REVIEW ESSAY

THE UYGHURS FROM MODULAR COMMUNITY TO PARTISAN NATION

The Sacred Routes of Uyghur History. By RIAN THUM. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014. 336 pp. $39.95, £31.95, €36.00 (cloth, e-book).

Struggle by the Pen: The Uyghur Discourse of Nation and National Interest, c. 1900–1949. By ONDŘEJ KLIMEŠ. Leiden: Brill, 2015. xiv + 280 pp. $149.00, €115.00 (cloth, e-book).

Uyghur Nation: Reform and Revolution on the Russia-China Frontier. By DAVID BROPHY. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016. 364 pp. $39.95, £33.95 (cloth), $39.95, £19.47 (e-book).

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The study of ethnicity has long been shaped by a conflict between two broad positions, one of which may be called the circumstantialist or instrumentalist position, and the other the primordialist or affectivist position. The primordialists view ethnic sentiments as something existing prior to and not dependent on goal-oriented behavior and hence not subject to calculation.[1] The circumstantialists, however, view ethnicity as a product of particular circumstances in which contingent groups, usually at the behest of elites within those groups, broaden and reconceptualize their particular group interests as being derived from a common primordial substance, thus generating ethnicity.[2] These circumstantialist or instrumentalist arguments as a rule assume that the particular circumstances where such group redefinitions and extensions prove useful are either unique to, or at least much more common in, the modern age. Thus the circumstantialist approach usually implies a modernist one.

A similar opposition may be found in nationalism studies, between those who emphasize the perennial and kin-like features of the national bond[3] and those who view nations and nationalism as a purely modern phenomenon, related to the peculiar features of modern social organization, whether specified as social mobility, universal education, or secularism.[4] Again the modernists stress the crucial role of elites in parlaying their instrumental concerns into seemingly primordial

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[1]E. Shils, "Primordial, Personal, Sacred and Civil Ties: Some Particular Observations on the Relationships of Sociological Research and Theory," *British Journal of Sociology* 8.2 (1957), 130–45; Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (San Francisco: Basic Books, 1973), 255–310; Steven Grosby, "The Verdict of History: The Inexpungeable Tie of Primordiality—A Response to Eller and Coughlan," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 17.2 (1994), 164–71.

[2]See e.g. Jack Eller and Reed Coughlan, "The Poverty of Primordialism: The Demystification of Ethnic Attachments," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 16.2 (1993), 183–201.

[3]John A. Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers 1986); Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

[4]Karl W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1966); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and*

affective ties. And as modernists, they also generally view nationalism as an ideology that originated in a particular place.[5] It then diffused from that political cradle around the world in a process that combined mass structural change and elite intellectual fashion.

As told by a previous generation of scholars and reference works,[6] the story of Uyghur ethnicity and nationalism in modern-day Xinjiang is a perfect illustration of the circumstantialist, instrumentalist, modernist, and diffusionist case. As they present the story, the idea of a single Uyghur ethnic group or nation was a purely twentieth-century creation, which originated in certain circumstances in which elites found the concept of nations and nationalism that were diffusing into Central Asia from Russia useful for their instrumental purposes. Uyghur nationalists who imagine that they are speaking in the name of a primordial nation, one which has always been bound by affective ties based on ties of kinship reaching far into the distant past, are therefore badly deluded. In this, however, they are not alone. The Chinese nationalism against which Uyghur nationalists struggle, with its view of China having a two-thousand-year history of unity in roughly its present borders, depends on an equally untenable fabricated history. "As Renan said, 'Getting its history wrong is part of being a nation.'"[7]

UYGHUR HISTORY: THE RECEIVED ACCOUNT

To understand the importance of the three books under review, it is important to understand the "received account" against which they are arguing. This received account of Uyghur history goes as follows. Traditionally, the people living in Xinjiang's Tarim Basin, today called Uyghurs, had no common name or sense of identity. When the Russian traveller N.M. Przhevalskiy visited the Tarim Basin, he found the inhabitants identified themselves only by their oasis, e.g. as Qäshqärlik ("Kashgar people") or Khotänlik ("Khotan people"). When asked for a broader, more inclusive identity, they would say only *Musulman* or "Muslim." This same lack of any group identity between the oasis and the worldwide Muslim community was also found among the farmers and city-dwellers of western Central Asia as well.[8] The term Uyghur was found only in obscure historical tomes and even then applied only to Turpan (Turfan) and Qumul (Hami) in eastern Xinjiang. When the Tarim Basin people referred to their language, they called it Turki, and to their region as a whole, they called it Altishahr ("The Six Cities") or Yettishahr ("The Seven Cities") after the number of oases.[9]

Into this world where ethnicity or nationalism played no role came the diffusion of a Russian-tinged modernity to Central Asia through the *jadid* or modern education movement in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[10] After the Russian Revolution and Civil War

Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality, 2nd Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[5]Usually revolutionary France but occasionally elsewhere as in Latin America; see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd Edition (London: Verso, 1991).

[6]E.g. Dru C. Gladney, "The Ethnogenesis of the Uyghur," *Central Asian Survey* 3.4 (1990), 1–14; Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire: A Guide*. (Bloomington: Indiana University 1986), 115–20.

[7]Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780,* 12.

[8]Gladney, "Ethnogenesis of the Uyghur," 2; Thum, *Sacred Routes*, 149; Klimeš, *Struggle by the Pen*, 53.

[9]Typical counts of oases actually run from six up to eight, but "Eight Cities" seems attested only in Chinese administrative usage. Altishahr and Yettishahr are also spelled as *Alte Sheher* and *Yette Sheher* respectively. See Thum, *Sacred Routes*, 3, 5–6; Klimeš, *Struggle by the Pen*, 28, 32, 49, 89.

[10]Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

(1917–20), the Soviet regime directly imposed new ideas of revolutionary popular agency and national identity. In this rapidly changing situation, political actors, both Russian and Central Asian, had to mobilize constituencies for which they could serve as appropriate representatives. This meant speaking in the name of the broad masses of various linguistically-defined nations. According to the received account, Russian political elites played the lead role in insisting that this new "nation" not be Turkestan's Turkic speakers in general, so in short order new, more manageable, Uzbek, Kazakh, Turkmen, and other nations were defined.[11] A significant population of migrants from Xinjiang were also present in Central Asia and their activist elites, hoping to have a constituency to speak for as well, proposed reviving the ancient medieval name of "Uyghur." The modernist interpretation culminates with a congress in Tashkent, where on June 3, 1921, nationalist elites succeeded in getting "Uyghur" adopted by the Soviet authorities as the official new term for all the oasis people of Xinjiang.

Subsequently, when the Xinjiang warlord Sheng Shicai (in power from 1933 to 1944) needed Soviet support, he adopted the same Soviet policy of nationality classification, which conveniently divided the region's Turkic-speaking Muslims into diverse groups, such as Uyghurs, Taranchis, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and so on. This same policy was then followed by the People's Republic of China, which again imposed a Uyghur identity on the oasis peoples.[12] Yet even today, it is argued, "the modern definition of the Uyghur people as encompassing all the oasis Turks of Xinjiang hides… strong local oasis identities and the different strategies that each oasis employs."[13] Uyghur nationalism still remains primarily a project of intellectuals, while merchants and peasants have different identities as either Muslims or citizens of China.[14]

Thus the received account. The three books under review, Rian Thum's *Sacred Routes of Uyghur History*, Ondřej Klimeš's *Struggle by the Pen*, and David Brophy's *Uyghur Nation* all challenge this narrative, in one way or another. This challenge is both theoretical and factual: Thum argues that the oasis people of Xinjiang did have vigorous forms of collective identity not limited to oasis or religion. Likewise, Klimeš shows that diversity of political interests and even names among the Tarim Basin peoples did not necessarily mean an absence of a shared identity. Brophy contends that what the June 1921 congress was actually doing in applying the name Uyghur has been both misunderstood factually and misconceived theoretically. The cumulative result of these three superb volumes is to make Xinjiang's Tarim Basin and Ili Valley one of the most fruitful sites not just for understanding identity in early modern Qing and Islamic worlds, but also for rethinking the role of nations and ethnicity in the modern world generally.

All three of these books have made a substantial effort to be accessible to those unfamiliar with Uyghur history. Unfortunately there are enough inconsistencies between the traditional orthography of the early modern period and the contemporary Uyghur orthography, compounded by differences in transcription conventions for the latter, to cause confusion for the unwary beginner. Thus names may be written in the traditional fashion, where the Arabo-Persian etymology is respected,

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[11]Recent research such as Adrienne Lynn Edgar's *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2004) has challenged this idea of current national identities emerging from a top-down Soviet policy of "divide and rule," showing that in fact the idea of a unified "Turkic" or "Turkestani" nation was the preoccupation primarily of Tatar and Uzbek nationalists who expected to dominate such an identity. Turkmen, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz were always strongly opposed.

[12]The Taranchis, however, were combined with the Uyghurs in the PRC. Although the Sheng regime divided the Taranchis of the Ili Valley from the Uyghurs of the Tarim Basin, the Soviet census of 1937 and Uyghur "Enlightenment Associations" that organized coopted intellectuals under Sheng's regime give some precedent for such a combination; see Brophy, *Uyghur Nation*, 258–60.

[13]Justin Jon Rudelson, *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism along China's Silk Road* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 39.

[14]Rudelson, *Oasis Identities*, 168.

or in the current phonetic orthography. And in transcribing the latter, the same letter which Brophy transcribes as *ä* appears as *e* in Klimeš and *ǎ* in Thum. Thus Klimeš's Seypidin Ezizi, a PRC-era Uyghur politician, appears in Sǎypidin Ǎzizi in Thum, and in a more traditional guise as Sayfuddin Azizi in Brophy. Equally troublesome are discrepancies in the indexing. The educator Abdulqadir~Abduqadir Damolla appears under A in Brophy and Klimeš, but under Q, as "Qādir Damolla, 'Abd al-" in Thum. Similar such major or minor discrepancies appear with virtually every name. It is to be hoped they will not deter non-specialists from reading these volumes in concert.

IMAGINED COMMUNITIES IN ALTISHAHR, 1700 TO 1930

Rian Thum's *Sacred Routes of Uyghur History* is an original synthesis of a whole body of new data with a profound rethinking of Anderson's idea of "imagined community."[15] Thum places at the center of his story three linked phenomena: the geographical destination of shrine, the manuscript genre of *tazkirah*, and the social practice of pilgrimage. Tombs of Muslim holy men buried in the "Six Cities" (Altishahr) of the Tarim Basin became centers of pilgrimage. Pilgrims did not just visit the shrines, however. While there they would listen to or themselves recite *tazkirah*, a Arabic term for a biographical dictionary-cum-anthology (42) that in Xinjiang was redefined as any text that could be recited at a shrine to increase the pilgrims' devotion. As such, they could be poetry or prose, romance or epic, biography or genealogy (46).

While visiting, pilgrims also copied or had copied these manuscripts and left pious graffiti on the shrine walls. All this activity took place in the local vernacular, called "Turki" or Turkic at the time. By participating in this pilgrimage to shrines, through seeing and hearing its traces in the form of copied *tazkirah* and shrine graffiti, and through making and altering such copies and graffiti themselves, pilgrims "participated in history," and did so in an active way: "the addition of one's own story to the pages or walls of history was sanctioned by custom and faith" (160). These three together, he convincingly argues, created a complex nexus of embedded history that nurtured a kind of imagined community, one that had many analogies with the modern nation, yet was also strikingly different.

In Altishahr or the "Six Citites," to be a Musulman ("Muslim") was to be a participant in this culture; thus when nineteenth century oasis residents told travellers that they were *Musulman*, they were not referring to a universal *ummah* or Islamic community, but to rather to a community defined by the shrine-pilgrimage complex, one which was in extension more or less equivalent to their Uyghur descendants of today.[16] It excluded Muslim Turkic nomads like the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, Chinese-speaking Muslim Hui, and even Turkic-speaking oasis dwellers from western Central Asia.[17]

This "imagined community" was formed by manuscripts, not print, by shrine pilgrimage, not educational mobility, by an "oases of history" (50–51, 130) approach, rather than empty, chronological time, and without any explicit connection to the idea of sovereignty or resistance to foreign rule. Yet it was, for all that, a genuine imagined community, one that placed Altishahri people within a community that they could and did see as embodied in the people of the oases moving through time and space.

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[15]Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

[16]As Thum (*Sacred Routes*,150) acknowledges, this point was already made by Laura J. Newby, "'Us' and 'Them' in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Xinjiang," in *Situating the Uyghurs between China and Central Asia*, edited by Ildikó Bellér Hahn, M. Cristina Cesàro, Rachel Harris, and Joanne Smith Finley (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 15–29. The people of the Ili Valley (or Taranchis) and of the eastern oases of Turpan and Qumul were only ambiguously, if at all, part of this "Altishahr" community; see Thum, *Sacred Routes*, 162.

[17]Thum, *Sacred Routes*, 149–50; cf. Rudelson, *Oasis Identities*, 118.

In addition to the literature on nationalism, Thum places his description of this shrine complex at the intersection of "global comparative historiography" (15), and the long-standing debate on textuality and orality. As he argues, the debate on orality and the book, dominated by voices like Walter Ong and Jack Goody,[18] has too long presumed a dichotomy of the oral word and the printed book. Building on work on the place of manuscripts in Islamic culture, he shows how manuscript culture constitutes a *tertium quid* between these two alternatives. In Altishahr, it became a form of collective, indeed Thum goes so far as to say democratic (76ff), knowledge production.

The *tazkirah*-shrine complex achieved its classic form precisely during the period from the late seventeenth century to the 1930s, when Xinjiang came under non-Islamic rule, first the Junghar or Oirat empire, then the Manchu Qing empire and the Republic of China. As Thum concludes, the "complex identity system" of the Altishahri *tazkirah*-shrine complex developed during this "long period of indirect rule."[19] After the 1930s, the advent of direct Chinese rule, particularly in the People's Republic of China, broke it up. First the increasing domination of print (170ff), and then the PRC's effective efforts to confiscate manuscripts as "illegal religious books" (192–93) broke up the manuscript culture as a site of knowledge production. Then the assertion of state control over and subsequent "disneyfication" of (242) several major shrines, and severe limitations on pilgrimage, has crippled, although not eliminated, the shrine culture.

In the place of the *tazkirah*-shrine system has emerged a new genre of biographical novels, or historical novels (*tarikhiy roman*), that take as their main characters historical figures. This genre, which Thum compares to the Hollywood "biopic," emerged rather suddenly in the 1980s and "provided a new venue for important elements of the tazkirah tradition" (198). In some cases there is direct continuity, such that the *tazkirah* provided the explicitly acknowledged textual grounding for the new biographical novel, such as with Säypidin Äzizi's *Sutuq Bughrakhan* (written 1979–82, published 1987). Yet in other ways, these novels are classically modern examples "of the novel's potential for depicting an imagined community" (202). Yet these new works, celebrating the "saints of the nation," have retained aspects of communal reading and pilgrimage that were classic features of the *tazkirah*-shrine system. Thus, the movement from *tazkirah* to the biographical novel supplies an unusually fruitful site for exploring the transition from a premodern manuscript-based imagined community, to a modern print-based imagined community, which is an explicitly national one that is teleologically directed to sovereignty.

NATIONALISM AND ITS LITERATURE, 1900–1950

Both Brophy's *Uyghur Nation* and Klimeš's *Struggle by the Pen* focus on the period bracketed by the emergence of the *tazkirah*-shrine culture in Junghar-Qing Xinjiang on the one hand and the PRC period with its print nationalism on the other. While both are also political in focus, they conceive of politics rather differently. For Klimeš, representations of "communal identity" lead to "national consciousness," which in turn is politicized as "nationalist agitation and nationalist ideology" (2). Brophy on the other hand contends that "the emerging Uyghurist discourse was not initially grounded in these symbols of ethnic identity" (9). Instead of symbolic structures of communal identities, Brophy highlights the importance of particular "settings" (40), that is, particular contexts

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[18]Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge. 1982); Jack Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

[19]Thum, *Sacred Routes*, 250–51. It should be noted that Thum himself emphasizes Qing and modern Chinese rule, but the beginning of the *tazkirah*-shrine complex clearly coincides with the overthrow of the last Chinggisid dynasty of Moghulistan and the inception of indirect rule under the Junghar empire in the late seventeenth century (*Sacred Routes*, 43–45, 152–53). David Brophy's research has likewise demonstrated the crucial role of the Junghars as precursors of Qing rule (*Uyghur Nation*, 29–32).

inhabited by "small and disenfranchised bod[ies] of activists" (273). In these settings distinctive intellectual trajectories "made sense" (144) as expression of the social and political grievances of small communities.

Klimeš's *Struggle by the Pen* is an intellectual history, analyzing major works and journalistic writing by Uyghur (or Altishahri) intellectuals in the period from 1900 up through the two East Turkestani republics (1933–34 and 1944–49). As such it gives a rich picture of the thought world of poets and publicists in oasis Xinjiang. The works chosen are those with more clearly historical or political-programmatic character. Thus he begins not with the *tazkirah* genre so deeply examined by Thum but with two histories, the *Tarikhi Eminiye* (or *Tārīkh-i Amniyya*; 1903) and the *Tarikhi Hemidi* (*Tārīkh-i Hamīdī*; 1908) written by Molla Musa Sayrami (or Mullā Mūsā Sayrāmī, b. 1836). Both histories focused on the great rebellion that temporarily freed Altishahr from Qing control from 1864 to 1877; along with Mullā Bilāl's versified *Ghazāt dar mulk-i Chīn* ("Holy War in China," 1876–77) they form the major source for the study of that period.[20] Sayrami's history has been acknowledged as a "cornerstone of modern Uyghur historiography,"[21] but it is precisely his factual, journalistic approach that set him apart from the *tazkirah* tradition. Indeed as Thum claims, Sayrami's histories, however brilliant, were not emulated by other writers (167–70). Yet, as limned by Klimeš, the contours of identity implicit in Sayrami's work were similar if not identical to those of the *tazkirah*: an identity incorporating the six or seven cities of the Tarim Basin as a single fractious, but clearly related, community (48–51).

Already in 1908, Sayrami named the second version of his history the *Tarikhi Hemidi* or "Hamidian History," being dedicated to the Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876–1909) (Klimes, 41). This work circulated only in manuscript, but the earlier *Tarikhi Eminiye* was printed in Kazan', a center of Tatar and Islamic culture in European Russia. As these examples show, the Tatars of Russia and the Turks of the Ottoman Empire, were early inspirations for the "national idea" in Xinjiang. Klimeš provides readings of works by Nezerghoja Abdusémetov (1887–1951)[22] and Abdukhaliq[23] "Uyghur" (1901–33), the two most famous early adopters of the name "Uyghur," the former among Taranchi emigres in the Semireche district (southeast Kazakhstan) and the latter in Xinjiang itself in Turpan.

Klimeš expounds, with extensive block translations, the distinctive national imaginations of publicists and intellectuals in the first East Turkestan Republic (1933–34), the following Soviet-backed Sheng Shicai regime (1933–44), and the second East Turkestan Republic (1944–49), also Soviet backed. He also discusses at length unofficial sources by writers such as Mas'ud Sabiri (1886–1951),[24] Muhemmed Imin Bughra (1901–65),[25] and Polat Qadiri Turfani (1919–70). It is symptomatic of their very different concerns, that while Klimeš sees in these works "an excellent example of a national protest text that integrates constructing a modern national identity with inventing its 'historical' past" (Klimeš, 223), Thum rather dismisses them: "There is very little in this history [by Muhemmed Imin Bughra] that can be explained by reference to the earlier Altishahri traditions. It is in most respects no different from nationalist histories around the world" (189). Precisely because he sees in these nationalist histories (unlike the historical novels) a denial of "much of what is Uyghur (or at least Altishahri) about Uyghur nationalism" (209), Thum

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[20]Hodong Kim, *Holy War in China: The Muslim Rebellion and State in Chinese Central Asia, 1864–1877* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), xvi–xvii.

[21]Nabijan Tursun's phrase, as cited in Klimeš, *Struggle by the Pen*, 40.

[22]Nazarkhoja Abdusamadov in Brophy, *Uyghur Nation,* or 'Abd al-Ṣamad Oghli in Thum, *Sacred Routes*. It is an interesting comment on the difficulty of finding out information on these figures that Klimeš knows only Abdusémetov's birth date and Brophy knows only his death date.

[23]Also written as Abdulkhaliq.

[24]Masud Sabri in Brophy, *Uyghur Nation.*

[25]Muhammad Amīn Bughrā in Thum, *Sacred Routes.*

provides only a fairly perfunctory analysis of texts from this crucial period. Yet at the same time, Klimeš's thorough analysis of themes and influences in this nationalist literature at time elides the question of reception, i.e. how widely read or influential these works really were.

THE RUSSIA-CHINA FRONTIER

As opposed to the religious focus of Thum, and the intellectual focus of Klimeš, that of Brophy is more directly political, in the sense of focusing on how particular persons and communities functioned in public life. As his subtitle suggests, he is primarily focused on how this political life was shaped along the "Russia-China Frontier," where Xinjiang or "Chinese Turkestan" met "Russian Turkestan." In this zone, both migrants from Xinjiang into Russian Turkestan and migrants from Russia into Xinjiang retained communal organizations and a significant degree of legal and political autonomy under the leadership of *aqsaqal*s or "white beards" (Brophy, 74–82, 122–27). The "rise" or "spread" of nationalism is thus put in a context which is not primarily about ideas and their contagion, but rather about small communities and those individuals trying to advocate for them.

Precisely because it concerns various small communities along the border, Brophy's narrative is complex and braided. Throughout his aim is to trace the particular historical contexts in which the term "Uyghur" came to be used, and what meanings users ascribed to it. As traced by Brophy, the term Uyghur first emerged in Russian Turkestan among communities defined by Chinese "subject-hood" (i.e. citizenship) and Muslim religion. This "Chinese Muslim" category included three primary groups: 1) Taranchis, comprised of Altishahris who had been deported north of the Tian-shan Range during the Junghar and early Qing rule, 2) Kashgaris, named after the most populous of the oases, and 3) Dungans, or Chinese-speaking Muslims of Xinjiang. Each of these communities in Russian Turkestan was first founded by refugees fleeing the Chinese reconquest of Xinjiang from 1877 to 1881, with the Kashgaris taking refuge in the Ferghana Valley and the Taranchis and Dungans in Semireche (a region now in southeastern Kazakhstan). Later, many Kashgaris entered Russia as merchants and migrant farm workers seeking economic opportunity in the Ferghana Basin then undergoing rapid capitalist development.

Within the Russian Empire, intellectuals of ethnic Russian, Ottoman Turkish, and local Turkic origins were engaged in a joint discovery of the Turkic past. Terms from Chinese dynastic histories were slowly matched, not without bitter academic feuds, with ones from Persian and Arabic sources. From these discussions, "Uyghur" emerged as not just an ancient ethnonym, but a a term with connotations of urban civilization, while "Turk" still implied rural ignorance: "'Uyghur' means a civilized people who live in cities."[26] Early adopters of "Uyghur" were found among a number of Turkestani Muslims, not just the Chinese subjects residing in Russian Turkestan, but for the latter it soon acquired especial salience, especially after the Russian Revolution in 1917 jeopardized their very existence.

After 1910, these small communities along the border were again buffeted by a series of more or less simultaneous disturbances, none of which were centered on Xinjiang, but all of which destabilized the previous patterns of political life. These began with the Xinhai Revolution in China (1911–12) and the contemporary Balkan and Libyan wars buffeting the Ottoman Empire, continued on into World War I (1914–18), and culminated in the fall of both the Ottoman and Tsarist empires, and the foreign interventions and civil wars in Turkey and Russia that lasted to 1920–21. Each of these disturbances altered the terms on which the frontier communities related to the political authorities, thus creating new contexts of political opposition and struggle.

The term "Uyghur" was pioneered before World War I by Nezerghoja Abdusémetov[27] among the Taranchis in Semireche. But the community's primary concern from 1917 was not ethnic

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[26]Brophy, *Uyghur Nation*, 261; cf. 141–44; cf. Klimeš, *Struggle by the Pen*, 172, 106.

[27]Nazarkhoja Abdusamadov in Brophy, *Uyghur Nation*, 'Abd al-Ṣamad Oghli in Thum, *Sacred Routes*.

identity but vindicating its legitimate presence as Chinese subjects in Russia, particularly against Bolshevik vigilante actions. By contrast, among the more integrated Kashgar bazaar merchants in the Ferghana valley, the primary issue was the maintenance of communal autonomy and the selection of the *aqsaqal*, or head of the foreign community. In this issue local Soviet regimes, the provincial government of Xinjiang, and local communal leaders all had a stake. While the Taranchis and Tungans were quite alien to the nomadic Kazakhs and Russian colonists who were the main population of Semireche, the Kashgaris in the Ferghana Valley were often seen as just "China's Uzbeks" (Brophy, 191, 195); assimilation thus formed a present threat to the continuance of Kashgari self-governance in the Russian Turkestan. Yet however little they had in common, both Taranchis and Kashgaris, along with the Chinese-speaking Dungans, could also be considered in Turkestan as "Chinese workers" (Brophy, 166) and were to be organized as such by the local Soviet government in Tashkent.

The complex and multi-faceted argument of *Uyghur Nation* may be reduced to two main points. First, it is no coincidence that the settings where "Uyghurist discourse" first appeared all lay along the Russia-China frontier. This is not, however, simply because the Russian side of the frontier had an earlier diffusion of modern ideas like nationalism as previous accounts have assumed, but because it was a frontier which various Muslim peoples crossed without cutting their ties to the other side. It was these sojourner circles defined and shaped by the border crossing that were the crucial social settings where this discourse emerged. The emergence of the term "Uyghur" among the Taranchi emigres in particular was closely linked to their own political struggles both to be recognized as legitimate members of the Soviet community, and their conflicted relations with the Kashgari migrants.

Secondly, "Uyghurist discourse" did not emerge originally from a concern with identifying a particular bounded national community. Rather it was a "political rallying point before it was widely thought of as a form of national identity" (Brophy, 4). "Uyghurist discourse" began as a "communal genealogy" (174) before the revolution, before being adopted by sojourner populations in the Semireche region of southeast Kazakhstan. But it was adopted as the name of a club, and then, at the June 1921 congress in Tashkent referred to earlier, as the name of a revolutionary organization.

Superficially this point might seem to be the old instrumentalist one, in which ethnic identities are dreamed up by intellectuals and then imposed on broader populations. But by emphasizing the origin of terms like "Uyghur" in the struggles of specific small groups, Brophy's narrative illustrates how their eventual fate could not be controlled by the intellectuals who introduced them. "Uyghur" was deployed not as one of identity, but rather as one of partisan struggle, and in struggle, as in war, "the enemy always has a vote." Thus although the term Uyghur was early advocated by Taranchi intellectuals like Abdullah Rozibaqiev (1897–1938),[28] it was among the Kashgaris of the Ferghana Valley, whose leading representative Qadir Haji (1891–1938?) was Rozibaqiev's bitter enemy, that it made the most immediate headway (Brophy, 199–200). The term "Uyghur" was championed by small groups of intellectuals, and eventually by the Soviet state, but Brophy's detailed analysis shows that neither the Soviet state nor Uyghurist intellectuals could compel popular adoption of the term.

TURPAN, EAST TURKESTAN, AND OTHER LOOSE ENDS

Despite the rich material assembled in these three books, which together bring the understanding of Altishahri politics and communal structure to a new level, many issues remain but little touched on. Among these issues are the communal identities and political struggles in early twentieth century

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[28]Abdulla Rozibakiev in Klimeš, *Struggle by the Pen*.

Turpan (Turfan) and Qumul (Hami) oases of eastern Xinjiang. These oasis cities were governed by Chaghatayid Mongol princes until the twentieth century and were only ambiguously, if at all, part of the Altishahri *Tazkirah*-shrine complex (Thum, 162). Their late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century networks into Russia appear to have been quite separate from those of Kashgaria or the Taranchis, leading not into Russian Turkestan, but into the Tatar center of Kazan' (Klimeš, 81, 98, 106). Thus the path by which Abdukhaliq "Uyghur" (d. 1933) adopted Uyghur identity must have been rather different from that by which the Taranchi Abdusamadov adopted the same name. Klimeš gives us a rather fine grained analysis of the writings of Abdukhaliq "Uyghur"[29] but still remaining to be done is the kind of political sociology of the Turpan and Qumul communities such as Brophy gives us for the Kashgari and Taranchi figures.

Similarly, to the same degree that the adoption of the term Uyghur comes to seem less arbitrary and more overdetermined in the light of Brophy and Klimeš's research, the genealogy of the competing term "East Turkestan" becomes increasingly mysterious. Used today as a nationalist alternative to "Xinjiang," this term first appeared in public view in 1932 with the "Liberation of East Turkestan" party, the *Life of East Turkestan* journal, the "Local Government of South Turkestan" and finally in 1933 the "East Turkestan Republic" proclaimed by the Khotan-based Bughra brothers and Sabit Abdulbaqi Damolla in 1933 (Klimeš, 122–23, 128–33; Brophy, 241–44). As Klimeš's analysis shows, the term appears to reflect the desire to include Turkic nomads like the Kyrgyz in the national community, but exclude the Dungans. This dual inclusion/exclusion certainly had its link to the immediate politics of the rebellion.[30] Yet the associated term's sudden burst into regional prominence is puzzling, and the story of the term "Uyghur" should make us very skeptical of the possibility that the term was simply introduced by a few leaders to solve an immediate tactical problem. The Khotanese community whence hailed the early adopters was known for its close links to British India; what would a study focused on "Turkestan" show with regard to the Indian sojourners in Xinjiang and Khotanese sojourners in India? Such sojourners did, after all, have the same extraterritorial rights and similar *aqsaqal* institutions as those crossing the Russia-China frontiers.

One would have to imagine that social interactions with Kyrgyz and Kazakhs, both of whom were largely, although by no means wholly, mobile pastoralists must have likewise shaped the contours of Uyghur and East Turkestani identity. Similarly, the social boundaries with non-Turkic (the Dungans) and non-Muslim peoples (Mongols, Shibe, Chinese) as played out in various regional communities must have had an on-going significance for the terms of struggle and identification used in Xinjiang from the convulsions of the 1930s onward.

CONCLUSION

Together Thum, Klimeš, and Brophy have thus opened several new paradigms for scholarship on the modern transition among the Uyghurs. Like all powerful paradigms, they will guide scholarship not so much by dictating the answers, but by suggesting new questions and new places to look for the answers to the questions.

Methodologically, the three interventions illustrate that when we look at terms like "Uyghur" much depends on whether we see them as terms of identity or terms of struggle. As Thum demonstrates, identity can actually get along quite well enough without a single term or label. "The

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[29]Klimeš. *Struggle by the Pen*, 98–108; cf. Rudelson, *Oasis Identities*, 145–53.

[30]For the complex politics of this regime, see Andrew D.W. Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims in Chinese Central Asia: A Political History of Republican Sinkiang 1911–1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 83–96, 112–16, and James A. Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 197–98.

modern fixation on stable ethnonyms is itself a product of nationalist thought" (150). Manuscript culture, the *tazkirah*-shrine complex, and Qing administrative realities shaped a "modular, un-named, uneven Altishahri identity" (229; cf. 250) that was a distinctively pre-modern "imagined community" (208, 230).

But whether the introduction of modern national names like "Uyghur" or "Turkestan" should be seen in terms of identity is very much in doubt. In reviewing how national discourse functions, Klimeš opposes "dynamics of accord" to a "dynamics of dissent" (48, 51, 255), but such a distinc-tion is insufficiently dialectical. Partisan rejection and exclusion is inherent in the process of arguing for national inclusion and unity. As is clear from the rich Uyghur discourse of nationalism Klimeš presents, national unity is asserted precisely to mark particular members of the nation as selfish and treasonous, thus putting the onus of division precisely on those the nationalist wishes to exclude from the nation. Similarly Klimeš's "fragmented nationalism" (181, 247, 257) cannot be viewed as exceptional, but is actually the precondition for the emergence and rise of national vocabulary to dominance. Uyghur intellectuals indeed express "communal interests in a national vocabulary" (118), but this is precisely how the national term, whether "Uyghur" or "East Turke-stan" emerges: as a partisan category of struggle, in a rhetoric that presupposes the existence of empirical members who must be excluded.[31]

Here Brophy's analysis is path-breaking. The term "Uyghur" emerges from his history as a cat-egory of action, of struggle, and not one of identity. The particular form of sociopolitical struggle in a community early adopting this national term exercises a dominant role in the connotations of the national idea. Since in this process of struggle there is nothing either above (as in a political author-ity that is outside social interaction) or below (as in ethnographic facts defining a national commu-nity) the process of political conflict itself, neither bottom-up primordialist nor top-down instrumentalist interpretations are very helpful. Indeed claims that "their" definition of the national community was produced by manipulation of elites, while "ours" is based on objective facts (whether of class structure or language or folklore) are as a rule deployed in struggle exactly to deny the validity of another community's experience in that same political struggle (e.g. Brophy, 202).

Yet the history of "Uyghur" as a palimpsest of different partisan identities (Brophy, 274) does not mean that identity does not have significant time depth, just that it is not necessarily tied to such terms. Here Thum's demonstration of the continuity within change between the premodern *taz-kirah*-shrine complex and the modern "saints of the nation" found in historical novels is particularly important.[32]

As the first of these books to see print, Rian Thum's work has already won recognition in the form of the American Historical Association's John K. Fairbank Prize. With such recognition one may hope that these works will receive a reception far beyond historians of Xinjiang. Thum's concept of a modular but nameless premodern imagined community is a powerful correc-tive to studies of, for example, *Zhongguo* ("China") or *Bod* ("Tibet") that reduce identity to either centralized government or one particular name or term. His analysis of the mechanisms of pilgrim-age, manuscript, and environmental inscription in shaping these identities are likewise excellent examples for the study of both larger- and smaller-scale identities. Indeed much of Qing Inner

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[31]The parallel with exclusionary uses of "people" in Maoist rhetoric here is exact; see Michael Schoenhals, "Demonising Discourse in Mao Zedong's China: People vs Non-People," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8.3 (2007), 465–82. Given this parallel, the interchangeability of "national and social discontent" dis-cussed in Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, 124–30, is less surprising.

[32]Prasenjit Duara's *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) makes a similar claim from the opposite polemical standpoint of an assump-tion of overcontinuity, that the existence of ruptures and discontinuities between premodern and modern com-munities can only be covered over at the price of historical aporias.

Asia saw a similar trend toward hierocratic rule and modular structures in the seventeenth century. The replacement in Xinjiang of the last Chinggisid dynasty by the Sufi lineage of White Mountain khojas was paralleled with the replacement of the kings of Tsang in Tibet by the Fifth Dalai Lama,[33] the eclipse of the Chinggisid rulers in Mongolia by the line of the Jibzundamba Khutugtus, and the gelling of modular, local identities.[34]

Similarly the process of how a new name, such as "Uyghur" emerges first as a category of partisanship well before it becomes effectively able to call up preexisting associations of identity is one that can be fruitfully applied to the other major nationalist political movements within the former Qing empire, whether Chinese, Mongol, or Tibetan. As Klimeš shows, nationalist writings follow common intellectual patterns that were diffused like other intellectual trends. Familiar tropes like "awakening"[35] and specific cultural vectors such as the *jadid* movement in Turkic Islam play their part.[36] But the significance of such national designations cannot be exhausted by understanding them as purely intellectual "memes," still less as top-down instrumental tools. Rather a full account will demand tracing the specific communal contexts—ones which are by definition radically smaller than the nation itself being spoken for—in which national names acquire salience as slogans of struggle. The result is, as Brophy argues, a notion of nation that is a palimpsest of various communal definitions. If successful, this new partisan notion will eventually link up to the earlier forms of identity which had been rendered non-partisan by previous political change, and so become itself a new tag of identity. But success is determined by the realia of political struggle and is hence beyond the capacity by any elite or group of elites to decisively determine.

There is much in these volumes that is not directly related to the idea of national identity and nationalist struggle. All three open vast new areas in the history of Xinjiang and do so with remarkable care and exactitude. But it is to be hoped that the "Uyghurological" detail will not deter scholars interested in the worldwide field of identity in premodern regimes, and in the role of nation as a vehicle of communal struggles. They have much to learn from the shrines, educators, activists, and novelists of Xinjiang, and from the telling of their stories in these superb and synergistic volumes.

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[33]Peter Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor of China: A Political History of the Tibetan Institution of Incarnation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

[34]See Johan Elverskog, *Our Great Qing: The Mongols, Buddhism, and the State in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2006).

[35]See e.g. Klimeš. *Struggle by the Pen*, 100, 107, 148; cf. John Fitzgerald, *Awakening China: Politics, Culture, and Class in the Nationalist Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

[36]On the *jadid* movement in Xinjiang, see Klimeš, *Struggle by the Pen*, 70–74, 77–81, and Brophy, *Uyghur Nation*, 94–96, 109–12, 127–32.