

Xinjiang's Urban Heritage

Conflict and Cooperation on the New Silk Road

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Introduction

The spatial and temporal scale and complexity of the ancient Silk Road has been transformed into a brand that supports a range of development and modernization projects taking pace across Eurasia. Many nation-states are tapping into their Silk Road past for the purposes of modernization, development, and creation of national identities. This process is critically explored examining the “authorized heritage discourse” of the Silk Road – those parts that are highlighted in particular, and dominate over others, according to top-down principles of “value” and “knowledge”. The alleged benefits of the authorized Silk Road discourse are contrasted through an examination of the lands that they purport to represent. Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) is an area where urban sites have been transformed according to the top-down values of the authorized Silk Road discourse. However, it is argued that many of the local residents of these cities do not find benefit in these transformations, and instead reveal some of the core issues of the contemporary usage of the Silk Road. Two of these issues are highlighted in particular: gentrification and spatial cleansing. These have affected entire communities, which are assimilated into the Chinese nation through changing modes of identity formation. Meanwhile, cities are given of a false veneer of benefit that masks the new processes of exploitation that are taking place.

Chapter One: Research Context and Approach

Academic Context

This network of countries, stretching from the Black Sea and eastern Mediterranean to the mountain ranges of the Himalaya, Tian Shan and Pamir, is rich [in] commodities that help power and feed the world: oil and gas, rare-earth minerals, wheat and corn. Yet it remains a region we pay scant attention to and know little about. If we are to make sense of the past, the present and the future, we should be looking less to the West and the East and much more to the bridge that links the two.

– Frankopan, 2015, 31

The Silk Road is a subject that has continued to attract academic attention since it was first identified by the German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen in 1877 (Waugh, 2007). Greater attention has been focused on defining the extent and nature of trade and exchange on the Silk Roads, with the aim of challenging the notion that it was trade involving the Eastern and Western termini that was of the greatest importance, or that it was silk that was the commodity of singular importance brought along these routes. This has contributed to a more nuanced perspective of the composition of the historic Silk Roads (Whitfield 2004; Whitfield 2015; Christian, 2000, 9; van Oers, 2010). The Silk Road has been examined in terms of its role in the definition of national identities (Xie, 2016), in diplomatic relations (Frankopan, 2015), in the extent of state involvement in its past (Silverstein, 2007; Sims, 1978).

Cities have historically been the focal points of Silk Road trade; they were nodes where diverse peoples met and exchanged their goods and ideas, and places where the macro-scale complexity and diversity of the Silk Roads were concentrated (Beckwith, 2009). Today, cities are locations act as a medium for collective memory about the past (Bianco, 2010, 28). They are places where local culture and identity interacts with national policies in the process of globalization (Logan, 2002, 143), and where resistance to these processes is concentrated (Bender and Winer, 2001).

The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in western China has become a focal point for the study of ethnic, urban, and heritage policies of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Heritage is just one avenue in debates regarding the relationship between cultural heritage and China's legal system (CUAWG, 2010), changing state ideologies (Logan, 2002, 143), and the nature of China's treatment of its ethnic minorities in of Han and non-Han identity formation processes and the creation and maintenance of the Chinese nation-state (Elliot, 2015). Much attention has been directed towards threatened heritage sites in Xinjiang that are firmly archaeological (Agnew, 2013), and the violent erasure of the Silk Road's archaeological record has been a focal point elsewhere in Eurasia, most famously with the events at Bamiyan, Afghanistan, in 2001 (Meskell 2002, 564). But relatively little scholarly attention has been given to threats faced by *living* heritage sites in Xinjiang.

China's treatment of its urban heritage has been linked to broader issues observed across the country: of changing family structures (Arkaraprasertkul, 2011), of the classification of "historically and culturally important cities" (*lishi wenhua mingcheng*) (Merle and Youjun, 2003, 3; Li and Liu, 2005, X), of the relationship between cultural heritage and land rights (Silverman 2011; Bender and Winer, 2001), and of the role of human rights (Smith and Akagawa, 2009). China is met with a difficult situation that has emerged in similar contexts around the globe; how to continue developing and modernizing its historic urban centres whilst also being sustainable (Chen, 2005) and being respectful the role of cities in the representation of local and regional culture (Li and Liu, 2005),

whilst also implementing best practices regarding authenticity and heritage conservation of living landscapes (Shepherd, 2009 in Silverman, 2011).

Research question

This thesis explores the motivations and aspirations of those who evoke the Silk Road today. What is the institutional context of Silk Road heritage? Who are the individuals and organizations that authorize and benefit from it, and what is their relationship to local, individual stakeholders whose interests they are supposed to represent? How does heritage erasure work in the context of Xinjiang's urban development programmes, and in what way can this be related to the broader use of the Silk Road in heritage discourses? Xinjiang is chosen for being a place where China's ethnic, urban, and heritage policies can be critically examined in relation to their nation-building and -branding purposes, and in relation to the strategic importance of the region's geographic location for the Chinese state and Central Asian region. The urban development projects of Xinjiang found global attention between 2009 and 2010, especially focused on the destruction of Kashgar's historic urban centre. But these projects have by no means ceased; on the contrary, more and more cities in Xinjiang have been developed and modernized, and they continue to be locations of conflicting claims regarding heritage ownership and identity formation.

The project centres on the following hypothesis: urban heritage sites in Xinjiang are contested locations that are managed according to an "authorized" Silk Road heritage discourse and a development and modernization package that is given legitimacy by a Silk Road "brand". This can be connected to transformations of national identity and the assimilation of the region and its population into the Chinese state.

My main research questions are:

- To what extent has an authorized “Silk Road” heritage discourse been used to guide urban development in Xinjiang, and who are the most powerful stakeholders in this discourse?
- Has the transformation of urban heritage values and sites resulted in a transformation of local identities, and in what ways?
- For what reasons have conflicts arisen as a result of this process, and in what contexts has there been cooperation between stakeholders?

Relevance

This project is targeted towards anyone that is interested in the future of cultural heritage routes. The use of Silk Road heritage has emerged the same time as other comparable international thematic routes are being formed, including the Maritime Silk Road (China Daily, 2014a), the Spice Route (Elliot, 2014), the Incense Route (UNESCO, 2005), and the Tea Horse Road (CCTV, 2009a) to name a few. These cultural routes share similar issues, insofar as they fail to accurately represent the complexity and diversity of perspectives that the historic networks involved. Routes such as these must find a balance between local, national and international values and claims to ownership.

The urban redevelopment programmes in Xinjiang are a single example of broader problem that faces Chinese cities, where communities around the country are being broken up through forcible eviction, and their homes destroyed (Human Rights Watch, 2004). The effects of ongoing urbanization in Xinjiang will only be exacerbated in the coming years, as the Chinese authorities follow through with plans to resettle and relocate thousands of nomadic communities (UHRP, 2012, 29; Liao et al 2015), just as many Central Asian states are trying to get their so-called “floating populations” of nomadic peoples, most of whom are ethnic minorities, to become sedentary (Reeves, 2014). The Chinese state has been eager to describe the benefits of the “relocation and settlement program” – they would have access to basic public services, improved incomes, and the opportunities available to modern urbanites (State Council Information Office of the People's

Republic of China, 2015). But problems that could occur with this ongoing policy have already been identified, based on similar resettlements that have taken place in Tibet, Mongolia, and Qinghai (UHRP, 2012, 51-53).

As China becomes increasingly active in pursuing their Central Asian interests, the spotlight will be focused on how they treat the heritage assets of their neighbours. This is illustrated in the case of the Mes Aynak mines in Afghanistan, where Chinese extractive industries has invested into excavating a copper reserve with an estimated worth of up to \$1 trillion (Hormats, 2011). New Silk Road supporters are quick to describe the potential for economic benefits that this will bring (Fedorenko, 2013, 7), but often fail to mention the enormous threat to Afghanistan's cultural heritage that the project entails (Lawler, 2011).

Sources

I made use of a standard desk-based assessment involving a range of primary and secondary documentary sources to establish the historic context of the Silk Road heritage discourse and urbanization in Xinjiang. I drew upon a wide a variety of sources, ranging from official state media to non-governmental organization texts and journalistic sources, the most important archives being the *China Daily* newspaper operated by the PRC State Council Information Office, the *China Central Television* (CCTV) website overseen by the PRC State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television, and reports produced by the Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP), Human Rights Watch, and the Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC). Two additional documents were particularly relevant for understanding the creation and use of Silk Road heritage: the nomination document *Silk Roads: Initial Section of the Silk Roads, the Routes Network of Tian-shan Corridor* prepared by representatives from the People's Republic of China, Republic of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyz Republic (2014), and *The Silk Roads: an ICOMOS Thematic Study* edited by Tim Williams (2014).

Methodology

Heritage truths are not intrinsic, but created through communication and interaction. What is held to be true about heritage changes over time, depending on certain social contexts and the motivations of stakeholders involved. Anything declared as being heritage intrinsically possess a form of heritage value, whether the claimant is aware of it or not (Mason, 2002, 8). I believe that the Silk Road serves as a discursive conduit of messages from a particular source with a particular background to a particular audience in a particular place and time. For this reason, I made use of critical discourse analysis to examine the “producers” or “senders” that convey the Silk Road’s “message”. My discourse analysis focused on mapping out the repeated use of certain tropes or stereotypes regarding the old and new Silk Roads, Xinjiang’s cities, and the Uyghur people through an initial assessment of the primary and secondary sources, before making more rigorous analysis of the main sources, extracting segments where the words and phrases were used and examining the context of their use.

Critical discourse analysis was suitable for the first research question, insofar as it could help identify the position or bias of the authorized Silk Road discourse. Although it cannot tell us how these statements affect their target audience *per se*, it allowed me to explore the meaning of statements evoking the Silk Road within a certain social context. But discourses also crystallize into institutions that physically create and shape entire landscapes, and can fundamentally affect entire groups of people. The initial “text-only analysis” (Philo, 2007, 185) was then linked to one example of real-world implications and tangible effects, by looking at what the discourse “constructs” in Xinjiang. The Silk Road does not exist solely in language, but has real world effects; not only material objects – the urban landscapes of Xinjiang – but also the people whose lives are inextricably connected to these spaces. The only way to absolutely validate this is to conduct fieldwork in Xinjiang. Although it was not possible for this thesis, this is an ideal opportunity to take a broad macro-scale view the Silk Road is being presented to the world and used by China, which can later be used as the basis for field-based research.

Chapter Two: Critical Approaches to Silk Road Heritage

Top-down heritage frameworks

I take a critical approach to heritage, based on the understanding the heritage does not exist but is made. Heritage is never presented to us as a tidy package. There is no “as always was” when it comes to heritage; it is not simply about the revival of things “as they were”. Heritage is instead a discourse – it exists by virtue of someone declaring it so. All heritage is negotiated (and thus flexible) – meaning that only certain aspects of a heritage site’s past narrative and material evidence are chosen as being representative of its value and authenticity. People and goods did travel across Eurasia, causing cultural interactions with long-lasting effects, but this is only known as the Silk Road, and only defined as “Chinese”, “Uyghur”, or “universal” value because someone has described it as such (Smith, 2006, 15).

Many heritage sites and practices, and in particular those identified and endorsed by the UNESCO World Heritage framework, are entangled in what known as the “authorized heritage discourse” (Smith, 2006, 15) – a certain set of predefined criteria used to classify “cultural”, “natural”, and “intangible” sites and practices that are considered to be universally applicable. The Eurocentric and top-down nature of the World Heritage system has been explored among scholars (Arizpe 2000: 36; Cleere 2001; and Yoshida 2004: 109 in Smith and Akagawa, 2009, 1), who recognize that many of the criteria used imply that heritage is an easily identifiable “thing”. The authorized heritage discourse helps to create a canon, a global hierarchy of value (Herzfeld, 2004), that primes and frames all communication of heritage significance and value. This has numerous

potential uses and misuses, and moreover can feel like that is all that must be said about a heritage site. The authorized heritage discourse has been criticized for its huge agenda-setting power, and for the boundaries that it creates: between “past” and “present” values and aspirations of certain groups; and between “experts” with the authority to write about or work with the past and those without. The past has no influence on how heritage is identified, reified, and consumed.

World Heritage is frequently a status symbol for the country that contains it. However, although it brings with it a range of expectations and obligations regarding site conservation and management, World Heritage status affords no extra legal protection beyond that which already exists in the state. It is state parties who possess the real power in how their heritage – including World Heritage – is managed and used. Responsibility for representation and involvement of local or less-powerful stakeholders is restricted to the highest officials from these member states. The discourse of universalism – of placing importance on one group of people, the world community – is contrasted by the cultural particularism of nation-states that stress their ownership and use of heritage for the creation of imagined national communities. For this reason, Anderson’s (2006) approach to nation-building is useful when examining Xinjiang and the uses of Silk Road heritage in the present day, as imagined communities are created based on their particular role in the Silk Road.

A strong anti-universalist perspective has emerged in academia, amongst those who maintain that we must “deconstruct the idea that conceives heritage as a ‘common heritage of Humanity’ in Universal terms” (Alonso Gonzalez, 2014, 367). People do not like being told what to say or think about their heritage. Restricting “universal” value to certain predefined criteria threatens the very universality at its core, as it silences and dismisses the right of each individual to find what makes that heritage valuable and significant for them. Approaching heritage as a discrete and bounded thing dismisses and silences the variety and complexity of alternative perspectives that exist, especially amongst those whose value in the heritage goes against the *status quo* (Smith, 2006, 31).

Addressing the authorized heritage discourse

Embedded in my approach are a number of assumptions I hold regarding the relationship between people, between people and their physical environment, and between people and their relationship to the past (Uzzell, 2009).

An authorized heritage discourse carries with it certain assumptions: that all humans value certain physical and symbolic aspects of the past as heritage, that they do so according to the same criteria of value, and that geographical distance has no negative impact on this value (Byrne, 1991). This makes it such an effective tool for governance, international relations, and the creation of national identity. Agrawal's (2001) model for examining the governance of heritage commons is useful for examining authorized heritage discourses, by focusing attention on the character of the heritage resources drawn upon, the user groups involved, the institutional framework, and the broader socio-political context. Winter's (2015) approach to heritage diplomacy serves as a useful means by which state uses of heritage can be analysed, in terms of "international cooperation" efforts supported through the use of shared heritage assets. Critical discourse analysis is a useful method to identify the ways that specific individuals or groups can shape the "flow of knowledge" of the Silk Road, and how these people become entangled with questions of power, domination, and resistance (Schneider, 2013). It can help to show that the norms and values that are linked to the Silk Road are not fixed, but have nonetheless become institutionalized and ultimately accepted as being "authentic", "appropriate", or "politically correct". According to Schneider (2013), "discourse "crystallizes" into institutions, and prompts societies to create and shape the physical world they inhabit in specific ways rather than others". This paper focuses on what claims have been made regarding the tangible and symbolic significance of the Silk Road, and comparing those value claims with present-day living landscapes through which the Silk Road passed.

"Authenticity" is particularly important when discussing urban heritage. I identify with Israel's (1972) relational model, in which the nature of authenticity is focused on the repetitive and

constantly changing nature of social processes, and on the particular social and historical context of action (Uzzell, 2009). Herzfeld (2015) draws attention to issues that can emerge with authenticity in urban contexts. He highlights the distinction that is made between elements of a historic landscape that are perceived as possessing heritage value and those that are seen as metaphorical “dirt”, shows how this can result in spatial separation and gentrification (Herzfeld, 2015, 9). The metaphor of “dirtiness” has to do with perceiving things according to certain fixed, preconceived terms of value and desirability (Douglas, 2003), and for this reason a distinction should be made between “conservation” – a methodology based on communication and education that aims to preserve the existence and living significance of heritage resources – and “restoration” – a method that focuses on the focusing attention on certain subjective qualities over others (Jokilehto 2010, 62).

A distinction can be made between whether stakeholders are treated as insiders or outsiders with regards to their authority over heritage. “Insiders” are those who are more involved in the creation and use of heritage narratives and associated materials, and have more influence over how heritage values are identified and protected (Mason, 2012, 17). Examples include state officials, policy makers, and expert advisors. In contrast, outsiders are those who have a stake in the heritage, but possess limited or no power to influence the process of its creation and use (Mason, 2012, 17). This dichotomy is active and intentional, enforced through institutional or bureaucratic frameworks that favour certain “expert” groups, or those who possess economic or political power, whilst limiting the participation and perspective of others.

I believe that the situation in Xinjiang is reflective of a more abiding problem in the global context – that of urban heritage as a focus for exploitation and conflict due to the false separation of tangible and intangible elements. Heritage is not just the management (and misuse) of the materiality of the past and present, but of the social and cultural processes involved (Waterton and Watson, 2013, X). Heritage refers to the places, practices, ideas and experiences that are meaningful to people, and moreover to the context of that meaningfulness. It is more than simply saying

something is of heritage value, but understanding the living processes from which that value is formed. Like heritage, values are subjective, changeable, and based on present circumstances. Bennett (2012) draws attention to the “place attachment” aspects of urban landscapes, insofar as feelings of “threat” that are linked to urban contexts come from feelings of “home” and “belonging”. This also relates to the nature and use of cultural “traditions”. Traditions often present themselves with reference to the past as being old, even if they are recent or invented (Rüsen, 2012, 46), and are drawn upon as a source of legitimacy through their temporal depth, serving as enduring systems of value and inherited ways of understanding the world. Therefore, the idea of “tradition” is frequently associated within a discourse of origins, kinship, authority, and duty (Rüsen, 2012, 46).

Traditions are closely connected to performance and rituals, produced and reproduced in a repetitive manner through living practice that creates continuity and collective memory (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 2012). According to UNESCO’s Operational Guidelines “a continuing landscape is one which retains an active social role in contemporary society closely associated with the traditional way of life, and in which the evolutionary process is still in progress” (UNESCO, 2015, 72). Van Oers (2010, 65) highlights the fact that the pursuit of authenticity must not prevent the capacity for cultures to change in the future according to their own aspirations and ways of life.

However, cultural heritage is increasingly commodified, packaged and presented to global consumers (Goulding, 2000). Tourism has played an important role in this process, as entire communities and spaces become redesigned in order to meet outsiders’ expectations regarding the “traditional” (Al Sayyad, 2001, vii) , as shown by Zhu’s (2015, 600-601) analyses of the religious communities and heritage landscapes of the Dongba priests of Lijiang and the Xuanzang pagoda in Xi’an. Elected officials and heritage “experts” are not always the main players in the creation and use of heritage; it is increasingly entrepreneurs, investors, and stakeholders with a range of other interests that are seeking ways to make the past “useful” by producing heritage assets according to the commercial and entertainment expectations of tourists.

Chapter Three: Characteristics of the Authorized Silk Road Heritage Discourse

The Silk Roads, Old and New

The ancient Silk Road is generally described to have “ended” with the growth of maritime trade and travel across the Indian Ocean, as well as the changing political situation in Central Asia at roughly the same time – which is cited as being one of the reasons that Central Asia became economically and culturally “cut off” from world affairs from the early fourteenth century CE (Hormats, 2011). But it was not until the 19th century that the concept of an ancient “Silk Road” first emerged (Waugh, 2007), and not until 2013 that the concept of a “New Silk Road” emerged following President Xi Jinping’s visit to Kazakhstan, in which he unveiled the “Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st century Maritime Silk Road” strategy (MFAPRC, 2013). This plan described China’s general aspirations regarding trade and politics in Central Asia, Russia and Europe, as well as maritime links with states joined by the Indian Ocean and South China Sea.

Since then, China has served as the driving force behind the New Silk Road project. Although ancient trans-regional trade existed in Eurasia long before China’s involvement, and continued even in China’s absence (Christian, 2000), it is frequently China’s involvement during the Han, Tang, and Ming dynasties that are cited as the origins or periods of significance in Silk Road history (Liu, 2016; Li 2016). China has invested substantial funds into the New Silk Road project (Shi and Yang, 2014; Matthew, 2015), an improved road and rail network is being created that will connect China with its Central Asian neighbours, and natural resources from these countries, including gas and precious minerals, are being transported to China, and have benefitted from the growth of cross-border *renminbi* usage (Zhong and Jiang, 2016).

With China as the “proponent and promoter” of the New Silk Road (Liu, 2016), the New Silk Road idea has spread since its inception, and today state officials and entrepreneurs from around the world are eager to tap into the economic potential of individual Central Asian states and trans-Eurasian trade and tourism in general (Fedorenko, 2013). Western interests continue to be focused on the Silk Road heartland, exemplified by the continued efforts of the United States of America to promote neoliberal economic and political policies in Central Asian countries (Fedorenko, 2013, 4), and this has even been met statements of support by the Chinese state (CCTV, 2016). Central Asian states have eagerly accepted access to Chinese and global markets, though they are also wary of the potential threats that this might bring to the region (Hyer, 2006, 82).

Silk Road World Heritage

The Silk Road world heritage nomination emerged in a specific context, in which theories and best-practices regarding cultural heritage routes and trans-boundary heritage were being debate at the same time as the New Silk Road project gathered momentum across Eurasia. The idea of “cultural routes” emerged from the mid-1990s, initially conceived as a “set of values whose whole is greater than the sum of its parts and through which it gains its meaning” (ISCCR, 1994), then clarified in the 2008 World Heritage Operational Guidelines to be specifically based on the idea of exchange and dialogue between countries or regions that is continuous over space and time, and finally stated that the sites they contain must be chosen for their contribution to an idea of Outstanding Universal Value that the route is believed to possess (Williams, 2014, 3).

Within this context, “Integral Study of the Silk Roads: Roads of Dialogue” project began in 1987, aiming to explore the complexity of interactions that emerged through the historic Silk Road. The 1994 *Samarkand Declaration* called for “...a peaceful and fruitful rebirth of these legendary routes as one of the world’s richest cultural tourism destinations” (UNTWO 2014). It was not until

approximately 2003 that the Silk Road was being practically considered for World Heritage designation (Jing and van Oers, 2004). The first Coordinating Committee for the Silk Roads Serial Nomination met in Xi'an in November 2009, following a series of workshops held in Turfan, Samarkand, Dushanbe, Xi'an, and Almatay in the preceding years (Williams, 2014, 3). An initial reconnaissance of the potential "Oasis Route" between Xi'an and Kashgar took place in 2003, involving staff from UNESCO's World Heritage Centre and China's State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH), with similar fieldwork conducted in 2004 and 2006 (van Oers, 2010, 66). In each of these gatherings, heritage "experts" coordinated their effort to define the geographical and chronological boundaries of a Silk Road World Heritage "site". ICOMOS were heavily involved throughout the designation process of the Silk Road, especially through the comparative analysis made of sites from different countries to justify the selection of certain heritage assets over alternatives (Williams, 2014, 58).

A number of challenges emerged in the process of Silk Road World Heritage nomination. How could boundaries be designated on a historic phenomenon with such a vast temporal and spatial scale? How could the value of the Silk Road be identified, and who should decide what tangible aspects of the present landscape are considered representative of that value? Although the nomination of the Silk Road initially sought to be holistic, to tell a comprehensive Silk Road story, it was eventually decided that individual thematic heritage corridors would be designated with World Heritage status, rather than the nomination of the Silk Road as a whole (Williams, 2014).

In 2014 the "Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor" was inscribed as a transboundary cultural heritage route, the joint property of China, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan (People's Republic of China, Republic of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyz Republic, 2014). Its statement of significance was connected to four criteria of value attesting to:

- the unique interchange of human values across a vast space and span of time (ii)

- the unique testimony of economic and cultural exchange that led to social development across Eurasia (iii)
- the unique examples of traditional human settlement and land-use found in Eurasian historic urban sites and their hinterlands (v)
- the direct or tangible associated with events or living traditions of Outstanding Universal Value, specifically its association with Zhang Qian's diplomatic mission to the Western Regions and the transmission of religions along the routes (vi)

Thirty three individual sites or components were included in the World Heritage property, chosen to “support and carry jointly the OUV of the property as a whole in a collective manner... especially on the historic tracks and impacts of exchanges between civilizations and cultures embodied by these connections and interlinks” (People’s Republic of China, Republic of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyz Republic, 2014, 69).

The Authorized Silk Road Discourse

“China does not have any ideological or political agenda interweaved in its Silk Road investments and is quite cautious about maintaining its political neutrality in the region, including refraining from investing in disputed projects.”

– Fedorenko, 2013, 14

This claim has been assured on numerous occasions by the Chinese state, who has maintained that their New Silk Road strategy is peaceful, and that their international and regional policies have no hegemonic aspirations (CCTV, 2016b; Liu, 2016). However, I maintain that an authorized Silk Road discourse draws upon a certain version of the Silk Road’s past to frame a range of cultural, economic, political and diplomatic, dialogues and legitimize resulting action within China and

between China and other state parties with which they coordinated their efforts, in an attempt to secure particular top-down interests. This has occurred because Silk Road has the capacity to evoke the belief that it possesses intrinsic characteristics that can be drawn upon today. The vast and complex nature of the Silk Road has been reduced to a single, static, simplified discursive object, a brand that can be easily communicated and used, which has in turn influenced how Silk Road heritage is identified, described, and shared with the world. The Silk Road has become a diplomatic tool that crosses national borders – an increasingly politicized entity that is used to frame discussions regarding heritage, identity-formation, and nation-branding. Silk Road heritage is not universal or intrinsic, it is not the “revival of what once was”, but comes from the present-day interplay between various stakeholders, institutions, and ideologies.

How has the Silk Road been manufactured as a modern brand, and how can it be used to legitimize development package available for individual sites and entire states to make use of for their own purposes? It is precisely the transboundary nature of Silk Road heritage that makes it such a powerful tool; its “material and symbolic significance does not stop at the nation’s territorial borders” (Silverman, 2011, 20), and therefore it escapes the problems inherent to a particularistic discourse and favours universalist language. This can be understood in terms of the two definitions of “value” discussed by Mason (2002, 7).

The first concerns the morals and principles purporting to guide individual and collective human action in the lands through which the Silk Road passed. The authorized Silk Road discourse draws upon a range of tropes, stereotypes, and simplified statements to inspired belief in the legitimacy and benefit of its goals. The ancient Silk Road is frequently described as having set a precedent or foundation for the emergence and legitimacy of the New Silk Road project. The legacy of the Silk Road has “helped to guide the building of the Belt and Road” (Liu, 2016). For this reason, the ancient and new Silk Roads are frequently described as intrinsically encouraging unity, mutuality, reciprocity, and cooperation (China Daily, 2016). Instead of a narrative of competition and domination – one

that could easily be told of the Silk Road (Starr, 2015) – the Silk Roads are seen to act as a bridge or link between different cultures, civilizations, and regions; “the Silk Road spirit of peaceful cooperation” is a trait drawn upon to endorse peaceful international cooperation (Liu, 2016). Cultural routes such as the Silk Road “allow each destination to cooperate in building a better product” (Zabbini, 2012, 65); the idea of “international cooperation” (Winter, 2015, 999) is thus enshrined in this collaboration between states, institutions, and individuals based on their shared Silk Road past. State parties have frequently made use of a rhetoric that appeals to the “common good” and “mutual benefit” brought by the Silk Road, in the past, present, and future (CCTV, 2016; Chang, 2016).

Some of the most pervasive stereotypes associated with the old and new Silk Roads are of the energy, vitality, and stagnation that characterised it at different times. In 2012, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao described the Silk Road as having “...regained its past vigour and vitality” (Fedorenko, 2013, 12). This vitality is combined with the idea of motion and long-distance travel (Williams, 2014, 8). The “stagnation” of the ancient Silk Road at different periods, in particular after it allegedly concluded in the fourteenth century CE, is contrasted with the revival, rejuvenation, or revitalisation efforts of the modern age (McGregor, 2015). This is framed in a language of immediacy and urgency; the New Silk Road is spoken of in terms of seizing an opportunity and is framed as being “progressive”. In doing so, the New Silk Road project is implied to have the ability to “fix” stagnation or backwardness in the drive to modernity. The authorized Silk Road discourse makes use of a historical narrative that suggests progress and evolution; “the world science's interest in the study of the Silk Road is, in its way, countdown, a glance deep into centuries; an attempt to retrace landmarks of history...” (Baipakov, 2011, 5). This quality is joined with the Silk Road’s role in the “common prosperity and development of humankind” (UNTWO, 2014). According to Christian (2000, 26), “we must regard modernity itself as an indirect product of the rich synergy created by the huge and ancient system of exchanges we label the “Silk Roads”. The age of the Silk Road gives it authenticity, a case of Rüsén’s (2012, 45) historical sense-generation, whereby the past is

interpreted according to present values and future aspirations, which creates a situation in which “time” is seen as a quality required for human progression. At the same time, the New Silk Road is described as having unique opportunity to lay a new foundation of its own – by fusing the ancient and modern new opportunities will be made that will affect the world to a greater extent than its predecessor (McGregor, 2015; Fedorenko, 2013, 4). Those that “ride the tide” of the New Silk Road’s “technological and industrial revolution” (Liu, 2016) can enjoy the benefits of being part of an international network and effort towards modernization. Silk Road also represents potential futures.

These discursive statements are important. The qualities linked to the Silk Road have no verifiable or real relation to its past, but they can potentially shape how some of the most influential and powerful people in Eurasian states are planning their policies for the coming years.

Uses of the authorized Silk Road discourse

“The evolution of the ancient Silk Road proves that there’s no development without peace and no prosperity without security. Solidarity and harmonious coexistence is the gene of the Chinese nation and is also the essence of the Eastern civilization”

– Liu, 2016

The second way that the Silk Road brand can be described concerned with the real and potential characteristics that can be viewed in “things” (Mason, 2002, 7). The values and principles described above in turn shape what people hold to be “true”, “authentic”, or “desirable” in the material aspects of Silk Road heritage. The United Nations World Tourism Organization has played a key role in this respect. Millions of tourists are forecast to visit Central Asia in the coming decades, and it is increasingly the expectations of these “outsiders” that governing how Silk Road heritage is to be presented (UNTWO, 2014). The UNTWO provides a platform for collaboration and coordination

between investors and state parties, whilst the work of UNESCO heritage organizations provides the expert knowledge and activities required to legitimize their actions. The delivery of Silk Road heritage is designed to encourage “consumers to willingly adopt the story they are being told” (UNTWO, 2014). They hope to turn the Silk Road into “an internationally renowned, seamless travel experience”, and promise significant returns for governments willing to invest in and support Silk Road tourism (UNTWO, 2014). They stress the mutual benefits that cooperation between Silk Road countries will provide, as Silk Road tourism generates jobs, promotes social cohesion, and fosters peace (UNTWO, 2012).

The authorized Silk Road discourse is frequently used to support efforts to build national identity, even as it is used in other contexts to suppress assertions of national sovereignty. The Silk Road brand promotes the values of social stability and national unity, especially with reference to ethnic minority groups (CCTV, 2016). The Silk Road’s “ability to preserve centuries-long identity” (Baipakov, 2011, 5) is a trope used as part of a country’s “national patrimony”, the cultural heritage that represents and legitimizes their national identity (Hall and Gieben, 1992, 308). The Silk Road described as an historical legacy (Liu, 2016), a package of attractive qualities that has been passed down from generation to generation (Chang, 2016) in a way that suggests cohesive national identities have a precedent in history. Related to this is the use of past “achievements” of ancient Silk Road peoples that are linked in some manner to the modern nation-state. Newly-independent Central Asian states have been keen to tap in to their Silk Road heritage to attract tourists, even when the authenticity of the connection between past events and the modern state is tenuous or fictitious. This is exemplified by the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, who expressed in 2012 that “... Kazakhstan should revive its historic role and become a business transit hub for Central Asia” (Fedorenko, 2013, 20). A similar process has occurred in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, where an authorized version of the country’s Timurid and Shaybanid heritage is drawn upon to manufacture a modern Uzbek identity reflected in the urban landscape (Paskaleva, 2013).

The Silk Road has a capacity to evoke values and ideas that are often romantic and Oriental (Wu, 2016). Just as Said's Orientalism served as an illustration of Foucault's notion of "regime of truth", the Silk Road discourse can also be viewed as being effective tool by which power is organized and regulated (Hall and Gieben, 1992). The New Silk Road has been described as "a Chinese solution of oriental wisdom designed to pursue common prosperity and development" (Liu, 2016). Just as Said stated that through Orientalism Europe was able to "manage—and even produce—the orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post enlightenment period" (Said, 1978), the New Silk Road provides a framework by which the citizens of modern Central Asian are told how they should *aspire* to behave, and how these aspirations should affect the opportunities provided in New Silk Road cities.

Chapter Four: Silk Road Discourse in an Urban Context

Gentrification and Spatial Separation in Xinjiang

The authorized Silk Road discourse masks the conflicted nature of heritage management in the lands it purports to represent. This can be seen in the case of historic urban centres in Xinjiang, where a great many urban redevelopment projects have taken place since the inception of the New Silk Road project. Most attention has been focused on these events in Kashgar, the westernmost city in Xinjiang (Skinner, 2016). But comparable processes have taken place in numerous other cities in the region, such as Karamay, a city in northern XUAR, has experienced much growth and urbanization since the discovery of lucrative oil fields in 1955. Existing restrictions to how fast property developers could work have been reduced at this city (Yong and Ge, 2014), and the local tax system has been tailored to favour petroleum and petrochemical industries in the city (Wu et al, 2016). At the same time, tourism in Karamay is booming, which hosted the China Xinjiang International Tourist Commodities Fair in August this year (Sun, 2016). Visitor numbers to the city are reported to have risen from 1.56 million people 3.46 million in the space of five years, and more than 2,000 tourism related companies have been founded within the city (Sun, 2016). They are attracted by the “beautiful and unique scenery in the region, the hospitality of local people, exciting ethnic activities and urban development” (Sun, 2016b). A 54-hectare cultural and industrial park devoted to the petroleum industry is being built in the city, aiming to be an attraction to both tourists and young entrepreneurs in the region (Li and Yuan, 2016). Silk Road Economic Belt

“experts” have praised the urban transformation of the city into a “World-level Oil City”, and seek only to accelerate tourism and industrial development (Liao and Yuan, 2014; He, 2016)

However, to make room for this modern “world-level” city, Chinese officials have demolished two Uyghur neighbourhoods in the city. Since 2010, 400 households and over 2,000 Uyghur residents have been cleared from the Xigou, Kassaphana and Daxigou neighbourhoods (UHRP, 2012, 48). Those who refused to move from the Kassaphana found their homes destroyed by a sudden fire that consumed the area, leaving them with no choice but to move elsewhere (Abdukeyum and Ehsan, 2015). Chinese officials have not tried to hide the fact that this was done in order to transform these into new tourist destinations (Hoshur, 2010). Regional officials state that the former residents of these neighbourhoods received compensation, but that it is “impossible” for residents to buy new houses in the area with the amount given to them (Hoshur, 2010). Furthermore, since 2005 the rural communities surrounding the city have been emptied of their Uyghur inhabitants, who have relocated to Karamay. In their place, thousands of Han Chinese and other immigrant workers have moved into these towns, to work at the oil-refining industries which once provided employment to the Uyghur locals (Ehsan, 2014). The Chinese government has failed to construct mosques in these resettlement zones, despite their promises to do so (Ehsan, 2014), and it is no surprise that the Karamay urban management centre receives tens of thousands of complaints each year (Wang, 2016).

This is not a small-scale process, but effects huge urban spaces and many people; the redevelopment of the Turpan Yuzi neighbourhood in Yining city involved the replacement of 9,000 homes (Hoshur, 2010). Physical structures are the immediate victim of these projects, as homes, shops, and religious sites are bulldozed, but entire communities have been affected as they are divorced from the patterns of life that they grew up in, split apart from their neighbours and families, and forced to move to alternative locations in the city.

Although they aren't directly coerced into moving to outlying suburbs, many have found that they have no choice but to do so (Human Rights Watch, 2004, 15). Earthquakes have caused extensive damage to homes in the cities of Hotan in 2015, Shihezi in 2016, and elsewhere in China in previous years (Jacob, 2016), which have been used as a precedent to demolish entire neighbourhoods. However, on some occasions it seems that more direct action is taken by the authorities; there are reports that power supply and other services have been cut off in order to force the residents to move (Abdukeyum and Ehsan 2015). Forced evictions such as these have been condemned by the U.N. Committee on Economic Social, and Cultural Rights and U.N. Commission on Human Rights (Human Rights Watch, 2004, 18), but continue nonetheless without punishment.

What is it about a Uyghur neighbourhood that upsets the Chinese authorities so much? The physical structures are described with a language that implies backwardness and danger – in definite contrast to the image of modernity and security in Xinjiang that China seeks to show to the world. These neighbourhoods, and the communities within, are being treated as being in some way divided from, or even in opposition to, modernity. Attempts made to contest these developments are defied as preventing modernization.

The checks and balances of the Chinese legal system might as well be non-existent, for all the good it does to those seeking arbitration for forced evictions and urban development. It is a complicated and bureaucratic process that boils down to the decision of local government officials who decide upon land-use rights (CUAWG, 2010, 30). More often than not, cases are ignored or outright refused (Human Rights Watch, 2004, 17). Many officials hide behind the excuse that nothing can be done about it (Human Rights Watch, 2004, 17). Saying that nothing can be done is a convenient excuse. But it boils down to choice, and to who governs the pool of options available to certain people.

Once the residents of these neighbourhoods have willingly moved or forcibly expelled by the authorities, property developers move in to construct a new urban landscape, one driven by

hierarchies of value influenced by the authorized Silk Road discourse. The process is exclusionary, as few attempts have been made to consult with local experts and draw upon their skills for the construction of these replacement structures, and instead Han-owned companies are used (UHRP, 2012, 71).

Entire communities cannot be moved from one place to another and be expected to maintain the same social arrangements. This results in social exclusion, as friends and relatives are distanced from one another, as they are divorced from the intimate social landscape of the *mehelle* neighbourhoods they grew up with (Dautcher, 2009). This results in social exclusion, as friends and relatives are distanced from one another, and it becomes increasingly difficult to acquire the same intimacy that existed in the *mehelle*. Many Uyghur are fearful that this spatial separation will damage normal family life (Sulaiman, 2016), and this might indeed be the state's intention; by dismembering tightly knit Uyghur social groups it is hoped that these people become more amenable to accepting assimilation into an imagine Chinese community.

There is a limited degree of conservation involved in the redevelopment process. Only on few occasions do property developers claim to be saving or protecting Uyghur culture through their actions. More often than not, this is done only to commodify Uyghur "culture" into something marketable, a tourist destination or "traditional" industry. As certain qualities of Uyghur culture are chosen for preservation over others, many alternative – and for many people, significant – heritage assets are transformed or lost. The sense of urgency, vitality, and short-term opportunities presented by the authorized Silk Road discourse has no doubt contributed to the remarkable speed of these development projects. But many of these urban neighbourhoods are incredibly old and complex sites (Di Cosmo, 2000), and important archaeological evidence from these temporally deep sites is being lost through the hasty development projects. If one of the purported aims of creating a trans-boundary Silk Road heritage route was to provide a platform from which urbanism along the

Silk Road could be analysed comparatively (Williams, 2014, 49), the loss of the material record from Xinjiang's cities will hinder this effort.

Spatial Cleansing and the Creation of New Silk Road Cities

Modern development programs such as these tend to dismiss the social cost of their projects (Bianco, 2010, 31). Spatial cleansing is a term that directs attention towards the violence that is used during these changes, by which allegedly “undesirable” aspects of the landscape are cleared away in order to protect and promote the elements that are of heritage value (Herzfeld, 2015, 11). Those who believed that their homes were secure and eternal – even more so thanks to the long period that many of the historic neighbourhoods had existed – were suddenly faced with the complete loss of their sense of belonging.

The new urban landscapes are promoted as possessing all of the amenities and benefits of modern society, but discourses of development and modernization frequently serve the interests of those that are already developed and modern (Winter, 2015, 1005). The new buildings tend to be targeted towards outside visitors and higher-earning residents of the city, as many of the former residents of these areas have found themselves unable to afford the new buildings, even if they received compensation for their old homes (CUAWG, 2010, 27-28). These cities are marked by the separation between public spaces used for tourism, consumerism, and businesses, and residential zones where private life can exist separately and also be closely monitored.

This creates an architecturally neutral and modern landscape designed to unify Xinjiang with the Han-Chinese state and to serve as a marketable, modern city (Logan, 2002, 254). These new urban landscapes offer very different opportunities to their residents, opportunities that reflect an authorized and globalised system of values rather than the home-grown policies and aspirations of their original residents. Instead of celebrating the distinctive character of their historic urban

neighbourhoods, great efforts have been made to create homogeneous landscape of high-density housing that can be sold for a high return.

Meanwhile, the new homes of the Uyghur are quite different. Although attested to be just as modern as the rest of the city, many of the apartments are also heavily monitored with surveillance equipment and guards. Many have found that employment is either difficult to find in these new locations, or that they have to drastically alter their day to day lives in order to travel to other areas of the city to work, and as a result they have found it impossible to maintain their previous professions (CUAWG, 2010, 25).

Historic urban landscapes have a physical form, but they also encompass a massive range of aesthetic and kinaesthetic qualities that cannot be artificially reproduced. As the broader environment is removed and the urban aesthetic transformed, it results in the loss of these “non-use” values (Bennett, 2012, 13), practices and perspectives that have been used for generations but which do not possess a readily identifiable monetary value. Entire ways of life can be lost in this manner, as symbiotic relationship between Uyghur communities and their residences and neighbourhoods is broken.

These aspects of urban heritage are difficult to reify and commodify. A built environment associated with Uyghur “traditions” and culture cannot be artificially replicated in an authentic manner; such an environment can emerge through repeated, consistent and collective actions over time (Bianco, 2010, 31). China has been criticized for developing similar “theme park” heritage sites designed for international consumption across the country (Haddad-Fonda, 2016), and this can be seen to have happened in Xinjiang’s cities as well, such as at Kashgar (CUAWG, 2010). The Uyghur Muqam is celebrated as “masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage”, and enjoys an international reputation thanks to its designation as Intangible Cultural Heritage. However, within Xinjiang such gatherings and festivals are tightly controlled or prohibited by the Chinese state (D.T., 2007, 99).

By removing such actions from their original context, and severing them from their living cultural significance, the effect is the “folklorization” of Uyghur heritage (D.T., 2007, 99). Those who agree to act according to state-sanction norms of behaviour have been able to make a living in this way, but in doing so, Uyghur heritage risks becoming classified as an “archaeological” artefact, an aspect of the Silk Road’s past firmly divorced from the present but still available for consumption in an entertainment context. A similar situation can be seen with minority communities around the world, for example Incan cultural practices at Cuzco (Silverman, 2011, 25).

What can be seen here is the loss of a sense of inheritance. Much of the value associated with these neighbourhoods and locations came from certain opportunities that are hoped to be available to future generations. “We have seen our villages and pastures being turned into tourist resorts,” (Sulaiman, 2016b). says one Uyghur resident in Tömürti, a village on the On Ikki Tagh mountain range where four major revolts against Chinese rule were launched, and where the majority of the Uyghur residents have been forced to relocate to suburban areas of Hami city over the past five years (Sulaiman, 2014b). “The old life and local nomadic heritage is going to vanish without a trace,” he concludes, supported by another resident who says that “they have lost their ancestral living spaces forever.” (Sulaiman, 2016b). Chinese companies have paid the residents to leave their homes and move to the city, so that their village can be redeveloped as a tourist destination (Sulaiman, 2014b). Even if there is short-term benefit brought by these redevelopments, by cleansing the historic landscape it removes the “option value” (Bennett, 2012, 13), the possibility of future inheritance and use of the city’s historic assets.

Transformations in identity-formation on the New Silk Road

The gentrification and spatial cleansing of Xinjiang’s cities has produced a situation where state intervention in the region is perceived by many as being a strategy designed to physically and socially transform the identity of its Uyghur population, according to PRC and global hierarchies of

value. Xi Jinping proclaimed in 2012 that “realizing the great renewal of the Chinese nation is the Chinese nation's greatest dream in modern history” (CCTV, 2016). The “Chinese Dream” of social stability, national unity, peace, and prosperity is presented as being a universal aspiration of the modern age. “In a way the Chinese dream is not just about China, but represents the common value and ideals of all human beings” (CCTV, 2016).

One of the most enduring tropes is the idea that the Silk Road is that it bridges nations and cultures. Boundaries, in the sense of the authorized Silk Road discourse, are treated as areas of communication and exchange and used as a precedent for cooperation between present-day states, even as they become even more strictly enforced upon the Uyghur by the Chinese state in different contexts. The trans-regional, even trans-civilizational, links that are purportedly enshrined in the Silk Road and which the Uyghur enjoyed for centuries contrasts with the strict control over Uyghur movements across China’s border in the present day (Shichor, 2014, 104). For many Uyghur, state boundaries are perceived as being symbols of ownership and control over the landscape, splitting communities and channelling movement through specific paths, or even preventing movement outright. Uyghur passports have been confiscated (Ng and Sing, 2016), and they have had to submit DNA samples, body scans, voice-prints, and other biometric data to the Chinese authorities in order to be allowed to apply for the return of their passports (Gao, 2016). This has resulted in the fragmentation of their ethnic links with the Uyghur diaspora in neighbouring countries (Shichor, 2014, 105).

China has resorted to eminent domain arguments to justify its actions in Xinjiang. The extent that China’s actions in Xinjiang are colonial has been the subject of debate for many years (UHRP, 2009, 44), but it cannot be denied that Xinjiang is becoming increasingly dependent on eastern China as a source of investment for development. New cities built by the *bingtuan* in Xinjiang served as “pivots in the imperial administrative system” in the past (Logan, 2002, 71). The same may be said of the redevelopment of urban landscapes in the present day, where huge numbers of Han workers are

emigrating to the region, creating imbalances in the region's major cities; for example, by 2010 there were 230,000 Han in Karamay compared to a Uyghur population of about 30,000 (Hoshur, 2010).

Uyghur culture has become a product to be packaged and offered for consumption by tourists in a state-sanctioned manner. It is branded and presented to the world in support of the New Silk Road paradigm, an example of the harmony and happiness that acceptance of the New Silk Road project promises to bring. China has presented its ethnic minorities in this manner in numerous international events, most famously during the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony (where they were later revealed to have been using Han actors (UHRP, 2009, 54).

A comparison might be made with the nineteenth century anthropological projects of colonial exhibitions. Such exhibitions recreated the "objectness" of the Orient in a globalizing context, and assessed it according to authoritative, Western values. Colonial governance went hand in hand with orientalist stereotyping, as time, space, and people were ordered and presented as part of an authorized narrative. World fairs were paces where colonies and metropolises could be presented to a rational, civilized, and modern audience (Breckenridge, 1989). These narratives were tied to ideas of progress much like that of the authorized Silk Road discourse; international audiences encounter the "traditional richness of China's landscape along the Silk Road, as well as the vigour and strength of our people, the peaceful co-existence of our Han people with ethnic minorities" (Chang, 2016).

These are carefully selected, non-threatening aspects of Uyghur culture, chosen to display the harmony that exists in Xinjiang as part of the Chinese state, and the benefits that other people can enjoy if they adopt the New Silk Road paradigm. They emphasize how "naturally" these ethnic minorities like to sing and dance (D.T. 2007, 101). In 2013, Deputy Xinjiang governor Shi Dagang stated that "There is mutual respect by Han cadres and ethnic minorities, and we are friends. When we go into their houses as guests we are treated to meat and wine, with song and dance. The ethnic minorities are simple-hearted and honest, very kind and unaffected." (Blanchard, 2013).

Dissent and State Reaction

This implies that modernization automatically means closer integration into the Chinese state system, and that the only way that the Uyghur can become modern, and enjoy all the benefits that modernity entails, is by “becoming Han” (Blum 2000: 72–75 in Shepherd and Yu, 2013, 39). It reinforces the view that the Han are more advanced and that “traditional” ways of life are obsolete, apart from their marketable use-value in the context of tourism. To become Chinese citizens, though, the Uyghur have to reject certain elements of their normal lives. This is reflected in the state’s clampdown on Uyghur religious practices in Xinjiang.

During Ramadan in 2013 the Uyghur of Karamay were banned from holding religious discussions in private, and were restricted to using designated mosques during certain hours, in a situation described as “like being under martial law” (Abdulim and Keyum, 2013). There were even reports that fasting was banned, and that state officials made surprise visits on Uyghur homes to provide their residents with food and drink (Abdulim and Keyum, 2013). Days after the state-sanctioned imam of Kashghar’s main mosque was murdered in July 2014 the Uyghur population of Karamay were banned from travelling on public buses if they have large beards or wear Islamic clothing (Agence France-Presse, 2014).

Xinjiang is a place that has been linked to global geostrategic concerns regarding religious extremism and terrorism – phenomena that the Chinese state has readily linked with the Uyghur nationalist movement (Xie, 2016, 2). Counterterrorism exercises have been carried out across the region (Zhao, 2016). Officials equipped with riot shields, helmets, and even spears occupy a temporary police station positioned directly opposite the mosque at Bayandai village in Ghulja, where they monitor the activities of those entering the site through a CCTV system (CECC, 2015, 285). Cash rewards have even been promised for those who “helped hunt suspected terrorists” (Ren, 2014).

It has the effect of suppressing Uyghur separatist activities, but ends up suppressing almost all other social activities as well. As the perceived threat of Russian and United States influence in the region has been removed from the limelight (Hyer, 2006, 75), it is now the threat of the three evils that has allowed the Chinese state to tighten its control over Xinjiang and its Uyghur population. In order to “stop terrorism” they are given legitimacy to monitor and track the region’s population. This control is about preserving power, about controlling access to knowledge and opportunity, and it has resulted in a sentiment amongst many Uyghur who feel like strangers in their own land (Sulaiman, 2016).

Chapter Five: Evaluation

Ethics of the New Silk Road in theory and practice

Much like the authorized Silk Road discourse promises to be of universal and common benefit, this urban regeneration paradigm is described as being in the public good. Chinese legislature fails to consider the individual perspective of the local resident when it comes to forced evictions, hiding behind declarations of common good and mutual benefit that their involvement brings (CUAWG, 2010, 8). However, when making judgements about China's actions in Xinjiang, it is important to consider the relative perspectives of all involved. The New Silk Road has facilitated the spread of financial assistance across many Central Asia states. In many ways, China is following good governmental roles; they strive to ensure state stability, provide an improved public infrastructure, and manage the macro-economy. In their attempts to consolidate the region into the broader nation state they claim to treat the residents of Xinjiang in the same manner – if not better than – those of central and east China. The people of Xinjiang and elsewhere in Central Asia will become more in touch with the world, as telecommunication networks and internet access are brought to the cities of the Silk Road (Frankopan, 2015, 33). Development interventions have reached a lot of people very quickly, and there seems to be a definite effort being made to ensure no one is being denied coevalness, the privilege of living up to modernity (Birth 2008). In what areas has common ground and benefit been found between the different stakeholders of Xinjiang's cities, and how does this relate to the authorized Silk Road discourse?

The Silk Road brand is made so appealing through reference to a range of development initiatives and economy-boosting packages promoted by the Chinese state within Xinjiang and internationally. Cities are celebrated as fine examples of the New Silk Road project when they provide harmonious scenes of unity. An example of China's vision for the ideal New Silk Road city

can be seen at Tacheng, located in the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture of the XUAR close to the border of Kazakhstan. A great amount of investment has been made to transform the city into a multicultural and attractive city (CCTV, 2013; China Daily, 2016b). The population is promoted as being an example of China's harmonious society, with its Uyghur citizens determined to "retain Chinese nationality" despite the close historical connection they have with the Uyghur population in Kazakhstan (Han, 2016). Inter-ethnic marriage and cooperation in Tacheng is celebrated (Han, 2015; China Daily Asia, 2016), as nomadic ethnic communities are encouraged to settle in the city (CCTV, 2012) with the promise of "improvements to housing in the old city" and the prospects of alternative employment (CCTV, 2010) shortly after more than 5,000 houses collapsed months earlier (CCTV, 2010b). By these drawing rural and nomadic populations into the city, it is hope to contribute to the blending of ethnic difference into a homogenous Chinese identity.

The Veneer of Cooperation

Xinjiang's communities neither passively accept nor homogeneously contest the effects of globalisation and modernization. Many have actively appropriated the knowledge, tools, and opportunities offered by the changing circumstances in the region.

China has frequently expressed its aspirations to "uplift" the region. But the original occupants of the region are not necessarily enjoying the benefits of these investments. Xinjiang's industries are predominately owned by Han companies from eastern China. Han workers are chosen over Uyghur for employment as seen in Aksu, where there have been testimonies that Uyghur workers who were promised compensation for the loss of their businesses promised never received it (UHRP, 2012, 63). Recently the situation has become even direr in Aksu's hinterland, where workers have been forced to travel enormous distances from their homes to find employment in the bingtuan cotton industries (Sulaiman, 2016; Patton, 2016).

Xinjiang's cities have experienced one particularly damaging effect of closer integration into the Chinese state; as more Chinese industries have relocated to Xinjiang, they have brought with them the pollution that plagues other urban centres around the country. This can be seen in particular at Hami, where the Rahetbagh township – renowned amongst its Uyghur residents for its beauty and fertile soil – has been “reduced to an environmental wasteland with choking smog and tainted soil” (Sulaiman, 2014). The employment of the township's residents has been affected, as the melons that have been grown in the area for generations no longer grow in the polluted environment, and they have been relatively unsuccessful in finding employment in the Han Chinese owned factories (Sulaiman, 2014). In response to their efforts to petition to the Chinese authorities to intervene, they were told that the “factories and plants made a great contribution to the economic development of Kumul city. They also said that the pollution problem was not only our problem, but all of China's problem” (Sulaiman, 2014).

Manifesto

As the driving force of the New Silk Road project, China possesses considerable clout in how the Silk Road is being used in international relations.

Who can therefore make use of Silk Road heritage? A number of different stakeholder groups have been identified that value the Silk Road for different reasons, classified according to their alleged “groupness”: the local communities, property owners, and developers of Xinjiang's cities; the Chinese state and countries across the globe; tourists and entrepreneurs eager to consume Silk Road resources; and experts invested in studying or conserving the Silk Road's past.

China plans to move hundreds of thousands of rural and nomadic citizens away from their homes into urban sites as part of their ongoing Five Year Plans (Sulaiman, 2016b), and this will only exacerbate the issues experienced by ethnic minorities in Xinjiang's cities. What is the best way to identify and describe the value of Silk Road World Heritage in a way that is relevant and useful to the

plurality of stakeholders represented by it? How can these values be usefully integrated into regional, national, and international heritage management strategies? Encouraging participation by all stakeholders is a must. It is only through closer communication and cooperation with local communities, those who have lived and found meaning in the historic neighbourhoods of Xinjiang's cities, that the needs and aspirations of the city's existing residents can be considered first and foremost. With demographic changes brought about by immigration this may change in the future, but this future state should not be the objective (as seems to be the case).

The events taking place in Xinjiang contradict the supposedly universal value of the Silk Road narrative. A single assessment of the Silk Road can never provide a comprehensive representation of all the perspectives of its heritage significance. It is the diversity of perspectives and experiences regarding the Silk Road that should be celebrated. Can something as vast and complex ever be justifiably represented by a select few sites, or comprehensively told through a single heritage designation? Why have none of the cities, market places, or oasis towns of Xinjiang been designated? Cities are more than just places where modern citizens reside and work; they were the places that enabled caravans to conduct their land-based trade, being places where goods and ideas could be exchanged and weary travellers could rest. The spaces and places of interaction and exchange, the living communities within Xinjiang's cities, these were what gave the Silk Road its significance. Instead, Silk Road heritage has been reduced to a select number of small-scale, but monumentally impressive focal points, and simplified into essentialist stereotypes.

There are limited opportunities for arbitration. Legal remedies to the situation must be improved by implementing a regular process by which a case is guaranteed to be heard by an independent body that has no direct stake in the matter. This has created a situation in which affected parties are deprived of many of their legal rights, rights that are theoretically guaranteed to them as citizens of the Chinese state. It might be simple to ascribe this to ethnic discrimination, but the situation can be seen throughout the country. The heavy-handed treatment of property

developers has been noted elsewhere in China (Human Rights Watch, 2004; more examples). The land rights of indigenous groups is an important part of international human rights law, enshrined in policies such as the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples . In general, it is recognized that landscapes are important sites for the creation and maintenance of spiritual, cultural, and religious identities amongst indigenous communities (Wickeri and Kalhan, 2010). Housing provided to those that are resettled should not be merely “adequate” for a homogenous, modern citizen, but should reflect the standards outlined in the Right to Adequate Housing, and at the least be places where they can enjoy their own standards of security, peace and dignity (Wickeri and Kalhan, 2010). Scuh laws must be considered for there to be a fair and representational heritage policy in Xinjiang.

Why should development and modernization entail such a total and uncompromising replacement of landscapes and social patterns? By simply denying claims of the landscape’s heritage significance, and erasing the material elements of those claims, the Chinese state asserts its power over what can or cannot be defined as heritage. By destroying living landscapes and disrupting the coherence of group identity, those very people who value and experience “tradition” as a meaningful part of their lives cannot reproduce that which gives these cities their value (Bianco, 2010, 31). As Smith (2010, 46) advocates, “a cultural landscape cannot be observed, it must be experienced. And it must be experienced within the cultural framework of those who have created and sustained it.” The consequences will be felt in the future, as memories of the violent and forceful expulsion of Uyghur families from their homes are used to define new group identities.

Freezing the past landscape is not a sustainable option. Both preservation and the creation of a better future must find harmony in urban development. Rather than providing for a globalised consumer, Xinjiang’s cities must reflect the aspirations of and provide opportunities for its original residents. This is not the case in Xinjiang, where historic neighbourhoods have been bulldozed away and replaced by settlements that are deprived of any reference to the unique history of that place.

Many of these problems emerge as a result of the control over the “flows of knowledge” – through keeping stakeholders ignorant of their stake and power over their own heritage. By tightly controlling the education (Murphy, 2004 in Shepherd and Yu, 2013, 40; Shepherd and Yu, 2013, 40) and language of the Uyghur people, China actively restricts their access to knowledge. Decision-makers need to have long-term vision when it comes to planning Xinjiang’s cities; otherwise, the temptation for short-term gain and escape before the consequences are felt will prevail.

Conclusion

Conflicts such as these can also be a constructive avenue by which a fair situational judgement can be reached, based on what is appropriate for a particular context. The Silk Road discourse is being produced in a context of gross inequalities of power within the lands that it professes to represent. China and the Central Asian republics have increased their efforts to tap into their shared Silk Road heritage, and have encouraged other countries around the world to identify with the symbolic benefits of this historic route. The Silk Road is being used as the banner for a number of ideological causes, to facilitate a range of political and economic connections, and to physically and socially transform entire cities according to top-down hierarchies of value. Xinjiang is shown to be a region where the globalising effects of the authorized Silk Road discourse are challenged by the local. The shaping of a certain image of Xinjiang’s urban landscapes, based on the authorized Silk Road discourse, has had a negative effect on the Uyghur residents of the province.

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