Shaping Historical and Cultural Heritage in Uyghur Children: A Case Study on the Book Series *Bilqut Balilar Shexs Hëkayiliri*

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Abstract

In the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (People's Republic of China), history is taught according to Chinese nationalistic guidelines and the history of ethnic groups is built around their relationships with the Han majority. In this context of historical hegemony, the paper examines a series of books for Uyghur children on famous historical characters in order to understand how young generations' ethnic consciousness can be shaped. The analysis identifies some trends of the Uyghur ethnic discourse transmit- ted to children (connections with the history of Central Asia and the Middle East, the focus on elements of identification such as Islam and *muqams*), as well as the presence of a Chinese paradigm that supports progress, secular education, and the standardization of folklore. Furthermore, the article aims to identify how much leeway is given to the development of a counter-discourse, particularly in the transmission of historical and cultural heritage to the younger generations.

Keywords

Xinjiang – Uyghur history – identity construction – history books – children education

1 Education and the Teaching of History in Xinjiang

Like other culturally and linguistically diverse countries, China has to deal with the challenge of providing an education that allows all citizens to acquire skills and knowledge while promoting integration and stability. Chinese education has been described in academic studies as a tool meant to develop

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social mobility as well as to integrate ethnic minorities in the Chinese system, preparing them to respond to state-directed economic and social challenges.[1] Scholars have highlighted a dual tendency in education policies toward ethnic minorities. On one hand, the state pays attention to this particular segment of the population through specific teaching materials, the implementation of programs of bilingual education, and preferential policies. On the other hand, specific programs for minorities aim to culturally and linguistically homogenize minority students' training through a model of mass education that focuses on Chinese language, culture, and patriotism.[2]

Minority education promotes national values and objectives while assuming that progress and modernity are possible through the guidance of the Han majority.[3] This often happens at the expense of the teaching of competences and the construction of a favorable learning environment: programs support political ideology rather than communication skills in the teaching of Chinese[4] or provide texts that diverge from minorities' modes of thinking and values.[5]

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1 In this article, the author employs the term "ethnic group" instead of "nationality" as a translation of the Chinese term *mínzú.* The first is indeed more appropriate for referring to the central government's vision of non-Han groups and to the concept of fifty-five populations classified according to cultural differences compared to the Han majority, fully integrated into the "Chinese nation" (*Zhōnghuá mínzú*).

2 G.A. Postiglione, "Ethnic minority identity and educational outcomes in a rising China," in P. Peterson, E. Baker and B. McGaw (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Education* (Oxford: Elsevier, 2010), 616–622; M.H. Hansen, *Lessons in Being Chinese: Minority Education and Ethnic Identity in Southwest China* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1999); J. Leibold and Y. Chen, "Minority Education in China: Balancing Unity and Diversity in an Era of Critical Pluralism," in L. James and C. Yangbin, *Minority Education in China, Balancing Unity and Diversity in an Era of Critical Pluralism* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2014), 1–26; G.A. Postiglione, "Education and Cultural Diversity in Multiethnic China," in J. Leibold and Y. Chen (eds.), *Minority Education in China, Balancing Unity and Diversity in an Era of Critical Pluralism* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2014), 27–44.

3 D.C. Gladney, "Representing Nationalities in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 53, no. 1 (February 1994): 92–123; Postiglione, "Education and Cultural Diversity in Multiethnic China."

4 L. Tsung, "Trilingual Education and School Practice in Xinjiang," in L. James and C. Yangbin (eds.), *Minority Education in China, Balancing Unity and Diversity in an Era of Critical Pluralism* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2014), 161–186.

5 G. Postiglione, J. Ben, X. Ling, and Tsamla, "Popularizing Basic Education in Tibet's Nomadic Regions," in L. James and C. Yangbin (eds.), *Minority Education in China, Balancing Unity and Diversity in an Era of Critical Pluralism* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2014), 107–130.

Moreover, the policy of achieving national unity by implementing specific programs for minorities strengthens ethnic-specific identities and does not al- ways integrate them into the national system.6

In recent years, the organs of the state responsible for education have developed a rejuvenation of school curricula, in some cases adding the subject *mínzúxué* "minority studies."7 However, a look at the curriculum of this subject shows that each ethnic group is presented according to a top-down approach based on the official Chinese taxonomy and conventional minorities' distinctive features: the fifty-five ethnic minorities are introduced according to their official name, demography, language and script (*yǔyán wénzì*), folk- lore, dietary habits, and traditional economic development (agriculture or livestock).8

Chinese historiography plays a significant role in education, especially in the construction of the idea of national integration and unity. Scholars have highlighted different approaches across China's education history, with a continuum between Han-centered and multi-centric nationalism.9 In the latter, ethnic minorities are not represented as barbarians, nomads, or backward, but are praised for their historical achievements and their contribution to the unity of the country. This follows Fei Xiaotong's idea of "pluralistic unity," ac- cording to which the diversity of histories and cultures exists within the unit of the Chinese nation.

These ideas of Chinese nationalism are both present in the representation of the history of Uyghurs. On one hand, books and museums refer to the Uyghur region as "Western regions," a term used in Chinese historiography, and

6 Hansen, *Lessons in Being Chinese: Minority Education and Ethnic Identity in Southwest China*; Z. Simayi, "The Practice of Ethnic Policy in Education. Xinjiang's Bilingual Education," in J. Leibold and Y. Chen (eds.), *Minority Education in China, Balancing Unity and Diversity in an Era of Critical Pluralism* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2014), 131–159.

7 Postiglione, "Education and Cultural Diversity in Multiethnic China," 30. In addition, the Minzu University of China promoted localized teaching materials (*xiāngtǔ jiàocái*), a collection of books required for secondary schools nationwide. Unfortunately, this project has not been fully developed and the books are not widely used.

8 See, for example, the teaching material offered on the website Wenku: http://www.wenku1 .com/list/中华大家庭教学计划 (last accessed on 18 January 2018).

9 J. Leibold, *Reconfiguring Chinese Nationalism: How the Qing Frontier and its Indigenes Became Chinese* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); N. Baranovitch, "Others no more: The changing representation of non-Han peoples in Chinese history textbooks 1951–2004," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 69 (2010): 85–122; T. Grose, "Uyghur Language Textbooks: Competing Images of a Multi-Ethnic China," *Asian Studies Review*, 36 (2012): 369–389.

highlight the crucial role played by Han Chinese in the development of the area. This approach obscures Xinjiang's multiple origins – in particular, its intense contacts with several Eurasian civilizations.10 On the other hand, since the 1980s, in the spirit of the political openness led by the central government working with Uyghur intellectuals and political figures, some Uyghur historical characters (for example, Amannisa xan and Ahmetjan Qasimi) became representative of Communist values, such as modern education and progressive ideas.11

In Chinese history textbooks, the representation of Uyghurs overlaps with the discourse on minority groups and Han Chinese identity: Uyghurs are mentioned in the description of the richness of the Silk Road and because of their good relationship with the Han.12 Moreover, some episodes of Uyghur history that could be seen in terms of opposition to the unity of China are often described in a paternalistic and simplistic way (e.g. the separatist *khoja* are "bad" and the ordinary Uyghur population is "good"). Other issues in history education are the low number of class hours, major attention paid to world history (to the detriment of local history), as well as the national, rather than regional, distribution of history books.13

2 Dominant Ideology and Discourse performed by Marginalized Groups

In his study of the relationships between marginalized and dominant groups (such as states or social classes), Gramsci points out that a dominant ideology manages the way that civil society sees facts, understands beliefs and values, and assimilates political and economic goals. The discourse is usually con- structed in different kinds of settings (e.g. at school and in public media) and

10 G. Bovingdon, "The History of the History of Xinjiang," *Twentieth-Century China*, 26, no. 2 (2001): 95–139; G. Bovingdon and N. Tursun, "Contested Histories," in S. Frederick Starr (ed.), *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Frontier* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 353–374; A. Rippa, "Re-writing mythology in Xinjiang: the case of the Queen Mother of the West, King Mu and Kunlun," *The China Journal*, 71 (2013): 43–64.

11 L. Benson, "Ahmetjan Kasimi: A Chinese Paradigm for a Uyghur National Hero," *Central Asian Survey*, 2, no. 3 (1992): 23–29; E. Anderson, "The construction of Āmānnisā Khan as a Uyghur cultural hero," *Asian Music* Winter/Spring (2012): 64–90.

12 J. Feyel, "Representation of Uyghurs in Chinese history books," in J. Smith-Finley and X. Zang (eds.), *Language Education and Uyghur Identity in Urban Xinjiang* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2015), 114–131.

13 Ibid., 117–21.

then accepted and assimilated by society.14 Hegemony also includes the re-counting of history. This implies the exclusion of the "subaltern classes," which generally consist of groups that lack political autonomy and are subjected to cultural and identity oppression).15 In the context of hegemony and the dominance of given beliefs and values, counter-discourse can take different forms. This is shown by various studies that aim to understand the interaction be- tween ruling powers and subordinate groups.

Gramsci points out that subordinate groups need a collective will when looking for political representation.16 Yet in other fields of studies inspired by Gramsci, such as subaltern and post-colonial studies, the masses are involved in social solidarity and in the construction of a common consciousness even without gaining access to political representation.17

This vision is followed by Fraser, who claims that social groups develop a counter-discourse and make possible the circulation of a different interpretation of their identities, interests, and needs in "parallel discursive arenas."18 For example, in the United States in the 1900s, women, even without suffrage, were able to access various public outlets, such as protests, parades, and phil- anthropic associations, and participate in the moral education of society.

In the Chinese context, negotiations between local communities' needs and national interests are mentioned in two studies conducted by Bulag and Upton. Employing Scott's notion of "public and hidden transcript,"19 Bulag analyzes the figure of communist Mongol hero Ulanhu, glorified for his patriotism and contribution to the birth of the People's Republic of China yet associated

14 A. Gramsci, *Lettere dal carcere, quaderno 13 [xxx]*, eds. S. Caprioglio and E. Rubini, (Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1973 [1932–34]).

15 A. Gramsci, *Lettere dal carcere, quaderno 25 [xxiii]*, eds. S. Caprioglio and E. Rubini (Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1973 [1932–34]). See also P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. M.B. Ramos (London: Continuum, 1968 [2000]). For the concept of the subaltern classes, see G. Liguori, "Subalterno e subalterni nei 'Quaderni del carcere,'" *International Gramsci Journal*, 2, no. 1 (2016): 89–125.

16 Gramsci, *Lettere dal carcere, quaderno 13 [xxx]*.

17 R. Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 1999); R. Keesing, *Custom and Confrontation: the Kwaio Struggle for Cultural Autonomy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

18 N. Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 56–80.

19 J. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990). According to Scott, the public transcript shows that the community supports current politics and the system of values, while the hidden transcript represents criticism of the system, usually performed through tales and jokes.

with claiming and defending the right to autonomy threatened by assimilationist policies.20

In a study on the teaching curricula of the Tibetan Songpan County in Sichuan, Upton explores the possibility of encouraging the understanding of cultural and linguistic differences within the national education system. The scholar points out that historical facts and narration are certainly different from the history of Tibet that would be recounted by Tibetans abroad, and that they coexist with images of China's revolutionary history and its push for science and progress. However, there is still room to stimulate and imagine a distinct Tibetan world.21

The reflections cited above have in common strategies of counter-discourse that imply compromise with the system. If negotiation with dominant beliefs and values is possible, what are the tools that Uyghur civil society can employ in order to counteract Sino-centric positions? And how much leeway is given to counter-discourse?

Several works have identified forms of negotiation and resilience in different aspects of Uyghur society: in the defense of the mother tongue, in Uyghur urban youth's identity and mastering of Chinese as a way to be simultaneously Uyghur and competitive in Chinese society, in Internet youth culture, in Uyghur women's activities in the digital world, in cultural practices, as well as in practices of popular Islam and the tradition of manuscripts that contribute to preserving an ethnic consciousness.22

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20 U. Erden Bulag, "The cult of Ulanhu in Inner Mongolia: History, memory and the making of national heroes," *Central Asian Survey*, 17, no. 1 (1998): 11–33.

21 J. Upton, "The development of modern school-based language education in the PRC," in G. Postiglione (ed.), *China's National Minority Education: Culture, Schooling, and Development*, (New York: Falmer Press, 1999), 281–342.

22 A.M. Dwyer, "The Xinjiang Conflict: Uyghur Identity, Language Policy, and Political Discourse," *Policy Studies*, 15 (Washington: East-West Center, 2005); G. Cabras, *Alternance codique entre le ouïghour et le chinois: une étude de cas sur la communauté linguistique ouïghoure de Ürümchi* (Münich: Lincom Europa, 2018); A.C. Thompson, "Our 'messy' mother tongue: Language attitudes among urban Uyghurs and desires for 'purity' in the public sphere" (Master's thesis, University of Kansas, 2013), http://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/bitstream/handle/1808/11705/Thompson_ku_0099M_12593_DATA_1.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y; J. Smith Finley, *The Art of Symbolic Resistance. Uyghur Identities and Uyghur–Han Relations in Contemporary Xinjiang* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2013), 380–393; N. Light, "Uyghurs on Chinese Social Networking Sites: The Creation and Destruction of Ethnic Youth Culture," *Central Asian Affairs*, 2 (2015): 264–268; D. Reyhan, "Mothers who educate: Uyghur women's activities in digital space," *Women and Gender in China*, September 25, 2017, https://www.wagic.org/blank-2/2017/09/25/"Mothers-Who-Educate"-Uyghur-Women's-Activities-in-Digital-Space; R. Dawut, "Shrine Pilgrimage and

In this article, I analyze a case related to the transmission of Uyghur history to children and identify elements of counter-discourse, as well as elements that, in contrast, respect a Chinese nationalistic historical and ideological vision. Children's literature is indeed a valuable tool to understand communities. Children's stories are shaped by the ideological values and beliefs of those who write them.23 In particular, history narrated through the lenses of children's books can be a tool to construct cohesion, distance oneself from dominant narratives, and bring different perspectives, as well as contribute to historicaland cultural transmission.24

3 An Introduction to Children's Literature and to the Series Bilqut Balilar Shexs Hëkayiliri

Books are highly valued in China as well as in Xinjiang as a way to learn and understand the world. The publishing sector is active in China and bookstores constitute a popular place to browse as a diversion.25

Since the 1980s, regional publishing houses have printed publications writ- ten in Uyghur with official legislative support. In 2017, when the author con- ducted fieldwork in Xinjiang, non-scholastic print publications included texts for readers of different ages, as well as Uyghur-language reference works. While other media domains, such as the press and television, tended to translate material from Chinese, a large number of books were not translated but were written in Uyghur. As far as children's literature is concerned, publications included a wide range of books: stories and comics about the well-known Central

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Sustainable Tourism among the Uyghurs: Central Asian Ritual Traditions in the Context of China's Development Policies," in I. Bellér-Hann, M.C. Cesàro, R. Harris, and J. Smith Finley (eds.), *Situating the Uyghurs between China and Central Asia*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 149–164; Ä. Sulayman, "Hybrid Name Culture in Xinjiang: Problems Surrounding Uyghur Name/Surname Practices and Their Reform," in I. Bellér-Hann, M.C. Cesàro, R. Harris, and J. Smith Finley (eds.), *Situating the Uyghurs between China and Central Asia*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 109–130; R. Thum, *The Sacred Routes of Uyghur History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

23 M.T. Keyes and Á. McGillicuddy, *Politics and Ideology in Children's Literature* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2014).

24 S. Parlevliet, "Is that Us? Dealing with the 'Black' Pages of History in Historical Fiction for Children," *Children's Literature in Education*, 47 (2016): 343–356.

25 B. Xiang, "China Focus: Experiential bookstores boom in China," Xinhuanet, October 11, 2017, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/11/c_136672374.htm (last accessed on 18 February 2019).

Asian character *Afanti ependi*, the "One Thousand and One Nights," translations of foreign stories by Aesop and Hans Christian Andersen, and books on Chinese cultural heritage, such as the Tang poems. Other books were related to ethnic harmony, patriotism (*àiguó*), the modern development of Xinjiang, and Chinese, English, and Uyghur language-learning material. Because of the promotion of bilingualism, bilingual Chinese-Uyghur books were widespread. The series of Uyghur-Chinese bilingual books analyzed in this article is called *Bilqut Balilar Shexs Hëkayiliri* (in Chinese and English, "*rénwù gùshi*" and "characters' story," respectively), published in 2011 by the editing group *Shinjang Bilqut* and distributed by the publishing house *Shinjang ëlëktron ün- sin neshriyati* (in Chinese, *Xīnjiāng diànzǐ yīnxiàng chūbǎnshè*). The publishing house specializes in children's books, print and visual aids; the series is produced by the editing section *telim-terbiye üchün/ jiàoyù xué* (education)."26 These books were available in February 2017 in Kashgar, Hotan, and Ürümchi, in small independent bookshops as well as in the Xinhua bookstores, the state-owned bookstore chain that is found nowadays in cities and small urban centers across China. These multi-floor bookstores, with their rich offering of books related to the varied domains of the publishing industry (literature, politics, science, education, history, etc.), represent the current trends in Chinese educational and cultural policies.

The display of the series was very visible to customers. At the beginning of 2018, following the introduction of repressive government policies toward ethnic minorities in Xinjiang,27 the books were no longer distributed in the Xinhua bookstores but were still available in some independent bookstores. The stories were also accessible through an application for smartphones, *Shexsler*, that was produced by the group Qarluq Apps and was removed from the Apple and Windows stores.28 The application allowed children to read

26 Shinjang Bilqut Shirkiti (ed. Tursunbeg Ibrahim Taymas and Qurbanjan Baqi), *Bilqut bali- lar shexs hëkayiliri*, 30 vols. (Ürümchi: Shinjang ëlëktron ün-sin neshriyati, 2011).

27 Since the end of 2017, policies established by the new secretary of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, Chen Quanguo, have targeted Uyghur cultural and religious expression with the aim of fighting religious radicalization and terrorism. See A. Zenz, "Throughly re- forming them towards a healthy heart attitude': China's political re-education campaign in Xinjiang," *Central Asian Survey* (2018).

A cleansing of religious and non-religious Uyghur books and a change in minority publishing policies are claimed by observers and diaspora communities.

28 The reader can gain an idea of the texts and the illustrations by looking at some screen- shots of the application at https://appadvice.com/app/shexisler/544149719 or https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eH6BjQuaUE0.

stories on devices such as phones and tablets, which are very popular among the younger generations. Moreover, through the application, the content of the books was also easily accessible to the Uyghur diaspora.

Most of the characters presented in the series were born in an area that corresponds to the current region of Xinjiang, in places that belong to the areas of the northern Dzungarian region and Altishahr.29 Other characters are of early Indo-European, Persian, or Arabic origin, representing connections with Central Asian and Middle Eastern civilizations. The series is composed of thirty books, each with an average of twenty-five pages. Every page has an illustration and three to five lines of text.30 The stories have a simple plot; they introduce the date and place of birth of the characters and their achievements, mentioning the historical context in which they lived. The series is suitable for children aged ten to twelve years old or perhaps young teenagers. Nevertheless, the presence of pictures makes the series suitable even for younger children, with the company and help of adults. A short note that explains the aim of the series appears at the end of each book: the books pay homage to the personalities of the past and educate children through the stories of these figures' achievements.

4 A Note on Methodology

The following discussion draws on a textual analysis of the series. The analysis gives a representative picture of the historical times addressed and the connections with different civilizations that are presented in the books, as well as the geographical origins, vocations, and contributions to society of the featured

29 Altishahr is a term that references the oasis along the rim of the Tarim. Used by foreign explorers and scholars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, along with the term Kashgaria, it was and still is used by local people today as a reference to Southern Xinjiang.

30 The characters presented in the series are: Ayhan Ana (teacher), Amannisa xan (poet and musician), Ibn Sina (philosopher-scientist), Nuzugum (anti-Qing heroine), Sadir Palwan (poet), Oghuz xan (mythological figure), Farabi (philosopher), Tumaris (queen), Zordun Sabir (author), Turdaxun aka (poet, musician), Abdushukur Muhemmedimin (professor, editor), Sutuq Bughra xan (king, converted to Islam), Hüseinjan Tehelli (scholar), Mirza Heyder Köregani (historian), aka-uka Musabayoflar (businessmen), Mulla Musa Sayrami (historian), Ehmedshah Qaraqashi (poet), Nimshëhit Ermiya Ili Sayrami (journalist and author), Mehmud Kashgheri (scholar and lexicographer), Abduxaliq Uyghur (poet), Elishir Neway (poet), Ehmet Ziya'i (poet), Ibrahim Muti'i (linguist, philologist), Lutpulla Mutellip (journalist), Memtili Ependi (poet), Babarehim Meshrep (poet), and AbdurëhimÖtkür (author, poet).

individuals. Moreover, it considers themes related to history (such as episodes taking place in the ancient past and in modern history) and issues related to current Uyghur society (such as religion, language, education, women's emancipation, and transmission of values). These themes are contextualized, taking into account the Chinese representation of minorities addressed in the works cited in the introduction of this article, as well as research articles concerning the characters presented in the series (as in the cases of Amannisa xan, Sutuq Bughra xan, and Oghuz).

The discussion addresses the following topics: the connection between Uyghurs and the Central Asian/Middle Eastern ancient past; the importance of the arts, education, and the Uyghur language; the focus on women's achievements; Islam as progress; rebellion against the oppressor; Uyghur entrepreneurship; and feelings and values transmitted in the series.31

4.1 *Go West: Connections with the Central Asian and Middle Eastern Ancient Past*

The series dedicates two books to two famous figures who lived during the Karakhanid empire, Mehmud Kashgheri (Mahmud al-Kashgari) and Yüsüp Xas Hajip (Yusuf Khass Hajib). This is a common and standard choice: the Karakhanid empire (840–1212) is part of the collective memory of Uyghurs and considered one of the founding elements of their cultural and historical heritage. This period is also known for the production of literature on early Chagatay as well as the conversion of the West Tarim to Islam. Moreover, Mehmud Kashgheri and Yüsüp Xas Hajip are cultural heroes. Their works are widely published, their lives are narrated in books, and their pictures are hung in public and private spaces.

Nonetheless, the series goes further back in time and dedicates one book to the pre-Islamic history of the region with the tale of Oghuz. This mythical hero is found in Turkic, Persian, and Ottoman legends. His story has been shaped according to the public and the historical period: while the *Oghuz name* writ- ten in the thirteenth century is an account of his magical birth and miraculous achievements, in its later version the character is included in an Islamic con- text as a descendant of Adam and Noah.32

31 The article gives the romanized names of the characters as they are written on the covers of the books, with spellings widely used in Western sources given in brackets. Regarding citations from the texts, the author employs the Uyghur Latin script (*Uyghur latin yëziqi*).

32 İ. Evrım Bınbaş, "Oğuz Khan Narratives," *Encyclopedia Iranica, online edition 2010,* http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/oguz-khan-narratives; N. Light, "Genealogy, History, Nation," *Nationalities Papers*, 39, no. 1 (2011): 33–53.

In the children's book, the story of Oghuz is set in a pre-Islamic context. The legendary hero is described as a strong, precocious child whose mother stopped looking after him. He soon became a huge and valorous man: "When Oghuz was forty days old, he started talking; his back looked like that of a wolf, his chest like that of a bear, his feet like those of an ox, and he started riding horses and hunting."33 The story includes some elements that are found in different versions of the legend, such as a wolf that appears in Oghuz's dreams and leads and protects him on the battlefield during the process of unification of the tribes. Oghuz is presented as the maker of Uyghur cohesion: "I will be- come Oghuz xan the ruler of Uyghurs, no matter what, I will become the rulerof Uyghurs."34

As far as ancient history is concerned, the series also includes characters that have played an important role in Central Asian and Middle Eastern history. As noted in the introduction, Chinese history tends to hide the contacts that non-Han local groups in Northwest China had with various political powers to the west, focusing exclusively on the relationships between the "Western regions" and the Han. In contrast, the series dedicates books to the doctor, philosopher, and mathematician Ibn Sina (known also as Avicenna), to the philosopher Farabi, and to the historian Mirza Heyder Köregani. These three men of wisdom were all born in Transoxiana: Ibn Sina in the region of Bukhara, Farabi presumably in what is currently southern Kazakhstan, and Mirza Heyder Köregani in Tashkent. Ibn Sina (alive in the tenth–eleventh centuries) and Farabi (alive in the ninth–tenth centuries) lived in the period of the Islamic Golden Age, which gave birth to important philosophic and scientific progress; Mirza Heyder Köregani lived during the Turko-Mongol and Persianized Moghul dynasty (1526–1857).35 In their biographies, their knowledge of Arabic and Persian, their wanderings and search for knowledge, and religious encounters with Buddhism, Shamanism, and Islam are emphasized. As the story of Farabi, mentioned in the series as the *sherq Aristotëli* ("the Aristotle of the East"), points out: "In the period of his childhood and youth, when Islam, Shamanism, and Buddhism opposed each other, Farabi made a firm decision to go to Araband Persian lands, in order to answer issues about religion and culture."36

33 Shinjang Bilqut Shirkiti (ed. Tursunbeg Ibrahim Taymas, Qurbanjan Baqi), *Bilqut balilar shexs hëkayiliri, Oghuz xan* (Ürümchi: Shinjang ëlëktron ün-sin neshriyati, 2011), 3.

34 Ibid., 7.

35 Farabi has two claimed origins, Persian and Turkic. The children's book supports the latter.

36 Shinjang Bilqut Shirkiti (ed. Tursunbeg Ibrahim Taymas, Qurbanjan Baqi), *Bilqut balilar shexs hëkayiliri, Farabi* (Ürümchi: Shinjang ëlëktron ün-sin neshriyati, 2011), 6.

The story of Mirza Heyder Köregani emphasizes historical connections between Xinjiang and Central Asia, narrating the friendship between his parents and the Sultan of Aksu. The story ends by saying that the historian wrote *pütün Shinjang we ottura Asyaning 14–16 esirlerdiki tarixi ehwali*, or "the history of Central Asia and the whole of Xinjiang in the fourteenth–sixteenth centuries."37

Choosing from among ancient historical figures, the series also includes Tumaris (Tomyris), the Scythian princess who defeated King Cyrus and is the protagonist of legends found in various Central Asian countries, such as Tur- key and Uzbekistan.

Reading about these characters, Uyghur children are exposed to episodes of history different from that presented in schoolbooks and provincial museums. This vision looks to Central Asia for symbols and historical developments. In this narration, protagonists of Chinese history such as Sima Qian or Confucius, or even famous women such as Empress Wu, are not included.

4.2 *Arts, Education, and Uyghur Language*

Several characters presented in the series, such as Ibn Sina, Farabi, Mehmud Kashgheri, Yüsüp Xas Hajip, Amannisa xan, Turdaxun aka, Ahmat Ziya'i, Elishir Neway, Babarehim Meshrep, Abdurëhim Ötkür, and Sadir Palwan, highlight dedication to knowledge.

Discourse on Uyghur intellectuals is often set in a Chinese paradigm. Benson, presenting the portrait of Ahmetjan Qasimi (a political leader involved in the birth of the Second East Turkestan Republic), points out some features that characterize cultural heroes in China: progressive ideas and modern instruction, difficult childhoods and struggles to obtain education, as well as consideration for the subaltern classes.38 The same features can also be found in the musical cultural hero Amannisa xan, a concubine of the sultan Abd ar-Rashid Khan of the Yarkand Khanate (1514–1570) who is famous for her role in the creation and collection of *muqams.*39 Ahmetjan Qasimi and Amannisa xan have lost their "real" historical nature (which is often difficult

37 Shinjang Bilqut Shirkiti (ed. Tursunbeg Ibrahim Taymas, Qurbanjan Baqi), *Bilqut balilar shexs hëkayiliri,* Mirza Heyder Köregani (Ürümchi: Shinjang ëlëktron ün-sin neshriyati, 2011), 24. In the Chinese version of the text, the word Xinjiang is omitted.

38 Benson, "Ahmetjan Kasimi: A Chinese Paradigm for a Uyghur National Hero".

39 Anderson, "The construction of Āmānnisā Khan as a Uyghur cultural hero"; Nathan Light, "Cultural politics and the pragmatics of resistance: Reflexive discourses on culture and history," in I. Bellér-Hann, C.M. Cèsaro, R. Harris, and J. Smith Finley (eds.), *Situating the Uyghurs between China and Central Asia*, (Hampshire: Ashgate: 2007), 49–68.

to research and understand) and have become symbols of Uyghur folklore, the standardization of which is one of the objectives of the Chinese state toward minorities.40

In the series, the portraits of Amannisa xan and Turdaxun aka (1881–1956) follow this tendency: the figures have simple origins, cultivate a passion for *muqams* from childhood and, in spite of various obstacles (the resentment of the court toward Amannisa xan and imprisonment of Turdaxun aka), succeed in valuing and collecting *muqams*. These symbols are therefore portrayed in a way that respects the interests of the state as they pertain to the standardization of ethnic culture. Talking about them is a way to negotiate with the system, showing the cultural achievements of Uyghurs and, at the same time, supporting Chinese state-building objectives.

Another element that is evident in the series is the importance of knowledge of the Arabic and Persian languages, as shown in the stories of Farabi, Mehmud Kashgheri, Yüsüp Xas Hajip and Ahmat Ziya'i. The Uyghur language is also emphasized, especially in the academic achievements of professor Ibrahim Muti'i (1920–2010). Trained in a Tatar (*jadīd*) school in Ürümchi, Ibrahim Muti'i devoted his life to teaching and developing high-quality teaching materials, studying and publishing about Uyghur, and translating Old Uyghur and Chagatay works into Modern Uyghur.

Ahmat Ziya'i, Ibrahim Muti'i, and Abdurëhim Ötkür are all presented as intellectuals committed to Uyghur who were also interested in other languages important to understanding Uyghur connections with other cultures, such as Persian, Arabic, and Russian. They successfully learned these languages, the teaching of which is neither supported nor common nowadays in Xinjiang; their educational choices show where the cultural actors that Uyghur intellectuals addressed were. Given the stigma currently associated with Uyghur, seen as a language that prevents Uyghur society from participating in Chinese social and economic progress, the life of these intellectuals gives children a glimmer of counter-discourse.41 These are perspectives that children cannot find in their history classes, nor in mainstream discourse centered on

40 Anderson, "The construction of Āmānnisā Khan as a Uyghur cultural hero"; Benson, "Ahmetjan Kasimi: A Chinese Paradigm for a Uyghur National Hero"; Light, "Cultural politics and the pragmatics of resistance: Reflexive discourses on culture and history."

41 Dwyer, "The Xinjiang Conflict: Uyghur Identity, Language Policy, and Political Discourse," 37; D. Byler, "The 'Patriotism' of not speaking Uyghur," *Supchina*, https://supchina.com/2019/01/02/the-patriotism-of-not-speaking-uyghur/ (last accessed 18 February 2019).

the importance of learning and speaking Chinese to attain a good place in Xinjiang society.

4.3 *Women's Power*

Among the thirty accounts, four are dedicated to women: the teacher Ayhan ana, the princess of *muqam* Amannisa xan, the anti-Qing hero Nuzugum, and the Scythian queen of Messagetae, Tumaris. These narratives are remarkable for the heroines' efforts to pursue their dreams, which contrast with sad private issues and obstacles. This is shown, for example, in the account of Ayhan ana, who, after the death of her parents and her husband, decides to dedicate her- self to the education of children, and in that of Amannisa xan, who, after the death of her mother, starts playing music as the only way to relieve the pain.

The heroines stand out for their heroic and noble actions. Ayhan ana directs a school, Tumaris leads an army to defend her people, Nuzugum resists the oppressive Manchu Qing government, and Amannisa xan plays and collects *muqams*.

The progressivism of the heroines and the support that they receive from their families and from the people, as in the cases of Amannisa xan, Ayhan ana, and Nuzugum, are central to the stories. In their accounts, a Uyghur society emerges that cares about civil values and gender equality. The role of women is also significant in the stories of the male characters, albeit different, more traditional, and heteronormative. Here, women are the mothers or spouses of successful men; mothers looking after their children are portrayed in the majority of the books.

Secular education, progressivism, and gender equality can easily be included in the paradigm of the socialist Chinese hero. Nonetheless, a counter discourse element is also identifiable: Uyghur heroines exist, and the society in which they lived was already working toward a secular and modern society before the advent of Chinese socialism.

4.4 *Islam and Civil Progress*

The conversion of Uyghurs to Islam is another historical event mentioned in the series, introduced with the story of Sutuq Bughra xan, the ruler of the Karakhanids who converted his kingdom to Islam. With the Karakhanids, Islam reached the western Tarim basin and later, thanks to Sutuq's son, the Buddhist kingdom of Hotan.

Sutuq Bughra xan is a mysterious figure in Inner Asian history. Although a symbol of the Eastern Central Asian conversion to Islam, little is known about the way in which he converted himself and his people. Hamada, who researched the genealogy of his cult, identified several sources, dating back to

the fifth to seventeenth centuries, that mention that his mausoleum was an important place of worship.42 According to a tradition preserved in Baghdad historiography, Sutuq Bughra xan was born in a populous village belonging to the tribe of the Yaghma; converted to Islam under the influence of a *faqīh* from Bukhara; and obtained a fatwa to kill his father, who did not convert to the new religion.43 The story of Sutuq Bughra xan is also a recurrent theme in *tazkirah,* which are biographical accounts connected to the veneration of local saints. The *Tazkirah of Satūq Bughrā-khān* emphasizes his predestined holiness (the Prophet Muhammad had announced that he would be the first Muslim Turk), his conversion to Islam through the medium of Abu al-Nasr Samani, and his kingdom's holy wars against Buddhism.44 After the cultural and religious rehabilitation of ethnic minorities promoted by the Chinese government in the 1980s, a novel written by Seypidin Azizi placed Sutuq Bughra xan among Uyghur national heroes.45

According to the book in the children's series, Sutuq was born in Balasaghun (capital of the Karakhanid empire, current Kyrgyzstan) and was converted to Islam while he was very young by Abu al-Nasr Samani. Sutuq did not kill his father, as told in other versions of his biography. Instead, he gave proof of benevolence, freeing a slave, who decided to serve Sutuq until the end of his days. During his kingdom, Sutuq built schools called *mektep* (a term that in modern Uyghur makes reference to secular schools, as opposed to the *medris*, or religious schools), and *bilik yurti* ("place of knowledge").46 Although the book leaves the impression that Sutuq was involved in the development of secular education, he probably established religious schools.

The story continues with an account of Sutuq's political and religious gestures, presented as peaceful and enlightened: "Sutuq Bughra xan was amicable with the surrounding dynasties. With the purpose of living in harmony, the Uyghur capital city of Qocho sent an embassy to Besh Baliq. Although the Qocho Uyghur had not yet converted to Islam, the delegation was warmly welcomed."47 In encounters with the representatives of neighboring powers,

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42 M. Hamada, "Le mausolée et le culte de Satuq Bughrâ Khân," *Journal of the History of Sufism*, 3 (2002): 63–87.

43 P.B. Golden, "The Karakhanid and early Islam," in D. Sinor (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 343–370.

44 Thum, *The sacred routes of Uyghur history*, 128–29.

45 *Sutuq Bughrakhan,* 1987.

46 The terms are translated in the Chinese version as *shūyuàn* "academy of classical learning" and *xuéxiào* "school."

47 Shinjang Bilqut Shirkiti (ed. Tursunbeg Ibrahim Taymas, Qurbanjan Baqi), *Bilqut balilar shexs hëkayiliri, Sutuq Bughra xan* (Ürümchi: Shinjang ëlëktron ün-sin neshriyati, 2011), 13.

Sutuq "asks for the abolishment of slavery and for rule based on unity, equality, and benevolence."48 As in the novel by Saypidin Azizi, Sutuq is a modern ruler who fights feudal injustices.

The narration follows a tendency found in the Chinese representation of ethnic minorities and their heroes: Sutuq is depicted in a positive and favorable way; he had good relationships with neighboring powers; he fought for unity and equality; and he contributed to the development of secular education. The khan is therefore presented in a way that respects Chinese standards of ethnic history, simultaneously introducing the Islamization of the Uyghur region brought about by a famous figure in the local history of the area.

4.5 *Rebellion Against the Oppressors*

In the series, characters that lived during the Manchu Qing dynasty and the period of the nationalistic party *Guómíndǎng* (gmd) are depicted as brave people who fight against political authoritarianism. Here, the depiction of the Manchu Qing government and the gmd follows the discourse in which minorities are oppressed by a despotic and tyrannical power. In the series, Nuzugum fights against Manchu Qing despotism. Ayhan Ana, with her project of education; Ahmat Ziya'i, with his support of the peasants' uprising; and Abduxaliq Uyghur, with his involvement in the Hami insurrection (1931–1932), all experienced the persecution of the GMD. The characters' noble moral values are juxtaposed in the communist historical discourse against the feudal and decadent Manchu Qing dynasty and the oppressive GMD.

Some characters are also victims of the Cultural Revolution, an event that in the post-Mao era has been criticized and condemned by the Chinese Communist Party as well as by intellectuals, particularly with the emergence of scar literature in the 1980s. Abdushukur Muhemmedimin and Ibrahim Muti'i experienced the humiliations of the labor camps. The lexicon used in their stories consists of specific terms related to the politics of the Cultural Revolution, such as *istil tüzitish* ("behavior correction"), *yëza turmushi körmigen yash marksizmchi* ("young Marxists who have not seen the country's life"), *ong- chi* ("rightist, conservative") as well as *medeniyet zor ënqilabi* ("great cultural revolution").49

The book does not omit the sufferings of the intellectuals during this period. For example, Abdushukur Muhemmedin "met many sufferings" and "came

48 Ibid., 14.

49 Shinjang Bilqut Shirkiti (ed. Tursunbeg Ibrahim Taymas, Qurbanjan Baqi), *Bilqut balilar shexs hëkayiliri, Abdushukur Muhemmedin* (Ürümchi: Shinjang ëlëktron ün-sin neshri- yati, 2011), 15–16.

across political persecution."50 Ibrahim Muti'i "was unfairly put into jail until 1978."51 The stories end with the reinsertion of the famous scholars into the intellectual and social life of the Chinese state. Abdushukur Muhemmedimin resumes his job as a professor, passing on his knowledge in Japan; Ibrahim Muti'i is also invited to prestigious conferences abroad, and his writings are revived.

4.6 *Uyghurs and Entrepreneurship*

The series highlights the importance of intellectuals (men of wisdom, poets, and writers) as well as figures fighting for rights such as education and social equality. Although less emphasized, entrepreneurship and economic self-determination are other qualities that the protagonists in the series demonstrate. For example, the *aka-uka Musabayoflar*, or Musabay brothers, led a commercial venture.

The Musabay brothers are a symbol of the Uyghur intellectual and cultural achievements of the 1920s and 1930s. They were born into a family of merchants, supported the *jadīd* movement, and were involved in the construction of secular modern schools.52 Moreover, part of their family was politically involved in the First East Turkestan Republic. Native to Artush, they moved to the Ili valley to set up their business.53

The book focuses on their commercial adventures: inspired by the development of factories in Russia and Germany and by shoes crafted in Italy, the Mu- sabay brothers wanted to set up an internationally competitive shoe business and build their own leather factory. After encountering derision, lack of support, and adversity, such as problems with funding and the Russian Empire's customs, the brothers succeeded in building their own business. Their achievement became part of the economic history of Central Asia: "This factory made an important contribution to the development of simple and high-class shoe products as well as to electronic and telephone communication means, not only in Xinjiang but also in Central Asia."54

50 Ibid., 15–16.

51 Shinjang Bilqut Shirkiti (ed. Tursunbeg Ibrahim Taymas, Qurbanjan Baqi), *Bilqut balilar shexs hëkayiliri, Ibrahim Muti'i* (Ürümchi: Shinjang ëlëktron ün-sin neshriyati, 2011), 15.

52 The *jadīd* school system rejected Chinese traditional and canonical learning, focusing on the learning of subjects such as foreign languages, science, and religion.

53 D. Brophy, *Uyghur Nation*, *Reform and Revolution in the Russia-Chinese Frontier* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 86–114; J.A. Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads: A Histo- ry of Xinjiang* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 171–74; O. Klimeš, *Struggle by the Pen*, *The Uyghur Discourse of Nation and National Interest, c. 1900–1949* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

54 Shinjang Bilqut Shirkiti (ed. Tursunbeg Ibrahim Taymas, Qurbanjan Baqi), *Bilqut balilar shexs hëkayiliri, Aka-uka Musabayoflar* (Ürümchi: Shinjang ëlëktron ün-sin neshriyati, 2011), 25.

The Musabay brothers' success is not incorporated in the nationalistic discourse of Chinese economic development, but rather in that of the Central Asian world. However, the story also reiterates a common cliché in the depiction of Muslims in China: the innate success of Uyghur, Hui, and Salar in entrepreneurship and commerce. It does not mention the involvement of the brothers in the *jadīd* movement, which can easily be related to separatism and Pan-Turkism, but instead limits the narrative to entrepreneurship. The story provides an example of what Scott calls the public transcript: emphasis is put on that which can be inserted in a politically correct discourse.55

4.7 *Life, Feelings and Values*

Another relevant aspect in the series is the transmission of feelings and values through the lives of the famous characters.

First, the series highlights death as a phase of life, which brings to completion the achievements of the famous characters: a Muslim-style tomb is portrayed on the final page of the books, with people paying homage to the deceased. In several stories, the characters often visit the tombs of their relatives and pray. The importance given in the series to mourning and paying homage at the tomb is a significant custom in Uyghur culture and history–similar, for example, to pilgrimages to the *mazar*. At the same time, mourning is an element that Islam shares with other faiths in China, such as Buddhism, Confucianism, and forms of folk religion. Grieving for a relative or a person important in the community connects Uyghur with filial piety and with virtues of respect recognized across China's different ethnic groups, including the Han.

During their lives, the famous characters encounter difficulties that they overcome, such as the early deaths of their loved ones, separation, prison, and oppression. For example, Amannisa xan and Ayhan ana experienced grief while they are still young, and Tumaris saw her son die in war. Abdushukur Muhemmedimim, Ibrahim Muti'i, and Ahmat Ziya'i also experienced hardship. Determination and strength are therefore emblematic in the stories.

The series also celebrates friendship, brotherhood, and mutual help (as in the relationship between Nuzugum and her brother in prison); respect and esteem for family members, elders, and mentors (as in the stories of Ahmat Ziya'i, Mirza Heyder Köregani, and Farabi); and compassion, benevolence, and tolerance (as in the episode in which Sutuq Bughra xan frees a slave).

55 Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts.*

The series does not employ emotional language, but addresses sever- al feelings in a concise style: grief (*yürek-baghri lexte lexte bolmaq*, "to be broken-hearted," when Amannisa xan loses her mother),56 jealousy (*chong xanish hesep qilidiken*, "the princess became jealous," reflective of the rivalrous attitude of the first queen of the sultan of Yarkand toward Amannisa xan, seen as *sehraliq*, or a "rustic person"),57 and revenge (in Tumaris's *qangha taza toyuwëlish*, or "thirst for blood," in response to the king who cheated her and killed her son).58 Love is addressed in the form of affection between family members. For example, Nuzugum's father played an important role in Nuzugum's life after the death of her mother (*uninggha hem ana, hem apa bolup, amal bar anisining yoqluqini chandurmay chong qiptu* – "he became for her a father and a mother; he raised her without making her feel the absence of a mother").59 Love is also found in the form of affinity, as in the attraction between Turdaxun aka and a woman who shares with him a passion for *muqams* and who will become his wife (*Turdaxungha ashiq iken* – "she fell in love with Turdaxun"), or when the young Mehmud Kashgheri falls in love with a young woman who collects water at the river (*ikkisi tonush- up, bir-birige ashiq bolushuptu* – "the two got to know each other and fell in love").60

The life of the historical characters therefore elicits universal feelings and values that are not in conflict with those transmitted in national education. Values that are often portrayed in the series, such as rebellion again despotism or passion and respect for studying and learning, are also supported in Chinese national discourse. The former, rebellion against despotism, is present in the anti-Qing, anti-GMD vision of history, while the latter, studying, is fostered by the current system of Chinese education as well as by recent propaganda and state-building projects such as the Chinese Dream. The contents of the series are therefore included in a politically correct discourse.

56 Shinjang Bilqut Shirkiti (ed. Tursunbeg Ibrahim Taymas, Qurbanjan Baqi), *Bilqut balilar shexs hëkayiliri, Amannisa xan* (Ürümchi: Shinjang ëlëktron ün-sin neshriyati, 2011), 2.

57 Ibid., 18.

58 Shinjang Bilqut Shirkiti (ed. Tursunbeg Ibrahim Taymas, Qurbanjan Baqi), *Bilqut balilar shexs hëkayiliri, Tumaris* (Ürümchi: Shinjang ëlëktron ün-sin neshriyati, 2011), 20.

59 Shinjang Bilqut Shirkiti (ed. Tursunbeg Ibrahim Taymas, Qurbanjan Baqi), *Bilqut balilar shexs hëkayiliri, Nuzugum* (Ürümchi: Shinjang ëlëktron ün-sin neshriyati, 2011), 3.

60 Shinjang Bilqut Shirkiti (ed. Tursunbeg Ibrahim Taymas, Qurbanjan Baqi), *Bilqut balilar shexs hëkayiliri, Turdaxun aka* (Ürümchi: Shinjang ëlëktron ün-sin neshriyati, 2011), 14; Shinjang Bilqut Shirkiti (ed. Tursunbeg Ibrahim Taymas, Qurbanjan Baqi), *Bilqut bali- lar shexs hëkayiliri,* Mehmud Kashgheri (Ürümchi: Shinjang ëlëktron ün-sin neshriyati, 2011), 9.

5 Conclusions

The series provides an example of the transmission of Uyghur history in a context in which younger generations are exposed to a model of mass education that focuses on Chinese history and patriotism. It reiterates the numerous relationships between the Uyghur and Central Asian historical heritages. The approach is opposite to that promoted in public education, which stresses encounters between the Uyghur and Han Chinese civilizations.

Reading the stories, children are exposed to Uyghur artistic and intellectual achievements and to leading figures from their community in the fields of education, entrepreneurship, and social progress. Languages that are not promoted today, such as Uyghur, Arabic, or Persian, are presented as part of cultural heritage. Religious practices are part of the characters' stories, often represented by the ritual of paying homage to tombs. Besides Islam, exemplified by the history of Sutuq Bughra xan as an enlightened Muslim ruler, the series includes in the narration the pre-Islamic past with the characters of Oghuz xan and Tumaris. This deconstructs the idea of a Uyghurness based exclusively on the recognition of Islam as a primary distinguishing feature and presents to children a more multifaceted vision of Uyghur belonging.

Moreover, portraying characters that come from the different geographical areas of the current Xinjiang region (e.g. Yarkand, Kashgar, Yëngisar, Artush, Kucha, Turpan, and Qumul), the books exhibit an inclusive vision of Uyghur people without internal regionalism.

The lives of the historical figures portrayed in the series shed light on a Uyghur past in which the paternalist influence of Han-centered nationalism is difficult to find. Indeed, the series does not involve characters and symbols that are connected with Chinese history and culture, such as the heroes of the "Journey to the West" or the concubine Xiang Fei, who was married to the emperor Qianlong.

In the context of a top-down education system where Uyghur history is marginalized, the series offers a form of counter-discourse. The education that parents can provide through reading the series outside of state-sponsored schooling is a "parallel arena," as referred to by Fraser.61 As in the cases of the Mongol hero Ulanhu and the Tibetan curriculum adopted in Songpan County, the series constructs a space in which it is possible to discuss minority culture and history.

61 Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy."

This approach is supported by a strategy that shares with Chinese discourse the idea of multi-centric nationalism, values, historical facts, and terminology; it represents a mix of dominant and marginal discourse. In this way, the younger generations are exposed to symbols that create group cohesion while respecting the dialogue between the center (the Chinese state) and the locality (the Uyghur community).

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