become part of the educated elite who will develop Xinjiang. The project has educational and political purposes: to offer minority students better standards of education, improve

their level of Chinese, and foster their attachment to the country and Chinese culture. As the author demonstrates, this project gives different and sometimes unexpected results in terms of opportunities for the graduates and their sense of belonging to the state and to their native, local community.

The study is rooted in the fields of Uyghur studies, China studies, ethnography, ethnic policies, and education. Its aim is to document this massive programme and its ideological, political, and educational implications, and the response of the young Uyghur generations in terms of adaptation and resistance. Moreover, it develops a reflection on the power of collective identities in minority contexts and the possibility of constructing a system where both stability and self-determination (in terms of economy, culture, and language) are possible.

The book is based on an empirical study and is the result of thirty months of field research, conducted between 2006 and 2017. The research is based on the qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted in Chinese and/or Uyghur. The study also employs government sources, such as documents published by the Ministry of Education and articles from Chinese newspapers, such as the *People's Daily*, and from the news website Tianshan Net. Radio Free Asia is also employed as a source of information about the experiences of Xinjiang Class graduates or on the general situation in Xinjiang.

The theoretical background consists of works on Uyghur studies and ethnic groups in China (to cite some: Barry Sautman, Gerard Postiglione, Chen Yangbin 陳陽斌, James Millward, Joanne Smith Finley, Gardner Bovingdon, and Emily T. Yeh 葉蓓), and on cultural anthropology and social theory (such as Fredrik Barth, Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, Eric Hobsbawn, and Benedict Anderson).

The book is structured into an introduction, four main chapters, and a conclusion.

The introduction sets out the social and political context of the Xinjiang Class and discusses the theoretical background of the study. After a brief description of the context of the escalation of violence and ethnic conflict in Xinjiang since 2009, the author discusses the notion of “ethnic minority,” described as a shifting category sensitive to the political interests of the community involved, as well as the nature of state-building processes: to what extent can they guarantee respect for diversity and represent non-dominant elites?

The author chooses to use two different terms to indicate ways to be “Uyghur” in the identity spectrum: *weiwu'er zu* 維吾爾族, the Chinese term for Uyghur, is employed to make reference to the Uyghur ethnicity as defined by the state, and *uyghur* to identify a multilayered identity defined by Uyghur individuals.

Important mention is made of other cases of schooling as part of nation-building in British India, the USA, the Soviet Union, Canada, and Australia, indicating that assimilation through education is a phenomenon that is found across historical periods, geographical areas, and different kinds of political regimes.

Next, the author examines the notion of ethnic minority in the Chinese system: a state-directed and state-controlled way to organize diversity which paradoxically sometimes leads to the strengthening of ethnic identities. In the context of assimilation processes conducted by the Chinese government, a series of Uyghur identity markers related to the group's Central Asian and Islamic ties are currently banned or under severe restrictions: Islamic religious practices, traditional architecture, styles of dress and appearance (e.g., bans on the veil and long beards), and naming practices.

The final part of the introduction is dedicated to the methodology, illustrating the fieldwork conducted, and the profiles of the individuals interviewed. As often happens to scholars working on Xinjiang and Uyghurs, the author had to change his research methods and objectives. Observing Xinjiang Class lessons was not possible for him as a foreign researcher, and local scholars discouraged him from investigating such a sensitive topic. This prohibition led the author to study the Xinjiang Class from outside and from the narratives of its graduates, and, therefore, to get a more genuine and non-propagandistic point of view on the programme.

Chapter 1 describes the organization and objectives of the Xinjiang Class, drawing on documents from China's Ministry of Education and the graduates' recollections of their time at the schools. The chapter gives an account of the ideological bases (*hunhe* 混合 [intermingling] and *ronghe* 融合 [amalgamation] through cultural exchange and education), on the procedures for enrolment, and on the educational bases: the Chinese-language-based education and the courses taught (socialist thought, mathematics, classical Chinese, etc.). The programme is supported by a complex system of regulations to select the best candidates, based on political, religious, and medical screening. The data on tuition show that the option of studying through the Xinjiang Class programme is a tempting one for poverty-stricken families, because in this way they have access to better education standards for their sons and daughters, while paying low tuition fees.

Part of the chapter is dedicated to school regulations and the way the students respond to them. The organization of the boarding schools standardizes the lives of the students: precise dress codes, a tight schedule for study, eating, leisure activities, and celebrations. The students' cultural events have to follow the state discourse on folklore: ethnic costumes are allowed only for group photos and performances; Uyghur celebrations such as Ramadan and Eid al-Adha (*Qurban Eid*) have to respect the language policy and the political aims of the Xinjiang Class (i.e., speaking Chinese and stressing patriotism).

The narratives provide insights into the students' responses. They highlight the presence of different reactions to assimilation practices, which show how minorities are not a single homogeneous block with standardized reactions. The account shows a multifaceted reality: students reacting in a negative or positive way toward their Sinicized Uyghur names; amicable, conflicting, or competitive relationships with Han

schoolmates; and the acceptance or refusal to speak Chinese in specified situations. Moreover, the author demonstrates that being separated from the cultural, linguistic, and religious context of their hometowns develops in these students a sense of collective identity that they were not aware of before.

The construction of a Uyghur identity discovered and developed during the period spent at boarding school is the focus of the second chapter. The segregation on campus and the contact with students from other countries and other Muslim people from Central Asia increase the possibility of developing Uyghur and transnational identities.

Ethnic markers, such as language, interethnic marriage, religion, hygiene practices, and dress codes, are usually emphasized by the students in order to construct boundaries with the Han and to accentuate transnational connections. Some of these elements, such as marriage choices, are also highly sensitive to social and parental pressure. The author shows again an extreme attention to documenting how the students play with these ethnic markers, which are expressed differently according to individual spiritual and material objectives: ethnic markers are not always directed against a “Chinese identity.”

A section of this chapter consists of some narratives on the role of the Uyghur language, in particular, in relation to the *minkaohan* 民考漢 / *minkaomin* 民考民 divide (students attending school and passing the final school examination in Chinese or in a minority language respectively). The author argues that, compared to other studies which see *minkaohan* as more prone to switching to Chinese language and to identify with Han-centred culture, his findings show that Xinjiang Class students are active supporters of the development and survival of the Uyghur language. Unexpectedly, some of them improved their mastery of their heritage language during their stay in *neidi*. At the same time, Chinese is learnt and employed as a tool of social mobility, which allows them to be heard outside their own communities and opens up more options for their future lives.

Chapter 3 examines the policies relating to returning to Xinjiang. The programme aims to bring the graduates back home, ideally to have them work in education, public offices, or commercial enterprises. However, students’ aspirations are remarkably distant from those of the policymakers.

On one hand, the use of Chinese sources gives insights into the ideological bases, e.g., increasing the *suzhi* 素質 (quality) of the students, immersing them in the *Zhongyuan wenhua* 中原文化 (culture of the Central Plains), and the wish to build the new elite of Xinjiang. On the other hand, the narratives of the students indicate their reluctance to return to Xinjiang, conflicting with an extremely intricate bureaucracy that prevents them from living, studying, and working in the cities where they have studied. This is a missed opportunity for them to integrate in Chinese society and, therefore, a failure of the Xinjiang Class programme.

The negative aspects of the current situation in Xinjiang emerge from the students' memories of life there, such as the lack of opportunities, discrimination, lower salaries, and cultural and religious oppression. Paradoxically, the *neidi* becomes a tempting and better place to live.

Making use of official sources and personal experiences, the author describes in detail the graduates' awareness of social and economic issues in Xinjiang, and their agency in resisting serving as the elite of a system of inequalities.

The last chapter provides an account of the students who come back to their hometowns and, sometimes having no choice, serve the political and ideological project of the Xinjiang Class aiming at developing Xinjiang. In this chapter, the author outlines and discusses the reasons that push Xinjiang Class graduates to go back home: the inability to go abroad, parental pressure, economic security, the prospect of marriage and a normal life, having no significant ambitions, and safe and easier than life in *neidi*.

The engaging narratives present the different processes of adaptation and re-establishment of a sense of belonging to the place of origin, finding compromises between habits acquired in *neidi*, local cultural and religious demands, and the morality codes of the Uyghur community. The accounts also highlight the complex and difficult choices and negotiations which lead the Xinjiang Class graduates to come back home: this means sometimes having better halal choices compared to *neidi*, but it also implies more restrictions on religious practices. Religion and the Uyghur language are often elements of reintegration in Xinjiang Uyghur society.

A section is dedicated to women, on the tension between career and family, and the (re)adaptation to cultural and gender norms.

In the conclusion, the author reflects on the future of this generation, connecting the educational policies with the broader context of oppression by the Chen Quanguo 陳全國 administration in Xinjiang, the increasing discontent, and the dynamics of Islamization. The Xinjiang Class shapes up to be an inadequate programme. It fails in the construction of a new generation of *weiwu'er zu*, as the graduates do not follow the ideas of nationalism and Han-centred social development instilled at the schools. Nor does the system form a generation of successful minority elites, as many of them experience discrimination or have difficulties in finding suitable jobs in either Xinjiang or *neidi*.

This study of the Xinjiang Class supports the evidence from a long list of boarding school experiences across the world where the students are taken away from their social and cultural systems and experience assimilatory practices that are supposed to benefit them but do not solve discrimination. However, as emerges through the book, the graduates accommodate to the rules of the Xinjiang Class, showing that they are able to take advantage of this programme for their future lives, developing their own forms of belonging and ethnic consciousness, playing with

elements such as language and religion, and establishing transnational connections. Finally, it is the graduates who decide who they want to be: it is their choice to what extent they are or feel modern, successful, Uyghur, Chinese, or Muslim.

The book is well written and well documented. Some minor weaknesses are found in some statements that could be more precise and contextualized. Regarding the tightening of religious and cultural expressions for Muslims (p. 9), the author should have mentioned that different policies are implemented across different Muslim communities, and freedom of religion and restrictions vary enormously throughout Hui communities and, in general, in Muslim communities across China.

Regarding women and their struggle to reintegrate in Xinjiang, the author finds “an apparent incompatibility between the (Han) cultural norms in which Xinjiang Class students are immersed while studying in *neidi* and those prevalent in Uyghur communities” (p. 105).

Uyghurs certainly have highly codified norms of hospitality and politeness. However, the feeling of maladaptation to the family context with its rules for meals, rhythms, and hospitality norms is probably also due to the fact that these students are almost locked in at schools and campuses, in an artificial environment with its own rules and separate dormitories that also ignores local (Han) cultural norms. Moreover, being a displaced student far from home is cross-culturally an experience that distances the young generations from the cultural norms of the family and the community of origin.

Overall, the book is an important and much-needed contribution to the understanding of educational policies in China and in Uyghur society. The discussion is detailed, attentive, well documented, and free of the East–West dichotomy. The book is polyphonic, and the narratives give the reader a feeling of hearing authentic voices and experiences. This is particularly valuable in these times, when Uyghur studies are changing because of the severe humanitarian and political issues in the region and the resulting research limitations for scholars.

This work is a must-read for scholars working on Uyghur studies, China studies, minority studies, and education. It is also suitable for experts and professionals, for example, in policymaking and NGOs, as well as those interested in Uyghurs and Xinjiang.

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