UYGHUR IMMIGRANTS IN TURKEY:

A HOME AWAY FROM HOME

MİNE AKMAN

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UYGHUR IMMIRANTS IN TURKEY:

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by Mine Akman

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This thesis has been approved and accepted on October 2010 by:

Asst. Prof. Berna Yazıcı ……..

(Thesis Adviser)

Prof. Zafer Toprak ……..

Assoc. Prof. Duygu Köksal ……..

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Title: Uyghur Immigrants in Turkey: A Home Away From Home

This study focuses on the Uyghur migrants who have immigrated to Istanbul from the People's Republic of China during the 1950s and how they relate to their experience of migration and their experience of living in Turkey while questioning their definition of "homeland." The sources for this work include diverse studies that examine migration issues form macro and micro perspectives as well as other works that define the historical background of Uyghur migration. The oral sources, on the other hand, have been collected through interviews with seventeen Uyghur migrants who have immigrated to Turkey during different ages and with different motivations. In this study, different periods of Uyghur migration are analyzed, revealing the causes of migration and the immigrants relationship with the host community during the concerned periods. Besides, using the narratives of the immigrants, their definition of Turkish identity and "homeland" are also discussed.

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Başlık: Türkiye'deki Uygur Göçmenler:
Evden Uzakta Bir Ev

Bu çalışma İstanbul'da yaşayan ve 1950'lerden itibaren Türkiye'ye Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti'nden gelmiş olan Uygur göçmenlerin Türkiye'ye göçü, yerleşmeleri ve göçmenlik durumu içinde "memleket" olarak nereyi tanımladıkları soruları üzerine yoğunlaşmaktadır. Çalışmanın yazılı kaynakları farklı tarihsel süreçlerde yaşanan göç olaylarını makro ve mikro perspektiflerde inceleyen çalışmalar ve Uygur göçünün tarihsel arka planını oluşturan çalışmalardır. Sözlü kaynakları ise Türkiye'ye farklı dönemlerde ve değişik sebeplerde gelmiş ve çoğunluğu İstanbul'da yaşayan 17 Uygur göçmenle yapılan görüşmelerdir. Uygur göçü 1950'lerden başlayarak farklı dönemler içinde ele alınmış ve bu süreçler içerisinde göçmenlerin göç nedenleri ve yerleştikleri toplumla olan ilişkileri incelenmiştir. Ayrıca göçmenlerin anlatıları üzerinden, Türk kimliği algılamaları değerlendirilmiş ve ev-memleket olarak nereyi betimledikleri tartışılmıştır.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Stepping onto the soil of China through Alashankou, its furthest point of entry in the northwest Xinjiang region surrounded by Russia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afganistan, Pakistan, and India, I had a unique experience. It was during the 2008 Olympic Games, and the restive region was already under tight surveillance with police and army men watching over. I was merely a passenger traveling across the steppes of Central Asia into China on a train from Almaty in Kazakhstan to Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang. The customs was already painful for every passenger and every passport was checked at the posts of both countries, which took hours to end. When we were finally out of the borders of Kazakhstan, our train made one last stop as we reached Alashankou, the entry point. Officers entered our compartment to check the passports. A few minutes passed when they kindly requested me and my friend to step off the train and follow them to their headquarters. Feeling sure that this was the normal procedure, we stepped off with our entire luggage and went to the police station where we saw that there were only two people who had been asked to leave the train: me and my friend who also carried a Turkish passport.

Why would the Chinese authorities question only two Turkish citizens when the train was full of foreign nationalities? It took approximately two and a half hours as they questioned our motives and endlessly asked us what we were going to do in China. Although we were both carrying a letter of acceptance from a recognized Chinese university, it seemed that it didn't matter at all. Searching every inch of our bags, and every single folder in our computer -including every picture- they at last came to the

conclusion that we were indeed innocuous to the People's Republic of China. So finally we were allowed to get on our train full of passengers anxious to continue their already delayed journey...

By then, it simply didn't make sense. It was only through a year and a half of stay in China and an accumulation of knowledge concerning Xinjiang that I found out there was a subtle anomaly lying as an undercurrent between the foreign policies of Turkey and China. This anomaly was nothing other than the historical connections the Uyghurs living in Xinjiang shared with Turkey.

Since the Islamic pilgrimage route passed through the Ottoman Empire, Turkey has always been a destination for the Uyghurs, first religiously and later on with nationalist implications. It was an elaboration of these connections that have been interpreted as Turkey (or at least the ideologies that were transported from Turkey) fomenting "terrorism" in Xinjiang since 1990s. In this regard, Turkish people were seen as potential threats to the integrity and security of the region during the tumultous period of the Olympic Games, and hence my first problematic entrance to the country.

When the July 5th incident erupted in Urumqi[1] approximately a year after my first encounter with the region, I was making plans to visit the region once more. The incident caused every newspaper all around the world to write articles on the whys and hows of the Uyghur rebellion in China. It was indeed a catastrophic event and it received a great deal of attention, for it was the first time such an incident in Xinjiang that had cost so many lives. However, despite the global attention on the subject for a short

[1] Here I refer to the violent uprisings in the capital of Xinjiang Autonomus Region, Urumqi which took place during July,5, 2009. The events were sparked by a fight between Han Chinese and Uyghur migrant workers in a toy factory near Guangzhou (south China). Then, two Uyghur workers were killed during the fight. According to the Chinese state news agency Xinhua more than 170 people were killed and at least thousand were injured during the riot.

period of time, we didn't really witness NGOs protesting against the human rights issues in Xinjiang, as we most often see when it is an issue of Tibetan freedom. Instead, there were two directions the opposition came from. Al-Qaeda, promising to defend its Muslim brothers in China, and Turkey. It was the (un) expected uproar caused by the Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan who claimed that there was a genocide ensuing in Xinjiang and that it had to be stopped. It was this rather interesting political environment that drew the attention of the Turkish public through a very nationalist discourse; and it is the same political environment that urged me to conduct this study, which seeks to discover the background of such politics and to contextualize the social and cultural stance of the Uyghurs in Istanbul.

The Research Question

Gladney writes that although there have been conducted many studies on minorities including the Armenians, Greeks, Jews, and Kurds in Turkey, "there has been almost nothing done on the sub-Turkic identities, since most assumed that once these people came to Turkey, they just blended in, becoming Turk, or what is culturally and politically defined as "White" in the U.S., just as in China, Cantonese, Shanghainese, and Hakka are defined as "Han."[2] This study will try to answer how the Uyghurs settled in Turkey, and whether they feel anchored in their place of settlement or not, in other words how do the Uyghur migrants belonged to the Turkish society.

[2] Dru Gladney, "Alterity Motives," in *China Inside Out: Contemporary Chinese Nationalism and Transnationalism*, eds. Pal Nyiri and Joana Breidenbach (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005), p. 281.

Recent ethnographic studies have shown that the assumption that immigrants of sub-Turkic identities "blend" and easily fit into the national culture of Turkey is highly problematic. For example, Ayşe Parla's study on Bulgarian immigrants, and Didem Danış's work on Iraqi Turkmens reveal that the process of integration for the sub-Turkic immigrants is highly complex, and cannot simply be regarded as a smooth process. Parla's study on Bulgarian Turks seeks to understand the "tensions between the phenomenological experience of dislocation and the discursive formations of nationalism that shape and limit those experiences."[3] After stating the background for "return migration" of Bulgarian Turks, who are "officially designated as "soydas" or "ethnic kin,"[4] to Turkey, Parla focuses on the narratives of three migrants who reveal that the formation of a "Turkish" identity is problematic despite their ethnic origins.

Indeed, as may be deduced from the studies of these writers, it is also problematic to identify all these immigrants as Turkic, and thus fit them all under the category of sub-Turkic identities. As seen in the case of Bulgarian Turks and Iraqi Turkmens, the immigrants have their own sets of cultural practices and historical backgrounds, and the process of integration for one of them is simply not the same as that for another. In other words, the Bulgarian Turks should be regarded as different from Iraqi Turkmens or, for our purposes, Uyghurs, although their post-migration experiences might have much common.

This study builds on this emergent literature on immigrants of sub-Turkic identity and given this dominant assumption about their blending in Turkey, examines

[3] Ayşe Parla, "Longing, Belonging and Locations of Homeland Among Turkish Immigrants from Bulgaria," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 6, no. 4, p. 544.

[4] Ibid., p.555.

how the Uyghur immigrants relate to their experience of having migrated from Xinjiang and their experience of living in Turkey? A quote from Tyler is revealing in this respect: "As Besson observed, Uighurs are good at seeing themselves as Turkis when they are with Europeans, as Uighurs when they are with Turkis, and as Kasgaris, Keriyanese or Khotanese when they are with other Uighurs."[5] How do the Uyghurs see themselves when they are with the Turkis in Turkey? The 1934 Law of Settlement states that "Only persons of Turkisch descent and culture have the right to immigrate and find refuge in Turkey."[6] This legal framework may lead us to assume that since the Uyghurs are of Turkish descent and they have the legal right to find refuge in Turkey, they may simply be regarded as Turks, and hence as ordinary citizens of Turkey. As this study will reveal, such an assumption would be completely false. Nevertheless, before explaining the error of this assumption, it would be informative to understand the Uyghur diaspora in general.

There is a large Uyghur diaspora in Central Asia and western countries like the United States, Germany and Turkey. One estimate suggests that the diaspora's population is around 500,000 if the Uyghurs from both Xinjiang and Kazakhstan are included.[7] The General Secretary of the East Turkestan Foundation (*Doğu Türkistan Vakfı)* states that currently there are around 5000 Uyghur Turks living in Turkey, 4000 of them living in Istanbul.[8] Even though there is no official account of the migrations

[5] Christian Tyler, *Wild West China: The Taming of Xinjiang* (New Brunswick N:J: Rutgers University Press, 2004), p.230.

[6] A. Didem Danış, Cherie Taraghi and Jean- François Pérouse, "Integration in Limbo: Iraqi, Afghan, Maghrebi and Iranian Migrants in Istanbul," in *Land of Diverse Migrations: Challenges of Emigration and Immigration in Turkey*, eds. A. İçduygu and K. Kirişçi (Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, 2009), p.457.

[7] Dru Gladney, *Disliocating China: Muslims, Minorities and Other Subaltern Subjects* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp.386-388.

[8] Interview by the author of the thesis: Istanbul, 02.02.2010.

from "East Turkestan" to Anatolia, the first comers can be traced back to the sixteenth century since pilgrimage route passed form the Ottoman lands.[9] After the conquest of the land referred to as "East Turkestan" by Uyghurs and "Xinjiang" by Chinese in the eighteenth century, unstable political and social situation of the region increased the number of emigrants from the region to the neighboring countries of Afghanistan, India, and Anatolia. The political changes in the twentieth century such as the formation of two short-lived independent Uyghur states in Xinjiang[10] and their consequent collapse caused many more to escape from Chinese rule to arrive in the Republic of Turkey.

For a Turkish language reader there exist some studies on Uyghur history written by the Uyghurs themselves. However, they are mainly from a very nationalist perspective, mostly defending the rights of a nation oppressed under the communist yoke.[11] Despite my sincere belief that the Turkish historiography concerning Xinjiang should be altered fundamentally from its nationalist stance, the purpose of this study is not to undertake such a task. The current study, though pays attention to the history of the region and that of the Uyghurs, is an attempt to understand the process of Uyghur immigration to Turkey through the words and the eyes of the people who have experienced it; and moreover, to understand how they have integrated into Turkish

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[9] *Belgelerle Osmanlı- Türkistan İlişkileri* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 2004).

[10] The first independent state was called the East Turkestan Islamic Republic (ETIR), which was formed in 1933 and eliminated in 1934. The second state was the East Turkestan Republic (ETR) formed in 1944. The latter republic led to the formation of a coalitionary government in Urumqi with the participation of ETR and Guomindang members, but totally ended in 1949. For details, see James Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

[11] Some references can be given as an example of this literature in Turkey: Mehmet Emin Buğra. *Doğu Türkistan'ın Hürriyet Davası ve Çin Siyaseti* (İstanbul: Osmanbey Matbaası, 1954); İsa Yusuf Alptekin. *Doğu Türkistan Davası* (İstanbul: Otağ Yayınları, 1973); Hızır Bek Gayretullah, *Altaylarda Kanlı Günler* (İstanbul: Türkistan Kauçuk ve Plastik Sanayii, 1977).

society, or to put it in different words, do they? Thus, this work will take the tenets of ethnographic field work as its methodology, and try to comprehend this socio-historical process through interviews with Uyghur subjects living in Turkey.

Literature Review

I focus both on the process of the immigration and the process of settlement in Turkey as Uyghur immigrants interpret and narrate them. I am particularly interested in the immigrants' conceptualization of home and homeland.

This study focuses on the discourses Uyghur migrants living in Turkey have about their migration decisions, migration routes, their identity-formations and conceptions of homeland. However, for the convenience of analysis, it is necessary to make a brief analysis of the international literature on migration.

In order to contextualize and conceptualize the Uyghurs as a migrant group in a foreign country, it is necessary to analyze the main points of the literature on migration studies. However, there ensues an academic difficulty on this issue, for there are no scholarly works conducted either on the Uyghurs in foreign countries or Uyghurs in Turkey. This poses a question and a challenge, as will be discussed in the following paragraphs. The challenge is that the Uyghurs in Turkey constitute an idiosyncratic case, for they cannot be conceptualized within the framework of one theory concerning the migrant studies; rather, a couple of theories should be merged into one another to produce a rational understanding of the Uyghur diaspora in Turkey. Therefore, it is necessary to examine earlier works on the subject in general, utilize some of the main arguments, and point out their shortcomings.

Migration Studies

In an article written back in the 1980s, Kearney puts forward a simple outline of how migration studies were conceptualized. His article, I believe, was clairvoyant in depicting the future of migration studies, for his ideas were adopted by other scholars who paved the way for a much more inspiring and challenging understanding of migration. In order to comprehend post-1980s scholarship, we first need to understand the earlier ones.

Kearney suggests that migration as a subject of study had three main models. The first one, pertaining to the 1950s and 1960s, was "migration as modernization," which drew a general picture of the world as divided between the developed and undeveloped nations, with migration taking place from the latter to the former.[12] The second conceptualization was "migration as dependency" which dominated the field during the 1960s and early 1970s. This framework was more lucrative in the sense that whereas "modernization theory [was] essentially psychologistic, individualistic, microeconomistic, and ahistoric; dependency theory theorize[d] historic macroeconomic relationships and processes at national and international levels,"[13] and thus it enabled the anthropologists to scrutinize migration from a wider perspective. In this regard, migration was observed as an outcome of "a chain of exploitation that extends from advanced centers of capital to the most remote rural regions."[14] The third general model was what Kearney calls "migration as articulation." This framework, in contrast to the

[12] Michael Kearney, "From Invisible Hand to Visible Feet: Anthropological Studies of Migration and Development," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, no. 15 (1986), p.333.

[13] Ibid.,p. 338.

[14] Ibid., p. 342.

dependency paradigm, argued that capitalism may indeed co-exist and strengthen noncapitalist modes of production, and thus there is no unitary global capitalist system. This reasoning led to refuting the dependency framework and instead arguing that in order to understand the dynamics of migration, more careful analyses of the modes of production in the peripheries as well as the components of that mode such as households and social networks should be taken into account.[15]

These models of Kearney were re-emphasized in the late 1990s by Castles and Miller, whose analysis is more up-to-date and clarifies the framework Kearney had suggested more than a decade earlier. Castles and Miller explain the three main migration theories with relevant examples. The first is the *Neo-classical economic equilibrium* theory that emphasizes the individual decision to migrate to search for better economic conditions, in other words the most disadvantaged people move from poor countries to richer areas.[16] However, this theory is insufficient in explaining the migration flows of the last decades, and it is described as "simplistic and incapable of explaining actual movements or predicting social ones."[17] This is, no doubt, another wording for "modernization theory."

A second theory is the *historical-structural approach* which came out in the 1970s intellectually depending on Marxist political economy, and it tends to explain the migration "as a way of mobilizing cheap labor for capital."[18] Historical-structural

[15] Ibid., p. 343.

[16] Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (New York: Palgrave, 1998), pp. 20-21.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., p. 23.

approach theories accentuate the point that the migration of people for better economic opportunities is not a free choice of the individuals but a result of the imbalance between capitalist economies and the undeveloped ones.[19] This is again a re-wording of the "dependency theory" and as suggested, it also has some shortcomings. Castles and Miller argue that this theory underestimated factors such as "unplanned shift from labor migration to permanent settlement in certain countries."[20] The large-scale migration of Turkish workers to Germany from the 1960s onwards and their transformation from "guest workers" to permanent settlers in Germany is a good example as a case study both to approve and disapprove the theory.

Castles and Miller, however, follow a different pattern in explaining the later developments in migration theories. Contrary to Kearney who suggested an "articulation theory," Castles and Miller suggest taking a step back from political economy and adopt a more holistic approach. Indeed, I believe that their suggestion is one of the primary steps that take us to the theoretical core of my study.

Even though people may have varying reasons to migrate as workers, political refugees or permanent settlers, we need fundamental and yet unique categorizations for a better and wider understanding of human movements from one place to another. In this sense, Castles and Miller's critique of both models deserve more attention.

Castles and Miller assert that as a result of this critique, *migration systems theory* has arisen as an independent form. Contrary to the one dimensional approaches, the migration systems perspective emphasizes the importance of "international relations,

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

political economy, collective action and institutional factors"[21] in migration routes. Prior links between the sending and receiving countries and ethnic, social, political ties between the people of both sides does matter in the migration process. According to this theory, migratory movements are the outcome of interrelated macro and micro structures:

> Macro-structures refer to large-scale institutional factors while micro-structures embrace the networks, practices, and beliefs of the migrants themselves. The macro-structures include the political economy of the world market, interstate relationships, and the law structures and practices established by the states of sending and receiving countries to control migration settlement.[22]

In other words, conforming to the micro-structure theories, I argue that in order to understand the Uyghur diaspora in Turkey, it is obligatory to adopt a holistic viewpoint and approach the topic from diverse backgrounds such as historical ties, ethnic similarity and cultural proximity. However, this approach also needs a closer scrutiny.

Social Capital and Social Networks

The concepts of social network and social capital are crucial to comprehending the micro-structure theory, and at the same time, since these concepts cut across the studies on migration and transnationalism, they should be analyzed in detail.

Social capital, as Castles and Miller put it, basically can be explained as the migrant's "personal relationships, family and household patterns, friendship and community ties, and mutual help in economic and social matters."[23] This is closely

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., p.25.

related to *migration systems* theory, which underlines the importance of "both ends of the flow and studying all the linkages between the places concerned."[24]

Vertovec provides a clear definition for social capital which should be separated from social networks. According to Vertovec, social capital should be observed as an "individual's *ability* to mobilize [social networks] on demand."[25] In other words, social capital is "ability," meaning that it may only be regarded as an abstract category that is neither inherited nor possessed. As such, Vertovec suggests that social capital is not a property but rather an entity based on the person's web of social interactions.[26]

The importance of social capital and social networks both in the migration and settlement processes is emphasized in various migration studies. In their valuable study on Iraqi, Afghan, Maghrebi and Iranian migrants in Turkey Danış et al highlight the significance of social capital in the process of "survival and incorporation"[27] in Istanbul. Among the various sources of social capital as familial, social, religious or ethnic ties, they address the importance of family as it becomes the "principal source of assistance and relief for almost all migrants, regardless of the national, ethnic, religious or economic status."[28]

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[24] Ibid., p.26.

[25] Steven Vertovec, "Migration and Other Forms of Transnationalism: Towards Conceptual Cross-Fertilization," *International Migration Review,* no. 37 (Fall 2003), p.648. (emphasis in original)

[26] Vertovec, "Migration and Other Forms of Transnationalism," p.648.

[27] A. Didem Danış, Cherie Taraghi, Jean-François Pérouse, " "Integration in Limbo":Iraqi, Afghan, Maghrebi and Iranian Migrants in Istanbul," in *Lands of Diverse Migrations: Challenges of Emigration and Immigration in Turkey*, eds. Ahmet İçduygu and Kemal Kirişçi (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi University Press, 2009), p. 456.

[28] Ibid.

As this study aims to reveal in the chapter on Uyghur migration, such social networks are also crucial for Uyghurs as they are mobilized to get an invitation letter to obtain a visa, or to find a job and accommodation in Turkey. A very vital point derived from the oral accounts of the informants is that Uyghurs who migrated to Turkey after 1980s benefited from their social capital. Some of them were "able enough" to mobilize distant relatives, fellow townsmen or old friends to settle and cope with the difficulties of their migration process. It was not only the individual but also the families and communities that were involved in the whole migration and settlement process. Additionally, having a Turkish origin, being a Sunni Muslim and speaking a Turkic language can be classified as other crucial components of social capital from which Uyghur migrants benefited. As will be discussed throughout the later chapters, ethnic and religious attachments, and linguistic proximity generate an advantageous position for the Uyghurs in Turkey among the other immigrant groups.

Nevertheless, micro-structure theories, albeit useful, are not sufficient to explain the Uyghur diaspora in Turkey, for although the concept of "social capital" may be utilized to describe some patterns to cope with real-life situations faced in the host country, micro-structure theories are insufficient in explicating the primary reasons of migration. In other words, micro-structure theories may be perused to explain the aftermath of migration, but not the actual reasons nor the long process of arrival in the host country. In this regard, there arises the need for a different approach – such as transnationalism.

Transnationalism, "Home" and Belonging

Recent social, political and economic developments in the world have created new migrant images and patterns both for their host and home societies. Therefore,

academics and students of anthropology, sociology, political science, and geography argue for new conceptualizations to create new analytical frameworks for a better understanding of migration and migrants that span over various societies. Migrants are no longer seen as people uprooted from their country of origin to work and settle in a new society in which they form patterns of adherence. In this regard, "transnationalism" approach in the context of migration provides a useful perspective for migration studies. A brief description of the "transnationalism" and "transmigrants" is made as follows:

> We define "transnationalism" as the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many migrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders. Immigrants who develop and maintain multiple relationships- familial, economic, social, organizational, religious and political- that span borders we call "transmigrants."[29]

In this regard, studying migrants from the framework of transnationalism provides us more space to analyze and understand recent migrant groups, since currently migrants sustain multiple involvements to social, economic and political events in both home and host societies. As Ruba Salih stresses, transnationalism allows us to understand the complex situation of the migrants as they engage in economic, social, political and cultural activities across borders, and thus they form and maintain membership both in their country of origin and the host country. Through this vision of transnationalism, it is argued that the migrants are "no longer [perceived to be] caught up in the trap between either assimilation or nostalgia and the "myth of return.'"[30]

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[29] N. Glick Schiller, L. Basch, and C. Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation- States* (London: Gordon and Breach, 1994), p.7.

[30] Ruba Salih, "Shifting Meanings of "home": Consumption and Identity in Moroccan Women's Transnational Italy and Morocco," in Nadje Al-Ali, Khalid Koser (eds), *New Approaches to Migration:*

As the literature on transnationalism suggests, the migrants maintain double identities, and they persist in engaging in activities in their country of origin. However, this conceptualization, as will be argued, does not fit the Uyghur case perfectly. Although the Uyghurs also engage in activities in their country of origin, these activities, if there are, are mainly political activities with no economic benefit. The transnationalism of the Uyghurs, in this regard, does not correspond, for instance, to the Turkish transnationalism in Germany where the Turkish migrants maintain their bonds with Turkey through political and economic means. The paradigm of transnationalism in the case of Uyghurs may be understood through the words of Vertovec and Cohen, who argue that four main features prevail in understanding transnationalism: "the possibility of having multiple identities and multiple localities thanks to new technologies of travel and information, the globalization of kinship and network ties, the extraordinary growth of remittances, and ... disintegration of boundaries between host and home societies."[31] This theorization may suit the Uyghur case, except for the remittances argument, for there is not a considerable amount of capital flow between the Uyghurs in Turkey and their homeland.

The formation of multiple identities and maintaining multiple localities are visible in the conceptualization of "home" for the Uyghur migrants, as will be discussed in the following chapters. In this respect, this study aims to explore the perception of "home" by the Uyghurs in Turkey and understand the ways in which "home" has been transformed due to their experiences in China and Turkey. As will be argued, notions of

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Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Home (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 51.

[31] Quoted in ibid., p. 52.

identity," "belonging" and "culture" emerge as key concepts to understanding how Uyghurs in Turkey contest and negotiate the meaning of "home," and in the end, it appears that there is not a concrete "home" for the migrants.

As will be disclosed in this study, the experiences of the dislocated Uyghurs are also shaped by their discursive formations of nationalism as a completely abstract ideology that binds them to an "imagined" homeland.

Methodology

In this regard, the study attempts to make an in-depth inquiry into the "Uyghur question" that remains a disputed topic in Sino-Turkish politics. What distinguishes the current study from the existing ones is the emphasis it gives to individual lives and experiences. Rather than pointing out how potent or trivial the "East Turkestan"[32] problem is, I will focus on what the Uyghurs have to say about their historical pasts and current lives.

As such, conducted interviews will be the primary source of this study. As will be discussed later, Uyghur migrants don't represent a significant proportion of foreigners among other migrant groups in Turkey – to the extent that they are not even regarded as "foreigners." Thus, they are not considered to be a "problematic" migrant group in Turkey since they are already regarded as "Turks." In terms of official data and scholarly work, there is little known about the social, cultural, demographic and economic behaviors and conditions of the Uyghurs living in Turkey. Even though

[32] Even though the official Chinese name for the region is Xinjiang, Uyghur people call "their land" as "East Turkestan." Since it is a politically sensitive issue, I prefer to use the Chinese name.

creating official data is hard to achieve, I will attempt to draw a general framework on the Uyghur migrants by using ethnographic research methods. The subject of study is a group of people selected from the Uyghurs living in Istanbul.

Since I will pursue the methods of ethnographic studies, the points stressed by Portelli give meaning and cohesiveness to my analysis, for he argues that oral sources, though not reliable at all, open up a new framework that helps us understand the subject of study even better than the written accounts could reveal. As Portelli states, "the oral sources used ... are not always fully reliable in point of fact. Rather than being a weakness, this is however, their strength; errors, myths lead us through and beyond facts to their meanings."[33] In this regard, this work focuses on a few topics.

The first topic of interest will be the "living pasts" of the Uyghurs, which I will describe through the knowledge gathered throughout the interviews conducted. The individual life stories will shed light upon how the interviewees migrated to Turkey. What were their motivations? When did they leave? What route did they follow? What hardships did they encounter? To answer these questions, the methods of oral history are very helpful.

Oral history can simply be defined as "the living memory of the past."[34] Listening to the stories of the men and women who experienced certain events enables us to have first hand information about those events. Their own life stories are as valuable as written sources; hence "oral history has a power far beyond dry conventional

[33] Allessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, N. Y.: State University of New York Press, 1991), p.2.

[34] Hugo Slim and Paul Thompson, *Listening for a Change* (London: Panos Pblications, 1993), p. 11.

historical writing, or the reports of statistical social surveys."[35] I assume that examining the migration narratives of the Uyghur people living in Turkey for a certain period of time would heighten the value of this study. By making relevant connections with the past through oral history, we may contribute to the perception and the analysis of the history.

Secondly, besides the emphasis on the process of migration, I also attempt to disclose the process of settlement in Turkey. This should be elaborated, for I assume that the process of settlement has been in close relation with the government policies of promoting the immigration of Turkic people even if ethnically they might have been Albanian, Bosnian, Circassian, Pomak, Roma,Tatar[36] or for that matter, Uyghur. The immigration of Turkic people from outside of Turkey has been promoted by the Turkish government policies since the 1930s. However, the immigrants that have arrived in Turkey are not homogeneously distributed among the geographies that possess Turkic ethnicities, and this poses a problematical issue. As Kirişçi states, the number of the immigrants coming from the Balkans was substantially higher than that of that came from Turkestan[37] which is indeed striking for the Caucasus and Central Asian regions were in turmoil during the 1920s and 1930s. To put it in numerical terms, no immigrants that came from Turkestan came to Turkey until after the Second World War whereas those that came from the Balkans were close to a million. When we compare the figures

[35] Ibid.

[36] Kemal Kirişçi, "Disaggregating Turkish Citizenship and Immigration Practices", *Middle Eastern Studies*, no. 36 (July 2000), p. 5.

[37] "Turkestan" is used to refer to a wide geographical region that comprises Central Asian lands that the Turkic ethnic groups inhabit. It is generally divided into two, with west Turkestan, which includes former Soviet Union Turkic states in Central Asia, and east Turkestan, which refers to the Chinese Xinjiang.

of the post-war era, they are again striking. The number of Turkestanis reached 2878 between 1946 and 1995 whereas those from the Balkans are again roughly one million.[38]

Although the number of Turkestanis is shown to be equal to zero, we know from the personal accounts of prominent Uyghur leaders such as İsa Yusuf Alptekin and Gen. Mehmet Rıza Bekin that there were Uyghurs residing in Turkey during 1920s and 1930s.[39] It would be reasonable to suggest that apart from the eastern Turkestanis, there should be a considerable amount of people must have migrated from Soviet lands. This is not to suggest that they could in any way compete with the figures of the Balkans, but comparing the official data given by Kirişçi with those of first-hand material may lead us to claim that the immigrants coming from Turkestani lands might not have been officially recorded. Nevertheless, the figures become official once we reach the 1950s.

According to the presentation of Hamit Göktürk at a conference organized by Zeytinburnu Municipality, the leaders of the nascent Uyghur diaspora in the 1950s, İsa Yusuf Alptekin and Mehmet Emin Bugra, reach New Delhi as they left their lands in 1949, right after the Communist takeover. They applied to the Turkish Embassy in Delhi to be accepted on to Turkish soil as immigrants. After long discussions, the Council of Ministers in Turkey passed a law on the 13 of March 1952 stating that the Turkish government would subsidize all the expenditures of 1850 immigrants and would place them in Kayseri, Niğde, Aksaray and Manisa as "settled immigrants" (*iskanlı göçmen*).[40]

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Isa Yusuf Alptekin, *Esir Doğu Türkistan İçin:İsa Yusuf Alptekin'in Mücadele Hatıraları*, der. M. Ali Taşçı (İstanbul: Doğu Türkistan Neşriyat Merkezi, 1985); Gen. M. Rıza Bekin, *Doğu Türkistan Vakfı Başkanı M. Rıza Bekin'İn Anıları* (İstanbul: Kastaş Yayınevi, 2005).

[40] Hamit Göktürk, "Doğu Türkistan'dan Anadoluya Göçler", paper that was presented at the *Zeytinburnu Belediye Başkanlığı Uluslararası Göç Sempozyumu*, 06-11 Aralık 2005. "Bakanlar kurulunun 13 Mart 1952 tarih 3/14595 sayılı kararı ile gerekli ödenekler genel bütçeden karşılanmak üzere toplam

During the 1960s, there was yet another group of immigrants amounting to 600 who had first migrated to Afghanistan and later to Turkey. According to an article from *Milliyet*, there were two hundred East Turkestani migrants who came to Turkey through Afghanistan. The first convoy of 200 people was expected to arrive in Ankara on October 11, and the second and the third on the thirteenth and sixteenth. As the news indicates, after a former border agreement between Afghanistan and Communist China those Uyghur people who were living in the Afghan territory asked for permission from Afghan authorities to migrate to Turkey. As it was approved, a group of two hundred people were able to migrate with the help of the United Nations.[41]

Turkestani, i.e., east Turkestani, immigration continues to maintain its vitality even today. However, I argue that observing the Uyghur immigration to Turkey merely as an extension of the Turkish government's policy of accepting those who are Turkic and being reluctant to accept those that are not Sunni-Hanefi or not ethnically Turkic, as the Law of Settlement stated above, is a reduction in terms of categorizing the immigrants as "Turkic" and "non-Turkic." As argued in the earlier pages, I believe that these categories should not be taken as monolithic for not every ethnic group has passed through the same experiences nor has been motivated by the same tenets. The reception of Turkish citizenship is not an end in itself but merely a start in a new geography. Every ethnic group, and in this case the Uyghurs, has a relatively different story to tell. Even among the Uyghur diaspora in Turkey there are various groups of migrants representing

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1850 kişinin iskanlı göçmen olarak Türkiyeye getirilmesi kararlaştırılmıştır."

[41] *Milliyet*, 10 October 1965.

different aspects of migration. It is a heterogeneous group in which people have different motivations to leave their land, and seek a new "home" in which to settle and live.

Within this context, it becomes imperative to understand where "home" is for the Uyghur immigrants. The concept of "home" is especially vital to observe whether the Uyghurs blend into the Turkish society, embracing the latter as their new "home." According to Papastergiadis, "the ideal home is not just a house which offers shelter… Apart from this physical protection and market value, a home is a place where personal and social meanings are grounded."[42]

During my interviews, this conceptualization became a central issue of concern and dialogue, for the Uyghurs feel that although Turkey has given them a shelter, they still have only one home: "East Turkestan." The Uyghurs' unique position also poses a challenge to earlier studies of "home." Basch, Schiller, and Blanc argue that "transmigrants use the term "home" for their society of origin, even when they clearly have also made a home in their country of settlement."[43] This is not exactly true for the case of Uyghurs, as will be shown in the later chapters, because their "official" homeland (i.e. China) is not their home, but a temporal occupier of their "true home." This perception of home is intimately connected to the identity formation of the Uyghur migrants. Just as their concept of home is ambivalent, so is their ethnic identity.

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[42] Nikos Papastergiadis, *Dialogues in the Diaspora: Essays and Conversations on Cultural Identity* (London and New York: Rivers Oram Press, 1998), cited in Nadje Al-Ali and Khalid Koser (eds.). *New Approaches to Migration: Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Home* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p.7.

[43] Basch, L., Glick Schiller, N. and Szanton Blanc, C. *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects Postcolonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation-States* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1994), p. 7.

As Sultan Mahmut Kaşgarlı, the vice president of East Turkestan Foundation in Istanbul, told me during an interview: "Turkicness is like a huge tree, the Kazakhs are a part of it, the Kyrgyzs too and of course the Uyghurs."[44] Conscious of their "true identity," they still refer to themselves as Uyghurs, hence an unassimilated group of immigrants. In accordance with this identification, they still imagine their "home" as the non-existent country of East Turkestan.

Therefore, I will try to understand the intricate nature of the formation of Uyghur identity once its location has been altered. The identity of the Uyghurs, this study suggests, cannot be restricted to the area they deem as their "homeland," but rather their identity is one that has been shaped by the interaction they have gotten into with other identities, and since their diaspora has not been confined to solely one locality, their contemporary identity formation also cannot be claimed to be confined to one area. Justin Rudelson in his study *Oasis Identities* asserts that Pan-Turkic sentiments seem weak in present day Xinjiang and mainly found among Uyghur intellectuals.[45] I will try to describe the way in which they form their national identity in one foot of the diasporic movement that is Turkey. Thus, I will try to understand and explain their discursive way of thoughts in forming their bond with their Turkish hosts, and how this bond reflects itself in the formation of a Uyghur identity in Turkey.

The Research

[44] Interview by the author of the thesis: Istanbul, 15.02.2010.

[45] Justin Jon Rudelson, *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism along China's Silk Road (*New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p.118-120.

The research for this thesis is based on a review of secondary sources as well as fieldwork. Although the secondary sources were relatively easy to find due to our university's sources, I had many challenges during my fieldwork with the Uyghurs living in Istanbul. The Uyghur subjects' fear of persecution by the Chinese government was the main difficulty during my field work. Even though I only conducted interviews with Uyghurs who carry Turkish passports, still they claimed to be very vulnerable. The interviews were conducted in an atmosphere of paranoia and fear of being followed by a Chinese spy or in some cases the spy being myself since I had lived in China for one and a half years.

I first tried to reach the Uyghurs through the East Turkestan Foundation, and there I was asked to bring a paper signed by my thesis advisor stating that I was conducting an academic study for my MA thesis. Most of the Uyghurs living in Turkey have families, relatives, and friends back at home that they do not want to put at risk. I was recommended that I meet people only under the supervision of the secretary general of the foundation. I was told that the activities of the young Uyghur students in Turkey are under surveillance by the "big brother." Thus their susceptible position *vis-a-vis* the Chinese intelligence influences the content of their speech about virtually anything. When I asked about help for reaching some names and contact numbers the response was:

> You have to be very careful when you contact those people. You should not ask them to reveal their names. When you interview one, the other may not know it. You never know who is who, who is what. Everybody is very cautious and they don't even trust each other. We are surrounded by ones who sell themselves to Chinese government in order to assure their safety. Even we are very careful, we do not have internet connection here, and we do not want to be tracked down.[46]

[46] Interview by the author of the thesis, Istanbul: 15.02.2010.

The nature of the Uyghur diaspora in Turkey determined the method of interviews for this study. In an environment where there is suspicion both of insiders and outsiders "snowball sampling" was a helpful technique to assign interviewees. Even though in my study growing a "snowball" was very slow, it was only possible to form a network through people who knew other people, in other words I could only meet interviewees with the reference of others. To a certain extent, being questioned about my motives and my study all the time, I was influenced by this environment of distrust. This might show the limitations of doing research on a politically sensitive topic; however, the experience also generates valuable data.

Until now, I have conducted fifteen semi-structured interviews and two group discussions with open-ended questions which took approximately an hour. In total, seventeen immigrants were interviewed.[47] I introduced myself explaining that I was interested in Uyghur migration motives, experiences with Turkish society, and possible problems in their migration. I intended to remain neutral towards the Chinese and Uyghur perceptions on politics about Xinjiang. At the very beginning of the interviews, when I had just come back from China, I was calling the region "Xinjiang" to be politically correct. Indeed, I was merely conforming to what a Turkish bureaucrat had told me in Shanghai:

> Instead of studying such a sensitive topic, which may in fact harm the political relations between the two countries, why don't you study something like the similarities between the Confucian thoughts and the philosophy of Rumi? I suggest you not to build an academic career on this issue; instead focus on

[47] All the informant names are pseudonyms.

> something that would help to strengthen the Sino-Turkish relations. Therefore you can appeal to more people.[48]

However, as I later realized, this naming was erroneous, for it was the Uyghurs' conscious and delicate choice to denote their homeland as "East Turkestan." This is indeed the process that Portelli also writes about:

> The very need for anthropological research in Western societies implies the recognition and observation of otherness in subjects who are not on the same plane with the observer. As long as informants who belong to oppressed or marginal social groups hesitate to open up to members of the elite, every field worker will be involved in a complicated game of hide and seek.[49]

Playing this game of hide and seek, and trying to get on the same level as the Uyghur interviewees, I realized that "political correctness" was simply absurd. Moreover, it was hypocrisy to cover my cowardice in studying a "sensitive issue."

In the Uyghur eye, "Xinjiang" was just another way of imposing Chinese hegemony, and as long as I insisted on using "Xinjiang," they seemed to be right to consider of me as a spy. "East Turkestan", on the other hand, was a naive way to oppose the hegemony on a very daily basis. As Portelli would suggest, "the recognition of the other, which is the foundation of anthropology, is at best limited unless it implies also a questioning and redefinition of the anthropologist's own identity."[50] Therefore, honestly speaking, I learned the simple and yet intricate details of naming the region through my interviewees.

The Outline of the Thesis

[48] Interview by the author of the thesis, Shanghai- China: 04.11.2009

[49] Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories*, p. 31

[50] Ibid., p.38.

The study is divided into several chapters. After the introduction chapter, the second chapter examines the history of Xinjiang, taking it from the Qing conquest in the mid-eighteenth century until 1949, i.e. the Communist takeover; and from 1949 to the present day, which I believe will shed some light on the historical relationship between Turkey and Xinjiang. This part will introduce the reader to the historical whereabouts of the Uyghur diaspora in Turkey. It will provide a background to rationalize the reason of why the leaders of the Uyghur formation in Xinjiang have chosen Turkey as their target land especially from the 1930s.

The third chapter will focus on the immigration process itself, and I will examine in which ways the Uyghur diaspora was formed in Turkey within the last forty years.

The fourth chapter analyses the interviews conducted with the Uyghur subjects about their experiences of migration. These interviews take the questions posed in the above paragraphs as their focus, and try to explain these intricacies through one-to-one or group interactions. As this study aims to accomplish, I will make deductions from the narratives of the interviewees and endeavor to explicate the topics of home, social life, and identity formation.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

General Statistical Information on Xinjiang Province

China's modern northwestern border began to take shape in the mid eighteenth century with the Qing conquest of the region. The name Xinjiang, which was not used until the late eighteenth century, derives from the Chinese characters *xin* and *jiang*, literally meaning "New Territory." In contemporary politics the region is one of the most controversial spaces for national territory disputes, both for the Han Chinese and Uyghurs. In order to understand the ongoing territorial claims and the consequent quarrels we should look at modern Xinjiang history. Therefore, the following paragraphs, will briefly examine the pre-Communist history of the region taking it from the 1759 Qing conquest to the end of Kuomintang (Guomindang-GMD) period. And secondly, the political interactions between Turkey and Xinjiang, from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic will be explained.

It should be noted that although the following pages will present a brief history of Xinjiang, the account is far from adequate. As mentioned above, Xinjiang history-writing is a complicated and tough process, and it is not my intention to undertake the task of re-writing the history. Thus it should be kept in mind that the following pages are just for the reader to have background information about the historical and social setting of the region.

To keep the reader informed about the geographical and social structure of Xinjiang Province, a brief introduction to statistics is needed. Currently, northwestern

borderland of People's Republic of China is called the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. It gained this status in 1955. It encompasses one-sixth of China's territory, which is more than 1,660,000 square meters and shared by a population of 20.951.190 with 39.15% living in the urban areas. In other words, it is an area which is as big as Western Europe, whit a population far less than that of France.

Although its name addresses a specific nation (*minzu*), the ethnic composition of Xinjiang is not homogeneous. Uyghurs constitute 9.6 million of the population whereas the Hans comprise 8.35 million. Yet, the region is very multi-ethnic in its structure and the Uyghurs and the Hans are not the only inhabitants, though the largest in terms of numbers. Other ethnicities include Kazaks, Huis, Kirgizes, Mongolians, Xibo, Russians, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Tatars, Manchus, and Daurs as well as others, respectively given according to their numbers.

In order to have a thorough grasp of the region's history, its size and the tough geographical conditions should be noted carefully, for it is this great size that has separated culturally, for instance, Kashgar in the far west from Hami in the east both in terms of distance as well as culture. Geographically a huge area, it is surrounded by the Altai Mountains in the north and Karakorum and Kunlun Mountains in the south. The Tianshan Mountains are believed to separate Xinjiang into North and South Xinjiang. That separation has proved to be logical due to the cultural differences of the two parts. North of Tianshan is commonly referred to as the Zhungarian Basin, and the south as Tarim Basin. East of the mountain ranges is the region known as Turpan Depression. The Tarim Basin is the largest part of Xinjiang and includes the Taklamakan Desert.

The region's economy was boosted after the 1978 reforms; and the total trade volume amounted to 13.7 billion of US dollars in 2007 (increasing from 9.1 billion in

2006), with exports amounting to 11.5 billion. The main export commodities include raw cotton and cotton yarn. When we take a look at the countries Xinjiang exports to or imports from, Kazakhstan takes the lead with a trade volume of close to 7 billion dollars. As we scroll down the statistics page, we come across Turkey, the volume of which is 10 million dollars in total, with 7 million constituting Xinjiang's exports to Turkey. These data are revealing in many respects, for they show the actual connection Turkey and Xinjiang share in the modern world apart from the discursive exclamations in the political arena.[51]

Xinjiang (literally meaning New Territory) was conquered by the Qing Empire in the mid-eighteenth century and the name "Xinjiang" was attained during the Qing Dynasty, officially in 1884. After then, together with Tibet, Xinjiang has became one of the most controversial topics in Imperial, Republican and Communist (1949-) policy agendas. As for the Chinese historiographical approach, the name Xinjiang is usually attached to separatism, ethnic nationalism and Islam. As Nabijan Tursun puts it, "twentieth century Uyghur historiography has been the site of an ideological battle between the competing nationalist projects of the Uyghurs and the Chinese state."[52] Especially after the 9/11, under the great influence of U.S president Bush's "war on terrorism" in world politics, China re-evaluated the region and labeled it and its people as fundamentally Islamist and some groups as terrorists.

For a Chinese reader, there has been a remarkable increase in the academic work examining Xinjiang's history and examining topics such as terrorism's essence, its

[51] All the data has been taken from the Source: Xinjiang tongji nian lan 2008 (Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook 2008), (Xinjiang: Zhongguo tongji chu ban shi, 2008).

[52] Nabijan Tursun, "The Fromation of Modern Uyghur Historiography and Competing Perspectives toward Uyghur History," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, no. 6 (March 2008), p. 89.

history, the current situation of the region, and China's anti-terror fight. In its foreign policy implements, Chinese government take every possible measure to cut the veins of separatist movements as we can see in the formation of the Shanghai Five, which has evolved into the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in 2002 that includes China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan as the member states. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation has apparently surrounded Xinjiang and thus keeps the region intact. It should be noted that those countries are Xinjiang's western neighbours with good mutual economic relations.

The historiographical debates about Xinjiang have been contested by many actors, mainly the Uyghurs themselves, the Russians and the Chinese. In order to narrate a history that tries to stand neutral ideologically, we first have to understand the process through which Uyghur historiography has gone.

The Russians come at the top of the list in explaining the outside influences on Uyghur historiography. Tursun writes that during the Soviet era, "the goal of Russian scholars at this time was to promote a unique ethnic identity and history of Uyghurs as opposed to a common Turkic history and Turkic identity,"[53] and consequently Uyghur nationalism was boosted and "terms such as "national independence," "national liberation," and "self-determination" became an integral part of public discourse."[54] However, there was also a counter-formation that opposed this Russian understanding of history, led by Muhemmed Imin Bughra (1912-1965), Polat Qadiri (-1974), and

[53] Ibid., p. 90.

[54] Ibid.

Abdul'eziz Chinggizkhan (1912-1952). They strove to include the Uyghurs in a greater "Asia," rather than separating them from other Turkic groups.[55]

After the communist take-over of the region, Chinese influence on Uyghur historiography started. Since the earlier works of Uyghur history were seen as incompatible with Communist Party ideals, Chinese scholars began to publish history books that emphasized the historical ties of the Uyghur people and the region with China. It was aimed to create a sense of pro-Chinese identity among the Uyghur people and dislocate the nationalist sentiments. In other words, Chinese scholarship was a means to strengthen the Party's ideological notions together with the unity of the country. However, when the political stage in China started to shift from socialism to market economy during the 1980s, minority historiography also started to transform, and hence emerged another scholarly fight between the Uyghurs and the Chinese. In order to overcome the battle of the Uyghurs in their approach to history, Chinese academia took some measures. As Tursun puts it "in the 1990s, following the emergence of independent republics in Central Asia, the Chinese government intensified its efforts to co-opt the field of Uyghur studies and employ scholars to write versions of history to meet state goals."[56]

Historiographical works play a vital role in identity formation and institutionalization of the ethnic identity. Particularly in the process of the "making the nations," each party, in our case the Communist Han Chinese and Uyghur people, uses history writing to endorse its ideological underpinnings. Thus, historiography becomes a

[55] Ibid., p. 89.

[56] Ibid., p.92.

quagmire in the political battlefield. In this regard, the PRC took every measure to incorporate Xinjiang into the realm of Chinese government. Nabijan Tursun notes that Chinese historians have argued that the political entities Uyghurs administered were just local governing entities under the control of the central dynasties and that they did not enjoy full independence. In doing so, they have portrayed Uyghur history as a mere component of Chinese history. This conclusion is a common viewpoint within modern Chinese historiography and agreed upon by almost all Chinese scholars. It serves to reinforce the PRC's claims to Xinjiang by "asserting an unbroken chain of direct control over the region."[57]

As for the Uyghurs, they connected their culture and history to a long history of independent empires dating back to the eighth century in connection with the Turkic people of Central Asia, thus allowing the idea of "the Uyghur nation" to create a cultural continuity that culminates in independence. To use Duara's phrases, this allocation of Uyghur history back to the eighth century which draws linearity between the independence of those times and the contemporary fight for liberation may be defined as the writing of "deep history." As Duara puts it, "this is what we call essentialization; they make certain traits the essence of a people. It is deep history that produces moral authority to say that you should do this or that for the unity of the nation."[58]

A fair history of the region should preserve a core that is faithful to history; hence it should avoid one-sided historiographies of the PRC as well as those of the Uyghurs. Therefore, in the following pages I give a brief account of the history of

[57] Ibid., p.97.

[58] Prasenjit Duara, "The Legacy of Empires and Nations in East Asia," in *China Inside Out: Contemporary Chinese Nationalism and Transnationalism,* eds. Pal Nyiri and Joana Breidenbach (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005), p. 50.

modern Xinjiang, which I reckon to start in 1750s with the invasion of the Qing Empire. To have a general idea about the history of the region from 1750s until 1949 it is important to comprehend the transformations it has passed through in becoming a province of China. It was, as will be shown, not a region of extreme exploitation since the very first day it was conquered; rather, its history is a combination of flexibility and oppression, progress and discrimination.

Imperial Power over Xinjiang

When the Qing Empire conquered the western territories, by eliminating the Zunghars, a policy of imperial colonization came with the promotion of military and economic incentives. The region was ruled from the headquarters in Ili with the deployment of nearly 100,000 military personnel and their dependents.[59] The Qing administrative system within its new borders was relatively different from that in mainland China. As McMillen puts it, "the imperial administration, composed of a thin upper stratum of Manchu bannermen and Chinese subordinates, ruled indirectly in Xinjiang through the traditional native feudal structures, with the existing begs (gentry), headmen, and princes used as instruments of local rule."[60]

Although the area, which was named "Xinjiang" in 1768, was under a more flexible organizational structure, "from the 1760s on, it was an integral part of the Qing

[59] James A. Millward and Peter C. Perdue, "Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late Nineteenth Century," in ed. S. Frederick Starr, *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland* (Armonk, N.Y. : M.E. Sharpe Inc.), p. 57.

[60] Donald H. McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1940–1977* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1970), p. 16.

Empire, albeit under administrative systems unlike those in the Chinese interior."[61] However, the naming of the region "Xinjiang" in 1768 was the indication of central administration's objective to include the area as "a new territory" of China.[62]

Rather than transforming the native society and existing political organizations immediately, the Chinese rulers gradually imposed measures in the military as well as other spheres. The unexplored lands of Xinjiang needed great efforts of human labor and financial resources to establish irrigation systems and set up agricultural yields. In order to fill the need for labor force, there emerged the demand for more Han soldiers to settle in Xinjiang with their families. By 1800, the new settlers comprised over one-quarter of the total population in the region.[63] As well as soldiers, some intellectuals and criminals like murderers, thieves, and high-ranking officials who had committed misdeeds, were sent to Xinjiang either as exiles or workers.[64] Thus, the central government put its efforts into creating a link between the region and the capital by changing the military, demographic and economic structure of the Empire's northwestern region. Those efforts though, never rendered imperial rule in Xinjiang completely secure.[65]

From the 1750s to the mid-nineteenth century, Xinjiang Muslims lived under Qing rule without any considerable problems or social unrest. However, as the Chinese government had to allocate more financial resources to the troops in southern and central

[61] Millward and Purdue, "Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late Nineteenth Century," p. 57.

[62] McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang* , p. 17.

[63] Millward and Purdue, "Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late Nineteenth Century," p. 59.

[64] Ibid., pp. 59- 60.

[65] Ibid., p.60.

Yangzi provinces to suppress the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864), there emerged a shortage of silver for the officials and the army and more importantly for the trade in Xinjiang. This led authorities in Xinjiang to seize Uyghur labor to mine for precious metals.[66] In addition, heavy taxes were imposed on Chinese and Uyghurs alike. Indeed, the military and economic weakness of Chinese state allowed the local begs of Xinjiang to find some space to maneuver for more independence in economic activities and politics. As Millward underlines, "it was economic distress and rampant misrule from the 1850s that created the conditions underlying the uprisings."[67]

Both economic difficulties and ethnic tensions between the Turkic Muslim and Hui (Chinese Muslims) populations and the Han Chinese, Mongol and Manchu authorities led to the 1864 rebellions. It was Yaqub Beg, a warlord from Khoqand, who took advantage of the power vacuum in southern Xinjiang and became the leader of the Muslim "holy war" against the infidel Chinese suzerains. He ruled the Kashgar Emirate from 1864 to 1877. It is significant here to note that the 1864 Yaqub Beg revolt was not a Uyghur rebellion against Qing rule as it is usually stated both in Chinese and Uyghur historiographies. Yaqub Beg himself was not ethnically Uyghur, but a Khoqandi, from what is now Kyrgyzstan. Though in modern Uyghur historiography Yaqub Beg is an important nationalist figure, recent surveys of Xinjiang history draw our attention to another essential point. Kim Hodong in his remarkable study emphasizes that "there was no concept of Uyghur nationality among the people in Xinjiang at that time and even no

[66] Millward. *Eurasian Crossroads*, p. 116.

[67] Ibid., p.118.

expression to designate all the population there."[68] Thus, Yaqub Beg's incorporation into Uyghur historiography or into Chinese historiography is both fallacious on account that the rebellion definitely had no any ethnic bearings.

After the defeat of Yaqub Beg's armies and the Qing reconquest of the region, there arose arguments about the desired state of Xinjiang. The debate was won by Zuo's suggestion that Xinjiang should become an official province of the Qing Empire. And thus, in 1884, the region was officially named Xinjiang, a process that also changed the administrative system of the province. By incorporating Xinjiang into the Qing Empire as a province, the Qing government replaced local Muslim leaders (*begs*) with Qing bureaucrats while relying on "begs and *ahungs* (Muslim clerigs) for interpreting, implementation of decrees, collection of taxes, police work, adjucation of minor disputes and a range of other clerical and administrative matters."[69] In other words, important posts were delivered to the Chinese, whereas the local Muslims were employed as junior officials.

The period between late the nineteenth to the early twentieth century is potent in Xinjiang and Uyghur people's history in the sense that the modernizing schemes as well as the idea of "nationalism" arrived in Xinjiang. This was a manifold process led by the Chinese on the one hand, and jadidists on the other. It was the era in which the Chinese wished to "assimilate" the region, whereas the local population was exposed to the novel

[68] Kim Hodong, *Holy War in China: The Muslim Rebellion and state in Chinese Central Asia 1864- 1877* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 67.

[69] Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, p.140.

concepts of *khalk* (the people) or *millat* (the nation) as new discourses through the influence of pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism.[70]

As such, new educational practices implied by the Chinese center aimed at supressing and assimilating local Muslim culture and tradition through a curriculum of the same content as those in China proper. On the other hand, however, there was an attempt to modernise Islamic education which was inspired by the jadidist movement in the Crimea and Central Asia and by developments in Turkey.[71] Therefore, at the turn of the nineteenth century education in Xinjiang was a battleground for clashing ideologies with strong emphasis either on Islam or Confucianism which had lasting outcomes after the 1911 Xinhai Revolution's domino effect hit Xinjiang.

Xinjiang between Warlords and Guomindang: An Era of Uprisings

The fragmentation of force and weak political authority at the centre during the 1911- 1949 era facilitated warlords and external factors to gain more control and autonomy within Xinjiang. Furthermore, as Millward puts it, Xinjiang turned out to be both "the pawn and the pivot of Asia", where it standed as "the point of intersection of the geo-political imperatives of Russia/ Soviet Union, China, Japan, and towards the end of this period, the US."[72] Thus, Han policies of the era were formed by the struggle to

[70] Ibid., p.125.

[71] Ibid., p.148.

[72] Michael Clarke, "The Problematic Progress of 'Integration' in the Chinese State Approach to Xinjiang, 1759–2005," *Asian Ethnicity*, 8, no. 3 (2007), p. 270.

overcome the expanding influence of external forces and to keep the region intact and yet Chinese.

After the elimination of the Ili Rebellion[73] in 1912, namely Republican governor Yang Zengxin (1867- 1928) was appointed as Civil and Military Governor of China's largest province by Yuan Shikai, president of the new Chinese Republic. Yang Zengxin, besides eradicating his political enemies, banished all sorts of Turkish and Russian schools which had brought new nationalist ideas to the territory, and deported the relevant subjects. As Forbes asserts "he disliked foreigners, and was determined to isolate Sinkiang [Xinjiang] from their influence in so far as this was possible."[74] In response to a growing number of Turkic schools, which were based on a new type of education known as *usul-i jadid*, Yang supported conservative Uyghur elites and clergy who were in favor of an Islamic rule. However, despite of his efforts, influence of pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism had their repercussions in Xinjiang as "growing awareness of Islamic religious and cultural identity amongst the Turkic-speaking peoples of the province."[75] He also kept an eye on the press, communication, intellectual activities and publications to cut all the possible opposition and to create a more isolated Xinjiang.

By the 1930s, Xinjiang's future was falling into the midst of ambiguity due to the misrule, growing Soviet intervention, and separating nationalist sentiments among Turkic Muslims. Thus began a series of events which would mark the modern history of Xinjiang and Uyghurs with rebellions and inter-ethnic conflict during the first half of the

[73] Ili Rebellion was an uprising organized by the Republican revolutionaries in Xinjiang.

[74] Andrew D.W. Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims in Chinese Central Asia: a Political History of Republican Sinkiang 1911- 1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 17.

[75] Ibid., p. 16.

twentieth century. It was in this era that the first Eastern Turkestan Republic (1933-1934) was founded after three years of devastating revolts.

Muslims twice ruled Xinjiang – first through the Eastern Turkestan Republic (ETR) from 1933 to 1934, and then through the second ETR from 1944 to 1949. The first ETR was founded in Kashgar in 1933 after rebellions in Hami and Turpan between 1931 and 1932, but lasted only until 1934 when Xinjiang was brought under control by the Soviet-backed Sheng Shicai. In 1944, the second ETR was founded with Yining as its capital, lasting until Xinjiang was "peacefully liberated" by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in 1949. The foundation of the second ETR reflected a complex set of factors since dissatisfaction was increasing in Xinjiang in the early 1940s due to economic crisis, a repressive prison system, rumors of an influx of Han Chinese etc. – but also support from the Soviet Union seems to have been important for establishing the second ETR.

Communist Policies over Xinjiang

Xinjiang's ethnic minorities, strategic location, and natural resources had a crucial impact on the Chinese Communist Party policies. The Party's ultimate goal was to achieve the goal of the socio-economic, political, and cultural integration of Xinjiang. Gardner Bovingdon states that the CCP had a shaky foundation in Xinjiang and Uyghurs viewed the CCP governance as exploitative even imperial.[76] The Communist party followed a policy of settling Han migrants from the various parts of the country to

[76] Gardner Bovingdon, "The Not-So-Silent Majority: Uyghur Resistance to Han Rule in Xinjiang," *Modern China*, 28, no.1 (January 2002), pp. 42.

Xinjiang and thus changed the demographic structure of the region. The Han population of 200,000 rose to 6,5 million from the 1940s to 1995.[77] Even though that drastic change in population cannot be an indicator of misrule over the non-Han people of Xinjiang, it can be noted that it was one of the factors in the ethnic tensions and social instabilities. According to Nicolas Becquelin, measures such as encouraging Han migration and sponsoring land reclamation seriously aggravated competition for limited jobs and educational opportunities in the cities and for limited land and water in the countryside, and led to discrimination against the minorities, and helped produce a series of violent incidents.[78]

The sinification of Xinjiang through agricultural policies, large reclamation programs and Han migration into Xinjiang was a risky strategy for Chinese government. Frankly, in opposition to the central government's efforts, political instability, ethnic confrontation and violent riots are still major agenda topics in the region. Communist strategies to unite all minorities within a single regime and desire to keep the Communist China intact backfired in the sense that the last twenty years of Xinjiang history has witnessed many uprisings by Uyghurs who are not content with the Chinese socio- economic policies including the April 1990 Baren incident, the 1992- 1993 series of explosions and bombings, the February 1999 Ghulja-Yining incident, and the recent Urumqi incident of July 2009.[79]

Uyghur Perspective in Sino-Turkish Relations

[77] Ibid., p.45.

[78] Nicolas Becquelin, "Xinjiang in the Nineties," *the China Journal*, no. 44 (July 2000), pp. 85-88.

[79] James A. Millward, *Violent Seperatism in Xinjiang: A Critical Assessment* (Washington DC: East-West Center Washington, 2004).

Ottoman contacts with east Turkestan start very early in the fifteenth century when Turkestani pilgrims establish two waqfs in Adana, southern Anatolia.[80] Although not many accounts exist that explain the interaction between the Ottoman Empire and east Turkestan, it may be assumed that this interaction continued until the nineteenth century. I believe that this long-standing relationship took on a new form during the nineteenth century, especially beginning with the Yaqub Beg rebellion.

When Yaqub Beg established his emirate in 1864, he sought ideological legitimacy, which he received from the Ottoman Sultan Abdulaziz, who bestowed upon him the title "Emir-ül-Müslimin," and sent him arms and ammunition together with military officers to teach Yaqub Beg's army modern methods of warfare, in 1873.[81] When Abdulhamid II became the Sultan in 1876, Yaqub Beg wanted to maintain the Ottoman connection. He immediately sent Yaqub Khan to Istanbul to inform the Sultan about the earlier connections between the two states. However, Abdulhamid's interest was much different from that of Abdulaziz. He kept the ambassador waiting for a month before accepting him to his presence; and when he did finally accept him, he did not give the ambassador any hope of ensuing the policy of his predecessor. [82] Abdulhamid II was indeed wise in his approach to the situation, for Yaqub Beg's emirate was on the

[80] Selçuk Esenbel, "Comment on the Chinese Coins from Tarsus-Gözlükule," in *Field Seasons 2001-2003 of the Tarsus-Gözlükule Interdisciplinary Research Project*, ed. Aslı Özyar, (Istanbul: Ege Yayınları, 2005).

[81] Ahmet Rıza Bekin, "Yakub Beğ Zamanında Doğu Türkistan'ın Dış İlişkileri," *Ankara Üniversitesi, Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Doğu Dilleri* , no. 1 (1971), 35-36, 39-42.

[82] Kemal H. Karpat, "Yakub Bey'in Osmanlı Padişahlarıyla İlişkilerinin Yeniden Yorumlanması", in *Türkiye ve Orta Asya*, trans. Hakan Gür (Istanbul: Imge, 2003), p. 163.

verge of falling when Yaqub Khan sought the new Sultan's assistance. Indeed, the emirate fell apart in 1877.

Despite the disinterest of Abdulhamid II, the link between east Turkestan and the Ottoman Empire persisted. The pilgrims that endlessly travelled into the Ottoman lands are indicators of the continuing relationship. The fact that Abdulhamid subsidized the holy journeys of these pilgrims is a manifestation of his Pan-Islamist policies.[83] Even after the reign of Abdulhamid, during the period of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), this policy of assisting the pilgrims continued. Another continuing policy was the Ottoman Empire's educational presence in Xinjiang. From the end of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire sent religious books to Chinese Turkestan to help them find the "true way." This policy also continued during the CUP era, although it changed in its content.

The CUP had two main missions relating to Chinese Turkestan. The first one was Ahmed Kemal's mission that started in 1914, and the other one Adil Hikmet Beg and his friends' mission that started in 1915. Although Ahmed Kemal's intention in Xinjiang is evident from his memoirs, Adil Hikmet Beg's presence is more complicated. Both of them, together with the latter's friends, were engaged in activities concerning the education of the indigenous people. Therefore, in this regard, they did not promote any inflammatory activities; however, Adil Hikmet Beg was sent there by the Secret Organization (*Teskilat-i Mahsusa*) and he fought together with the Kyrgyz in the Russian territories against the Russians in 1916. In other words, the Ottoman officers in Chinese Turkestan were engaged in educative activities in the region, but they had

[83] Cezmi Eraslan, *II. Abdülhamid ve İslam Birliği* (İstanbul: Ötüken Yayınevi, 1992), p. 384.

militaristic means to defend the rights of the Central Asian Turkic groups that lived in Russian Central Asia. It's interesting to see how Turkestan was divided into two parts, and how these parts were perceived as distinct entities.[84]

However, the Ottoman Turks' activities in the region changed during the 1930s. Although the Ottoman activities had not had any intention of igniting a political and social upheaval, the former Ottoman Turks in the region were engaged directly in Pan-Turkist activities that sought liberation from Chinese rule. In this regard, a failed Japanese plot is revealing to understand how close the tie was perceived to be between Turkey and Xinjiang.

When the Hami uprising was paving the way for the formation of the East Turkestan Islamic Republic, Japan was observing the political situation closely in order to impose its imperial control on the region, just like it had done in Manchuria—northeast China—in 1931 when it seized the region and named it Manchukuo. Japan thought of Xinjiang as a bulwark against Russia, and such a bulwark would ease the Japanese Pan-Asian dream of unifying Asia under the Japanese flag. As such, the Japanese leaders came up with a plot to enthrone the long-gone Ottoman Prince Abdulkerim Effendi in Xinjiang as the king of Muslims. To achieve their aims, he was brought to Japan, and then sailed to Shanghai to fly to Urumqi; but when the Chinese realized the gravity of the situtation, he never had the chance to arrive in Xinjiang. In the end, the Japanese plan failed, and a few months afterwards, Prince Abdulkerim was found dead in New York.[85]

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[84] Ahmed Kemal İlkul, *Çin-Türkistan Hatıraları, Şanghay Hatıraları*, ed. Yusuf Gedikli (Istanbul: Ötüken, 1999); Adil Hikmet Bey, *Asyada Beş Türk* (Istanbul: Ötüken Yayınları, 1998).

[85] Selçuk Esenbel, "Osmanlı Hanedan Ailesinden Şehzade Abdülkerim Efendi'nin Gizemli

There were also those Ottoman Turks who found ways to go to Xinjiang to fight with the Uyghurs, such as Kemal Kaya, but theiradventures are topic for another story. Nevertheless, 1930s may be seen as a period when the Turks in the region actively participated in the local fight against the Chinese rule; however, after 1934, there is no mention of any Turkish activity in the region. 1934 was a turning point in Sino-Turkish relations, for it was the first time that the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of China established a formal relationship by signing a Friendship Treaty. It was after this date that formal political dealings were exchanged between the two countries.[86] However, given the extreme political conditions of China until 1949, it is understandable that the relationship between the two countries was not very intimate.

When the Communist Party overthrew the Republic and formed the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, Turkey was among the countries that did not recognize the newly founded republic. It was on August 4, 1971, that Turkey recognized China when China was given a seat in the United Nations during the same year.[87] After that date, the relationship between Turkey and China gradually improved, yet the problem of Xinjiang always occupied a significant political place.

Since figures who took part in "East Turkestan" politics escaped from China in 1949 and took refuge in Turkey during the following years, Turkey's stance became essential in determining the place of Xinjiang in world politics. Isa Yusuf Alptekin, the leader of the Uyghurs in exile, and Mehmet Emin Bugra, a well-known intellectual who

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Ölümü," *Toplumsal Tarih* 195 (March 2010).

[86] Uluğ Kuzuoğlu, *Xinjiang between the Globes: The Ottomans in the Making of Modern Xinjiang* (MA Thesis: Bogazici University, 2010).

[87] Rosita Dellios and Nadir Kemal Yılmaz, "Turkey and China: A Study in Symmetry", *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies* 2, no. 1 (2008), p.16.

had played an important role during the formation of the East Turkestan Islamic Republic in 1933 in Chinese Xinjiang, were two of the main figures who lived in Turkey from 1950s onwards, and published articles in journals defending the "East Turkestani cause." Since then, the question of East Turkestani independence has retained an important place in the Turkish academia, as mentioned in the earlier pages.

The Chinese attitude towards Turkey also was shaped according to these exiled Uyghur activities, and especially after the 1990s, the "Xinjiang problem" once again resurfaced as a hot topic since the Turkish role in Central Asia started to change.

The collapse of the Soviet Union marked a new age for Central Asia, and Turkey was ambitious to gain an important place in Central Asian politics. As Shichor notes Turkey's new foreign policy as one of the competitors for Central Asia has begun to cause concern in Beijing.[88] According to Shichor, Ankara resisted Beijing's demands to assuage and control the Uyghur activities until the mid-1990s, but during the second half of the decade, Turkey appeared to submit, although never entirely did. Turkey's discontent with the Chinese demands is observed easily in naming a public park in Istanbul in 1995 as the "Alptekin Park," after the deceased Uyghur leader. Turkey's president, prime minister, chairman of the parliament and many other prominent diplomats attended the opening ceremony which greatly irritated the Beijing government whose response was harsh. The Chinese ambassador "accused Turkey of interfering in the PRC's internal affairs and pressured the Turkish foreign Ministry to remove the park, the memorial, and the Eastern Turkestan flag; [demanded from the Turkish government]

[88] Yitzhak Shichor, *The Uyghur Hitch in Sino-Turkish Relations* (Washington: East West Center Press, 2009), p.24.

to stop all East Turkestani activities in Turkey; and to deport Uyghurs from Turkey."[89] Needless to say, Turkey did not comply with any of these demands.

During the same decade, Turkish leaders also openly declared their support for the East Turkestani cause. Suleyman Demirel stated that unless Turkey took the preemptive measures, "Eastern Turkestan [would] disappear from the historical scene in the coming decades."[90] Nevertheless, Shichor also states that despite the speeches full of ardor and support, the organized Uyghur activities considerably declined during this decade.[91]

In 2000, Chinese President Jiang Zemin was invited to Turkey by President Demirel, and the two countries signed a framework agreement on bilateral cooperation on energy. During this visit, Demirel, who had earlier criticized the Chinese policies, reaffirmed the Turkish government's commitment to the "one China" policy and recognized "that the government of the People's Republic of China [was] the sole, legitimate government of China."[92]

Although the Turkish politics concerning Xinjiang's position vis-a-vis China may seem hypocritical, I believe that it would be anachronistic to suggest so. It should be remembered that the Sino-Turkish trade volume grew only during the last decade. When the Turkish government was openly supporting the Uyghur activities during 1990s, Turkey's China policy was not yet concrete, and thus Turkey's support for the Uyghurs should not be taken solely as a stance against China. I believe that it would be

[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid., p, 28.

[92] *Chinese President Jiang Zemin's Middle East Visit*, *China Report 2000* 36, pp. 439-445.

comprehensive to assume that the Turkish support of the Uyghur problem was an extension of its domestic policies rather than foreign policies. However, when the political climate concerning Sino-Turkish relations altered together with the increased trade relations, Turkey became more amenable in managing the Xinjiang problem. In this regard, I believe, the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's speeches concerning the Urumqi uprisings that took place in July 2009 also should be observed along the same line.[93] Erdogan was indeed trying to strengthen his own position in domestic politics when he condemned the Chinese policies on Xinjiang and the Uyghurs. It is significant to point out that Erdogan never used the term "East Turkestan" in his speeches, which elicits the fact that he was trying to find a balance between savvy foreign policies and domestic demands.

Whatever the real intention of Turkey is, I find it convenient to suggest that Xinjiang/East Turkestan still plays an important role in the relationship between Turkey and China, and a stronger relationship between the two countries can only be established upon the true solution of this problem—if such a solution may ever be found.

Conclusion

This chapter analyzed the history of Xinjiang based on secondary sources. My intention in writing this part of the study was to inform the reader about what the Uyghurs call their "homeland." In addition, I briefly introduced the Sino-Turkish relations of the last decades which were formed around the question of the Uyghurs living in Turkey. I assume that without a general knowledge about the history of the

[93] Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan asserted that the situation in Xinjiang could be described as "genocide-like" (*adeta soykırım*). See: Erdoğan: "Adeta Soykırım," NTVMSNBC, July 10, 2009. http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/24982651 (accessed on 15.08.2010).

region from which the Uyghurs have emigrated, it is impossible to comprehend thoroughly the process of the diaspora and its route to Turkey.

With the current chapter drawing an outline of the history of Xinjiang, the following chapters are devoted to the analyses of the in-depth interviews conducted with Uyghurs residing in Turkey. Since the interviewees' conception of the diaspora and their own remembering of the immigration to Turkey will be explored, the content of this chapter should always remain as a foundation on which the "memory of the past" will be built.

CHAPTER III

UYGHUR IMMIGRATION TO TURKEY

In this chapter, an analysis of the Uyghur immigration to Turkey during the last fifty years is given. After briefly describing Turkey's policies on immigration and the determinant factors in migration, I will focus on the discourses of the Uyghur migrants, and analyze their narrations since their words define the content of dislocation.

Turkey's Immigration Regulations

In its Republican history, Turkey has experienced various immigration flows either supported by the government, as in the case of Greek-Turkish population exchange of the 1920s, or those to which it was exposed to because of recent political developments both in the Balkans, such as the political unrest of the Turks in Bulgaria, and in its eastern neighbors, like the revolution in Iran or the Gulf War in Iraq. Recently, when we talk about immigration to Turkey, we come across a group of transit illegal or as one would say "undocumented" migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, as well as migrant EU and neighboring country nationals, and professional workers. In order to understand the legal ground for Uyghur immigration and settlement in Turkey, a brief look at the Turkey's immigration policies is necessary.

Officially, Turkey does not recognize refugees from outside Europe due to the Geneva Convention signed in 1951, which recognized Turkey as having a geographical limitation in granting refugee status to immigrants from non-European countries. As such, immigrants unable to obtain refugee status are observed as transit migrants,

meaning they are required to leave the country eventually. Indeed, as Kirişçi states, Turkey maintains a "two-tiered" asylum policy, which deals with people arriving from in and out of Europe.[94] Turkey informally granted non-European asylum seekers the right to reside in the country temporarily while their cases were considered by UNCHR. To obtain citizenship or residence permits in Turkey to those arriving from outside of Europe is only possible once refugee status is granted. The majority of Uyghur immigrants that have arrived in Turkey during the last thirty years are not refugees according to the criteria used by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (thereon UNHCR). This definition states:

> Owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.[95]

Even though the definition above suits the narrative of the Uyghur migrants' very well, acquiring a refugee status in Turkey is not possible according to the Geneva Convention, as stated above. Thus, the Uyghurs find other ways to arrive and live in Turkey. Considering the literature on other non-European migrant groups in Turkey, the Uyghurs declare that they have a relatively easier process of settlement and citizenship acquisition due to their ethnic and religious affiliations. As indicated in the previous chapter, according to the Law of Settlement, those people who are of Turkish ethnic

[94]Ahmet İçduygu, Kemal Kirişçi, "Introduction: Turkey's International Migration in Transition," in *Lands of Diverse Migrations: Challenges of Emigration and Immigration in Turkey*, eds. Ahmet İçduygu and Kemal Kirişçi (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi University Press, 2009), pp.15-16.

[95] Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1950.

descent are allowed to migrate, settle, and receive Turkish citizenship. Therefore, it is easier for Uyghurs to stay in Turkey with a "settled migrant" status until they obtain Turkish citizenship.

There were various ways for Uyghurs to reach Turkey. For instance, during the 1960s, when Turkey had not formed any official relations with People's Republic of China yet, Uyghurs with their "communist" passports were able to cross the Turkish border as a result of talks between the United Nations and then Turkish government.[96] However during the 1980s, after the opening of China to world markets both in economic and social terms,[97] people used their social networks to get invitation letters from their relatives already residing in Turkey, or obtained student visas for higher education in Turkey.

Social, Political and Economic Motives for Uyghur Migration

After conducting several interviews I came to the conclusion that the reasons for migration to Turkey were not clear in some cases. Broadly speaking, whether they migrated during childhood with their parents or during adulthood as a self-choice, Uyghurs mostly cited different motivations to migrate. Only two interviewees stated definite political reasons for leaving their places of origin. Three interviewees refused to talk about their motivations for leaving Xinjiang. Moreover, four Uyghurs who had arrived in Turkey within the last thirty years entered the country with a student visa.

[96] See Chapter I.

[97] See below.

As pointed out before, a link already existed between the Turkish lands and east Turkestan due to the pilgrimage route which passed through the Ottoman Empire. Countless numbers of pilgrims had flowed into the Ottoman lands for centuries. This connection was bolstered through Abdulhamid's Pan-Islamist policies and the Committee of Union and Progress' (CUP) Pan-Turkic ones. Thus, historically speaking, the connection between east Turkestan and Turkey had a long and strong foundation.

As described in the earlier chapter, it was first in the 1950s that Turkey received 1853 Uyghur migrants as "settled immigrants." It should be remembered that during the same period, there was another group of 500 Uyghurs who came to Turkey via Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Christian Tyler states that in 1952, yielding to the pleas of Mehmet Emin Bugra and Isa Yusuf Alptekin, Turkey gave political asylum to dissidents whom Egypt and Saudi Arabia would not accept.[98] Out of these immigrants, 160 households settled in Niğde, 63 in Konya, 100 in Kayseri, 56 in Aksaray and 150 in Manisa Salihli. Most of these immigrants today live in Zeytinburnu and Güneşliköy in Istanbul.

When we come to the 1960s, we have a rather different context. It was in 1961 that the Communist government enacted a law stating that those who had foreign origins could leave Xinjiang, provided that they could prove their ancestral origins.[99] A window was opened when the Party allowed Uyghur people with foreign connections to emigrate. Given this right, during the following years, a substantial number of Uyghurs left Xinjiang and settled in various countries. However, some of them who went to Afghanistan were not permitted to stay for long since they were unable to prove their

[98] Christian Tyler, *Wild West China: The Taming of Xinjiang* (New Brunswick N:J: Rutgers University Press, 2004), p.229.

[99] Altan Deliorman, A. Donuk, and İ. Kocakaplan (haz.), *Türklük Mücahidi İsa Yusuf* (İstanbul: Bayrak Basım Yayın Tanıtım, 1991), p. 72.

Afghan origins. When the Afghan government decided to deport them, they contacted the prominent Uyghur leader İsa Yusuf Alptekin, who was residing in Istanbul. After some negotiations with the Demirel government, it was decided that those migrants would be allowed to enter Turkey and reside as settled immigrants.[100] They were settled in Kayseri in housing provided by the government.

After the founding of the PRC, it was during the 1960s that the first wave of Uyghur migration took place. Indeed, Lai points out two specific periods when the number of immigrants especially increased: "Tens of thousands of Uighurs continued to leave in waves-first in 1962, as Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated, and then in 1997, after the Rebellion in Yining; large communities formed in Kazakhstan and Turkey."[101] Many immigrants also came to Turkey during the 1950s, 1960s and 1980s, as will be shown in the following paragraphs, but suffice it to say that the migration process observed in the 1960s was the first-wave and it may be analyzed in detail.

Immigration to Turkey during the 1960s: Ramize Hanım's Long Journey

Although there was a mass migration during the 1960s, this does not mean that there was no other story to be told about the immigrants. Indeed, there are also some individual stories that need to be narrated to understand why some Uyghurs have migrated.

[100] Ibid., p. 73.

[101] Hongyi Harry Lai, "China's Western Development Program: Its Rationale, Implementation, and Prospects," *Modern China*, 28, no. 4 (October 2002), p. 446.

Ramize Hanım was one of these individuals whose family chose to leave Xinjiang after communism arrived. Her grandfather, who was a merchant, received the news when he was in Tibet, where he was engaged in some missionary and trading activities. Having heard the news, he was unable to leave the province and stayed there for a couple of years, marrying a young woman who had been born in Kashmir, India. Ramize Hanım tells the story as it were a "fairy tale:"

> [My grandfather] went to Tibet; it was the period of the establishment of the Mao regime there, so that was what they met, and my father couldn't go back. He stayed in Tibet and married my mother. My mother is originally from Kashmir; her father as well is from Kashmir, but he had migrated to Lhasa. He had migrated there for missionary purposes, in order to spread the Muslim belief, to spread Islam. He had created a small Muslim community there, and he (my grandfather) became the *imam* of that community. He was like the chief of the Muslims there, as my mother says; but also he used to deal with commerce, he had a drapery business and such. Now when I listen to those stories from my mother and my father, they seem to me like fairy tales. While my grandfather was trading, he met my father, they did business, and this acquaintance ended with the marriage of my father and my mother. When the Mao invasion came to Tibet, my parents had to leave, after long struggles. From there, they crossed the Himalayas on mules and arrived in Kashmir, where they hung around for two years. Afterwards they migrated to Arabia, via sea route, via a boat. My mother's parents stayed in Arabia, and my father and my mother migrated to Turkey. They had arrived Turkey in 1967. [102]

[102] Interview by the author of the thesis, Istanbul: 18.05.2010. *"[Dedem] Tibet'e gelmiş, Tibet'e geldiği sıralarda tam Mao rejimi kurulmuş, o dönemlerde işte rast gelmiş, rast gelince de babam geriye gidememiş. Gidemeyince de Tibette kalmış ve kalınca da benim annemle evleniyor. Aslen Keşmirli annem, babası da Keşmirli ama Lhasa'ya göç etmiş. Göç edince de oraya misyonerlik amacıyla gitmiş, müslümanlığı yaymak için, islam dinini yaymak için. Orada küçük bir müslüman topluluk oluşturmuş, orada o topluluğun imamı olmuş dedem. Müslümanların başı gibi bir şeymiş annemin anlattığına göre, ayrıca işte dedem ticaretle de uğraşıyormuş hani böyle bir manifatura dükkanı filan da varmış. Şimdi hep böyle annem babam anlattığı zaman gözümde masalımsı şeyler geliyor. Bu şekilde dedem ticaret yaparken de babamla tanışmış, babamla ticari alışverişlerde bulunmuş, babamla tanışınca da haliyle dedem de o ara, babamla annem evlenmişler. Tibete de Mao istilası gelince annemler de ayrılmak zorunda kalmışlar, uzun mücadelelerden sonra. Oradan katır sırtında Himalaya eteklerinden tekrar gelmişler. Keşmirde hemen hemen bir iki sene oralarda oyalanmışlar. Ondan sonra oradan da Arabistan'a deniz yoluyla, vapurla göç ediyorlar. Annemin tarafı dedem anneannem filan Arabistan'da kalıyorlar, babam da işte annem babam Türkiye'ye göç ediyorlar. 1967 de Türkiye'ye geliyorlar."*

Before they entered Turkey through its southern border in Hatay, they spent almost two years on the road. During their journey, they were twelve people from two families in total. From Saudi Arabia, they all traveled to Syria where they were unable to get the necessary permissions to cross the border, and stayed there until his father arranged their long passage to Turkey with trucks and trains. Finally, they settled in Iskenderun and during their stay, her father went back and forth to Istanbul as a merchant and arranged accommodation and accumulated the financial capital required for their new life in Turkey. After one and a half years in Iskenderun, they moved to Istanbul and settled in Fındıkzade where her father owned a small shop. Since they settled in Turkey as *serbest göçmen*,[103] they were unable to acquire any financial support from the government as in the case of *iskanlı göçmen* (settled migrant), however, their status as *serbest göçmen* enabled them to get Turkish citizenship within four to five years. When I asked her if they had received help from the Turkish government she replied:

> No, the state didn't help… my father came to Istanbul because he was dealing with commerce. He found a place in Istanbul, he rented a house, he set up his own business, and then he brought us here from Iskenderun.

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[103] *5543 sayılı İskan Kanunu hükümlerine göre Dışişleri ve İçişleri bakanlıklarınca yapılacak incelemelerden sonra uygun görülerek serbest göçmen vizesi alanlar, Hükümetten hiçbir iskân yardımı istememeleri şartıyla İçişleri Bakanlığınca serbest göçmen olarak kabul edilirler ve bu yolla geleceklerin pasaportlarına gerekli açıklama yazılır.* (According to the no. 5543 provision of Settlement Law, those who receive free settled migrant visas with the approval of Internal and Foreign Affairs are accepted as free settled migrants with the condition that they should not require any help in settlement from the Government; and the necessary information is also recorded on the passports of those who are to come this way.)

Information at: http://www.nvi.gov.tr/Hizmetler/Vatandaslik,Yetkili_Makam_Karari_Ile_Turk_Vatandasligin_Kazanilmasi.html?pageindex=6 (accessed on 20.05.2010)

> Those years my father was producing rosaries. He didn't speak any other language; he spoke Uyghur Turkish, but it's a totally different dialect. Still, I suppose that the reason he was dealing with commerce was the relation of the Uyghurs with commerce. He had a rosary shop. We grew up in Fındıkzade, he made [the rosaries], gave them to us there, and we arranged them in rows. [104]

The other question raised here is their motivation in choosing Turkey as the immigration country. Considering the travel and information technology of the 1960s and the geographical distance between Turkey and western China, one would question the motives that determined their decisions. At this point, Ramize Hanım's answer to my question of why they had chosen Turkey as the country of settlement rather than staying in Saudi Arabia helps us to understand at least some individual objectives. She responded that in Saudi Arabia they did not have the chance to obtain citizenship, since the Saudi government had very strict regulations on residence permit and settlement process. Therefore, she said, "We thought that we should come to Turkey because we are from Turkish origin. We would live better, in terms of religion, of tradition, I think that living more comfortable was the reason for coming." [105]

When they start their new life in Istanbul, they were one of the few Uyghur families in the city. As stated before, another group of Uyghurs who had settled in Turkey during the 1960s had been granted settled migrant status and were given land in

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[104] Ibid. *"Yok devlet yardımcı olmadı….babam ticaretle uğraştığı için İstanbul'a geldi, İstanbul'da bir yer buldu, ev tuttu, kendi işini kurdu, ondan sonra bizi İskenderun'dan alıp buraya getirdi. O zaman babam işte tespih imalatı yapıyordu. Dil bilmiyordu babam, Uygur Türkçesi biliyor fakat çok ayrı bir lehçe. Yine de Uygurların ticaretle olan ilişkisinden diye dolayı düşünüyorum, ticaret yapıyordu. Tespih atölyesi vardı, biz Fındıkzade'de büyüdük, [tespihleri] yapardı verirdi orada bize, biz de dizerdik."*

[105] Ibid. The same reason is stated by the other Uyghurs who came to Turkey during the 1980s. It will be elaborated later. The original quote: *"Biz de Türk soyundan olduğumuz için Türkiye'ye gelelim dedik. Daha rahat yaşarız, din olarak, gelenek olarak daha rahat yaşarız diyerekten geldi diye düşünüyorum."*

Kayseri.[106] Therefore, her family was one of the first families in Istanbul to create the social networks that facilitated the entry of other Uyghur immigrants through signing official invitation letters and supporting their *memleketli* (fellow countrymen) to immigrate to Turkey. Particularly during the late 1970s and 1980s, Ramize Hanım's father helped many others, even her future husband, to get notarized invitation letters stating that those who will come from Xinjiang would be sponsored by him and would not ask any financial help from the Turkish authorities.[107] Thus, the immigrants of the 1980s were able to arrive directly in Turkey once they have obtained invitation letters from their relatives. Nevertheless, there were also other cases in which they did not need an invitation letter at all, for they had student visas.

Immigration to Turkey during the 1980s: Different Aspects of Immigration

Since the secondary sources do not provide any information on the process of immigration after the 1980s, in this section, I will analyze this process as experienced by the immigrants themselves. This immigration had several reasons which should be disclosed for a better comprehension of this process.

First of all, according to the interviewees' accounts, one of the main reasons for this increase was the liberal policies of China that started in 1978. After the death of

[106] See Chapter I.

[107] Ramize Hanım tells: "You sent an invitation from here, with official approval, saying that "I have a relative in East Turkistan, he will come for tourism for 3 months, to visit me, and he will be under my responsibility and auspices, while in any case I won't have any responsibility to the state."" *"Burdan davetiye gönderiyordunuz noter tasdikli, işte benim Doğu Türkistanda akrabam var, işte buraya 3 aylık gezmeye gelecek, beni ziyarete gelecek ve bütün her şeyi ile benim himayem altında gelecek, ve benim hiçbir şekilde devlete, hükümete yükümlülüğüm olmayacak."* Ibid.

Mao Zedong, the founder and leader of the People's Republic of China, in 1976, his successor Deng Xiaoping inaugurated new policies known as *gaige kaifang* (Opening Reforms) that changed the whole social and economic structure of China. Millward asserts that the State Provision of 1982 "restored much of the language devoted to minority equality, rights, customs, and political and fiscal autonomy in earlier constitutions that had been dropped during the Cultural Revolution Era [1966-1976]."[108] It was during this period that *Zhongnanhai* (The Chinese Parliament in Beijing) loosened its grip on Xinjiang for a while and the Uyghur people and it became relatively easier for them to obtain passports and travel abroad and in this case travel to Islamic countries. After 1983, cross-border visits were allowed thanks to restoring relations between China and the USSR, and after the collapse of the Soviet Union some mountain passes were also reopened.[109]

Ismail Bey, who spent more than twenty years of his life under the Communist rule in Xinjiang, decided to move Turkey in 1981 with his father after Mao's death. He stated:

> Mao died, this Deng Xiaoping came, and the behaviors of these Chinese peopled changed. He said, "White cat, black cat, all are the same; the best one is the one that catches the mouse." This was their kind of politics. Then, they took out that hat, it was the end. Everybody became one. Afterwards China said that "you can go to your relatives abroad, we open the gates." Before, the gates were iron gates… We open the border as well, you can go and visit your relatives abroad, and they can also come. This kind of politics. [110]

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[108] Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, p.277.

[109] Tyler, *Wild West China*, p.227.

[110] Interview by the author of the thesis, Istanbul: 18.05.2010. *"Mao öldü, Deng Xiaoping çıktı, bu Çinlilerin tutumları değişti. Dedi ki "ak kedi, kara kedi hepsi bir kedi, fare yakalayan iyi kedi." Böyle bir siyaset yürüttüler bunlar. Ondan sonra bütün o başındaki şapkayı aldılar, bitti artık. Herkes bir oldu.*

As Ismail Bey narrated, his father had owned some land before the Communists reached Xinjiang. However, after the regime change his land had been confiscated by the state and become state property. His father had been denounced as a "state enemy" and had had to deal with violent attacks by the "red communists" since he was a landlord. He said that although communism had promised social and economic equality for everyone, they had only got poorer, and the basic needs such as gas for use in candles or oil for cooking had become scarce. After criticizing China for being cruel (*zalim*), he said that he had had to work under very hard circumstances such as carrying sacks of fertilizer for the land and wheat for the people from the age of twelve. He added that he decided to leave middle school because even his brother who had a bachelor's degree wasn't given a job since he was the son of an "enemy" and had to work on the fields with all the others. After complaining about communist policies such as buying food with ration cards, working without being paid a decent salary, and living a commune life, İsmail Bey criticizes the communist policies for being unfair and harsh. Obviously, İsmail Bey was unhappy with the regime in China. Thus, he and his father decided to write a letter to their relatives in Saudi Arabia and ask for a letter to help them get permission from the Chinese government to go to Hajj –with the idea of escape in their minds. However, his uncle writes back that it is impossible for them to cross the border carrying a communist state's passport, and suggests them to meet him in Turkey.

> Things started to get better after the 1970s. Then, my dad wrote a letter to my uncle, and asked 'can I take my son and come for *Hadj,* is there such a

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Sonra Çin dedi ki yurtdışındaki akrabalarınıza gidebilirsiniz, biz kapıları açıyoruz. Ondan önce demir kapı…Sınırı da açıyoruz, yurt dışındaki akrabalarınızı görmeye gidebilirsiniz onlar da buraya gelebilir, öyle bir siyaset oldu."

> possibility?' My uncle answered saying "They don't take communist passports in Saudi Arabia, there's no such a rule here, but I can invite you through Turkey." So my father accepted this, and then our father-in-law invites us both saying "Come and make your pilgrimage."[111]

So far, I have attempted to give examples of migration determined by the interaction of political and economic factors and made possible by the immigrants' social networks in Turkey and policy changes in China. Another factor that determined particularly young people's decisions to migrate to Turkey was to receive higher education. As most of the interviewees stressed, after the mid-1980s education was one of the primary motivations for young Uyghurs to leave their "homeland." It is also important to note here that respondents who immigrated before the late 1990s never singled out "discrimination" against minorities as the particular reason to leave. This should be considered within the context of China's communist regime and political developments that took place from 1949 to Mao's death in 1976, and its aftermath, i.e. China's changing socio-political structure after China's open door policy.

Gül Hanım was one of the first students to arrive in Turkey in the 1980s. She and her husband, who was also a graduate student of Turcology in one of the well known universities in China, received scholarships to study in Egypt. However, after a short visit to Egypt they realize that Turkey would be a better place to study. She said:

> We said that we would go to Egypt via Turkey. We arrived to Turkey and went from here, while we stayed there for 16 days. After going to Egypt, we felt that it was not a suitable place for us… We thought that if we studied there, we had better go back to Turkey and not waste our

[111] Interview by the author of the thesis, Istanbul: 18.05.2010. *"1970'den sonra işte yavaş yavaş düzelmeye başladı. Ondan sonra babam mektup yazıyor amcama, ben oğlumla bir hac yapıp gelsem, ona bir imkan olur mu diye. Amcam da yazıyor Saudi Arabistan'a komünist pasaportu sokmazlar buraya, öyle bir kanun yok, ama Türkiye üzerinden ancak davet edebilirim. Babam da kabul ediyor, ondan sonra bizim kayınpeder davet gönderiyor ikimize, bir oğlunla beraber hacca gidip gel sen diye."*

> time. We came back to Turkey, to Istanbul. Our aim was to attend a master's program if we could. [112]

After completing their master's degrees, they decided to study further. She became a faculty member in one of the most prominent universities in Istanbul after receiving her Ph.D.

Another academic who came and stayed in Turkey for higher education is Memed Bey who migrated to Turkey in 1982. His situation as a migrant was between the two categories stated above. Like the others, he took the advantage of having relatives in Saudi Arabia and left China for the purpose of "visiting his relatives." Since he had been an academic of linguistic studies in China, when he immigrated, he had the idea of working at a university in Turkey. When I asked him why he came to Turkey instead of staying in Saudi Arabia where his father lived, he answered: "I'm an enlightened person. When I was there [in China] I followed what was going on in Turkey. They call us Turks. We feel sympathy for Turkey. We are enlightened people."[113]

Even though the subjects I conducted interview with during my field research only reflect a small proportion of the Uyghurs living in Istanbul, I believe their narratives provide useful information to understand why and how the Uyghurs immigrated to Turkey. I attempt to narrate the stories on a historical line so that these

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[112] Interview by the author of the thesis, Istanbul: 27.03.2010. *"Bir gelip biz Türkiye üzerinden gidecez Mısır'a dedik. Türkiye'ye gelip buradan gittik, 16 gün kaldık o arada. Mısır'a gittikten sonra baktık ki pek bize göre değil…Burada öğrenim göreceksek dönelim daha iyi, zaman kaybetmeyelim dedik. Döndük Türkiye'ye, İstanbul'a geldik. Önce burada bir lisansüstü yapabilirsek lisansüstü yapalım diye."*

[113] Interview by the author of the thesis, Istanbul: 12.02.2010. *"Ben bir aydın insanım. Oradayken [Çin'de iken] Türkiye'yi takip ediyordum. Bizim adımız Türk geçiyor. Bizim Türkiye'ye sempatimiz var. Aydın insanız."*

findings can be considered in the light of the certain social and political changes both in China and Turkey. In this regard, it is convenient to quote from different accounts of immigrants who settled in Turkey during 1990s.

Immigration to Turkey in the 1990s

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the political circumstances in Central Asia fundamentally changed. During the 1990s, due to the power vacuum in the region, Turkey came forth with a desire to lead the Central Asian countries, and bolster its relations with the region through emphasizing the common Turkic identity. However, the same region that promised hope to Turkey was observed as a threat to China for the possible detriment to its territorial unity. China regarded Central Asian states as potential areas to accommodate radicals who could re-claim Xinjiang as their homeland, and utilize the power vacuum in the area to establish bases from where they would penetrate into Chinese territories.[114]

Therefore, the political changes the region went through were to open a new stage on which Turkey-Xinjiang relations would be re-defined, and the discourses of the migrants would alter. In this regard, it would be revealing to look at a few examples of immigration in which there are definite political motives to leave.

Ahad Bey who is now engaged in active politics in Turkey for the "Uyghur cause" was very open to all my questions whereas Osman Bey refused to answer some basic questions such as why and how he had migrated to Turkey. These two cases

[114] See Shichor, *The Uyghur Hitch in Sino-Turkish Relations.*

constitute the situation of the post-Cold War Uyghur immigrants, yet their stories are bound up with different motivations.

The interview with Osman Bey was one of the shortest in length, since he was very suspicious of my intention in conducting this research. However, our discussion was very informative for me, since it helped me to understand recent Uyghur perceptions of Turkey, which will be elaborated in the next chapter.

When he was asked about the decision to immigrate to Turkey he refused to say a word to me:

> If I start telling you how I migrated to Turkey, it would take 2 months. I cannot tell it. You are somebody that I am seeing for the first time, how deep can I go, how can I explain to you? I came neither to earn my life, nor to study or visit my relatives. [115]

However, the accounts of Ahad Bey are more revealing, and it also displays the Islamic connection that he utilized in escaping from Xinjiang and entering Turkey. It seems that being a Turk and a Muslim were not the only motivation for some migrants who left Xinjiang and settled in Turkey. The rising tide of radical Islam, and the bolstering link between Central Asian Muslims and Taliban in Afghanistan were also reflected in the case of Uyghur migrants:

> In the incidents of 1997, as the ones that survived, we managed to escape.[116] It was very cold because it was February. We arrived in Mongolia in one and a half month. We went from Mongolia in Russia,

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[115] Interview by the author of the thesis, Istanbul: 06.04.2010. *"Ben Türkiye'ye nasıl geldim anlatsam 2 ay anlatırım sana. Ben anlatamam ki. Sen ilk defa gördüğüm bir insansın, sana ne derinlikte nasıl anlatayım ki. Ben karnımı doyurmak için Türkiye'ye gelmedim, okumak için Türkiye'ye gelmedim, akraba ziyareti için de Türkiye'ye gelmedim."*

[116] For detailed information on the Gulca Incident which took place in Gulca, Xinjiang in February 1997, see James Millward, "Violent Separatism in Xinjiang: A Critical Assessment," (Washington: East West Center Press, 2004).

> then from Russia to Afghanistan. On the 22nd of July, 1998, we got out of Afghanistan, because there was the issue of bombings by America.[117]

When I asked him why he had gone to Afghanistan, he replied, "For military education," and continued narrating his story:

> My family was kept under surveillance for seven years. In China, all the relatives of political criminals are punished. So many times they seized their passports; it was forbidden to exit the country. So we found a formula, we pretended that they were citizens of Central Asia and we kidnapped them from there. Neither I can go back, neither can they.
>
> Actually it was not political, we entered from the border. From the border of Iran, escaping from the gate of Iran-Gürbulak, we didn't have passports. Those days, I learned that a law had been passed in 1998, a declaration that said that if the children that took part in the incidents of 1997 came to Turkey, they would be supplied with a two-year residence permit. So I went there, but we had nothing, neither a document, nor any passports. They [Turkish police] asked me. We will give you citizenship, but first you should take the residence permit. They gave me the permit, and I granted the citizenship in 2001.[118]

[117] Interview by the author of the thesis, Istanbul:18.05.2010. *"1997 olaylarında biz hayatta kalanlar kaçmayı başardık. O zamanlar şubat ayı olduğu için hava baya bir soğuktu. Bir buçuk ayda Moğolistan'a geldik. Moğolistan'dan Rusya'ya, Rusya'dan da Afganistan'a indik. 1998 Temmuz'un 22'sinde Afganistan'dan çıktık, çünkü o zamanlar Amerika'nın orayı bombalama durumu vardı."*

[118] Interview by the author of the thesis, Istanbul: 25.05.2010. *"Benim ailem yedi sene gözetim altında tutuldu. Çin'de siyasi suçlunun tüm akrabaları cezalandırılır. Kaç kere el koyuldu pasaportlarına, yurt dışına çıkma yasağı vardı. Biz de bir formülünü bulduk, Orta Asya vatandaşı olarak gösterip onları oradan kaçırdık. Bir daha ben de dönemem onlar da dönemezler."* [...] *"Siyasi değil de ben açıkçası sınırdan girdik biz. İran sınırından, bu İran Gürbulak sınırından kaçarak girdik, elimizde pasaport yoktu. O zaman 1998'te bir kanun çıktığını öğrendim ben, bu 1997'deki olaylara karışan çocukların Türkiye'ye gelmesi halinde iki senelik oturum izni verileceğine dair bir genelge çıkmış. Ben de gittim, tabi elimizde belge, pasaport hiçbir şey yok. Onlar da bana sordular. Vatandaş yapıcaz, önce ikamet alman lazım dediler. Oturma izni verdiler, 2001'de de vatandaş oldum."*

Memed Bey's "military education" in Afghanistan no doubt means training in the Talibani camps. His involvement into the activities of radical Islam is indeed an indicator of a new stage of migration experienced by Uyghurs, for it is highly unlikely that Memed Bey was the only one who received training before he found his way into Turkey.

Conclusion

This chapter analyzed the narratives of the migrants to understand the process of migration and how it changed in time due to the changes in Turkish politics, Chinese politics, and world politics. As stressed, the Uyghur migrants mobilized their social capital, i.e. former Uyghurs who migrated to Turkey, to arrive and settle in Turkey. However, this process of settlement was not the same in every period. The motivations for migration during 1950s and 1960s were very different from 1980s and 1990s.

As the next chapter will show, the process of integration was also not a linear process of applying for citizenship, receiving one, and happily living ever after. Integration into Turkish society had its own difficulties and ruptures, and the troublesome concepts of "home" and "homeland" were products of this distressed process.

CHAPTER IV

SEARCHING FOR "HOME": TRANSNATIONALISM, HOME AND BELONGING

> Home is neither here or there (…) rather, itself a hybrid; it is *both* here *and* there- an amalgam, a pastiche, a performance.[119]
> (Bammer, 1992: ix)

Turkey: A Home Away From Home?

Transnationalism, which emerged as a key concept for anthropological studies during the 1990s, argues that migrants sustain multi-stranded social relations that link their societies of origin and settlement.[120] Transnationalism provides us a more comprehensive idea of international migration and migrants in the sense that it moves beyond the idea of the diaspora, which places a migrant community within a nation-state paradigm.

This chapter's specific interest is the Uyghur immigrants' conception of "home" in Turkey as it emerges within the particular ethnographic research conducted for this

[119] Cited in N. Rapport and A. Dawson, "The Topic and the Book," in N. Rapport and A. Dawson (eds), *Migrants of Identity: Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1998), p. 7.

[120] For further argument on transnationalism please see: Glic Shiller., Linda Basch and Stanzon Blanc, "From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration," *Anthropological Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (1995): 48-63; Michael Kearney, "The Loal and the Global: The Anthropology of Globalization and Transnationalism," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 547-565; *Transnationalism from Below*, eds. Michael Smith and Luis Eduardo Guarnizo (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers, 1998); Aiwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: Cultural Logics of Transnationality*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999.

study. In addition, it is an attempt to understand the perception of the concept "home" by the Uyghurs in Turkey through their narratives and the ways it transforms subject to their post-migration experiences in Turkey. Home as a space "created within the changing links between "here" and "there""[121] is vital to understand the immigrant identity and their belonging to places. As Rapport and Dawson define "home" as:

> "Home," we suggest as a working definition, 'is where one best know oneself'- where 'best' means 'most', even if not always 'happiest'. Here in sum, is an ambiguous and fluid but yet ubiquitous notion, apposite for a charting of the ambiguities and fluidities, the migrancies and paradoxes, of identity in the world today.[122]

Immigrants' social fields, daily practices, interactions with the receiving country and society and also their living conditions and experiences before and after the migration generate their conception of "home." Home may not be a very well defined place, but a changing and evolving spatial entity. As Al-Ali and Koser underline, "conceptions of home are not static but dynamic processes, involving the acts of imagining, creating, unmaking, changing, losing and moving "homes.""[123] The concept of "home" as used in this study is not a concrete space where the immigrants have a territorial attachment, but rather it is an adherence to place/places to which they attach cultural ideas and values.

The concept can be seen from two perspectives as macro and micro levels. From the macro level, "'community' and "home" seem to be identifiable as things," whereas from a micro level analysis "the reality … becomes much more difficult to pin down."[124]

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[121] Al-Ali and Koser, "Transnationalism, International Migration and Home," p. 6.

[122] Rapport and Dawson, "The Topic and the Book," p. 8.

[123] Al-Ali and Koser, "Transnationalism, International Migration and Home," p. 7.

[124] Heidi Armbruster, "Homes in Crisis: Syrian Orthodox Christians in Turkey and Germany," in eds. Nadje Al-Ali and Khalid Koser, *New Approaches to Migration: Transnational Communities and the*

Therefore, there is no one-dimensional approach to the concept which is applicable to all migrant groups or every individual within the migrant group. They would either define home as a "mythic place of desire" where there is no return even it is physically possible to "visit the geographical region,"[125] or just basically a shelter where they feel safe and stable.

Transnationally mobile people seem to imply a "plurilocal" and more globally "mobile" conception of home.[126] Recent studies on the concept of home for the transnational migrants reveal that the conceptualization of "home" may vary according to different migrant or refugee groups or even within the same group as it is in the case of this study. As mentioned in the earlier chapters, Parla's study on Bulgarian Turks, which challenges the assumption that "one's identity and experiences are only whole when rooted in a territorial homeland,"[127] discloses the idea that migrants can have dual attachments. On the other hand, Bruno Ricco's study on Senegalese migrants in Italy reveals that most of the migrants have a strong sense of identity and perceive Senegal as their homeland although they live within transnational social fields and benefit from transnational networks.[128] Even though Bulgarian, Senegalese or Uyghurs migrants seem to represent different contexts, I find it very useful to see the similarities between

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Transformation of Home (London, New York: Routledge, 2002), p.17.

[125] Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp.192-193.

[126] Rapport and Dawson, "The Topic and the Book," ibid.

[127] Parla, "Longing, Belonging and Locations of Homeland among Turkish Immigrants from Bulgaria," p.554.

[128] Bruno Riccio, "Senegal is our home: the anchored nature of Senegalese transnational networks," in eds. Nadje Al-Ali and Khalid Koser, *New Approaches to Migration: Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Home* (London, New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 68-83.

various migrant experiences. It is revealing to see that how these theoretical frameworks become relevant in studying migrants that are unbounded spatially and temporarily.

Identity and Belonging

Each migrant's individual sense of belonging and identity is important for this study. Notions of "identity" and "belonging" emerge as key to the ways Uyghurs in Turkey attach and negotiate meaning of homes both in Turkey and Xinjiang. In Turkey they have a sense of belonging to a country; and in China they have a sense of belonging to a land where the dominating culture is alien to them. Their sense of home shifts depending on their specific location: While some feel at "home" in Istanbul, they might feel less at "home" in Xinjiang when the latter is indeed their place of origin. Hence, their attachment can be multidimensional which spans the borders of their home and host countries.

There is a paradoxical process of articulation and construction of identity for the Uyghurs in Turkey through sameness and difference at the same time. Uyghur immigrants locate their identity vis-à-vis the locals both through difference and sameness. Their identity is inextricably linked to their inclusion in Turkish society, since the citizenship in Turkey is ethnically oriented in practice. In other words, the Uyghur migrants' ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious affiliations enable their attachment to Turkish society. Although migration to Turkey was not based on an idea of ethnic and religious sameness at the very beginning, ethnic and religious origins were the primary reference points in the decision to migrate and settle in Turkey.

Being a Uyghur does not necessarily mean to be a Muslim for some Uyghurs. However, for some, Muslim identity is inextricable from their Uyghur identity. Their ethnic origin and their Muslim background are among the effective factors in their creation of a "home" in their current location.

Migrant Narratives

I met Yolbars Bey on a hot day in an *emekliler çaybahçesi* (teahouse for the retired) where almost all the tables where occupied by people over their sixties either playing cards or discussing a political problem in Turkey. From the beginning he was very excited to tell me his story and in some cases indoctrinate me about his "cause," which he and his brother had inherited from their father. His father was a very well known political figure who had travelled all over the world to give a voice to Uyghurs during the twentieth century. Thus, Yolbars Bey and his siblings are inevitably highly politicized both in their acts and narratives. The interview was often cut with silence and tears when he told me about his family's long and challenging journey from Xinjiang to India and then to Turkey. In contrast to his emotional attitude when he talked about all the pain they had endured, he was very excited when he mentioned the political and social problems of the Uyghurs either in China or in diaspora.

Yolbars Bey was born in Chinese territory, and after proclamation of the Communist regime in 1949 he left his homeland as an infant with his mother, older siblings and some relatives. After spending several years in India, thanks to his father's diplomatic efforts, they managed to settle in Turkey in 1954. The family settled in the Asian part of Istanbul first where they had Uyghur and Turkestani neighbors with whom

they established a long lasting and friendly relationship. He said that he did not feel any estrangement in his new environment. He says: "We didn't feel alienated or anything. When we had arrived Turkey, all the Turkestanis were united. There was nobody who complained. You know they call Turkey a melting pot, thus we were just blended into it."[129]

At this point I was surprised to hear that how easily they had "blended into the Turkish melting pot." Furthermore, this was the first time I had come across the use of the term "melting pot" to describe Turkey. I thought he might have been affected by the American use of the term since he had lived in the US for a long time (he even used the English term itself to describe the situation), so I asked him to explain what he means by "melting pot" because while he described the Turkestanis as melting in, the East Turkestan flag still hung on the wall of the East Turkestan Foundation right beside the Turkish flag. What kind of a melting pot was he speaking of when the Uyghurs still felt they belonged to a nation without a state?

> America is a melting pot, for you raise the US flag in front of your house, but the US does not accept [the migrants] at all. I had a lot of American friends but no intimate friends (*dost*). What I mean is, "melting pot" is where you have intimate friendship (*dostluk*). In Turkey you both have friendship and *dostluk*. In the US, you can make friends, but cannot have a *dost*. In the US, who is together? Only those that come from outside.[130]

[129] Interview by the author of the thesis, Istanbul: 28.05.2010. " *Biz ne yabancılık çektik ne de bir şey. Türkiye'ye geldiğimizde bütün Türkistanlılar kaynaştı. Öyle ah vah çekenler yok. Hani Türkiye de melting pot diyorlar ya, biz de eriyiverdik."*

[130] Ibid. *"Tamam Amerika melting pot bayrak açılıyor ama Amerika kabul etmiyor ki. Benim Amerikalı arkadaşlarım var ama dostum yoktu. Demek istediğim melting pot dostluğun olduğu yer. Türkiye'de hem arkadaş var hem dostluk var. Amerika'da arkadaş ediniyorsunuz ama dost edinemiyorsunuz. Amerika'da kimler birlikte, dışarıdan gelenler."*

In other words, Yolbars Bey defined "melting pot" as a place where you have intimate friends. Moreover, after describing friendship and intimate friendship, he also underlined his Turkic identity as encompassing a geographical region from east Turkestan to Turkey:

> I even had a Chinese friend. I had Armenian friends, Greek friends. I made myself accepted. I worked at the Hyatt Regency. There was an Armenian cook who was born and raised there. He called me a butcher. He said, "Some say that you defend Turkey, you are an East Turkestani, you have a different cause." I said, "I'm a Turk. It is my primary duty to defend any Turk if he's getting harmed, wherever he may be. So I defend it.[131]

A very similar idea was put forward by another interviewee, Ahad, who had arrived at Turkey through Afghanistan, as mentioned in the former chapter. He wanted to meet me in an Uyghur restaurant where even the waiters were Uyghurs. He introduced me to his friends telling that I was interested in the Uyghur issue, and I would bring their cause to the attention of Turkish academia. There I was served tea and raisins which had all been brought from Xinjiang. Ahad approached the question of affinity with the Turkish culture from a very different point.

> I feel really lucky that I have become a Turkish citizen, and that I haven't gone to Europe. I had a friend from Canada, and I felt really sad when I heard his story. Now, he's a religiously conservative man. He had a 13 year old daughter, and she was, excuse me, kissing a friend of hers. Her father couldn't stand it and slapped her in the face, and her daughter of course didn't say anything; but her friend went to the police and complained about him. The next day, policemen come and tell him that they would throw him into prison if he did anything else to her daughter. Well, he felt really bad, and he beat up his wife, too, for he held her wife responsible for raising such a kid; and when his wife stood up to him, he

[131] Ibid. "*Çinli arkadaşım bile vardı. Ermenilerden arkadaşım vardı, Rumlardan vardı. Kendimi kabul ettirdim. Ben Hyat Regencyde çalışıyordum. Bir aşçı vardı ermeni, orda doğup büyüyen. Bana kasap dedi. Bazıları diyor sen niye Türkiye'yi savunuyorsun, sen doğu Türkistanlısın, senin başka bir davan var. Ben Türküm. Türkün davası neredeyse, eğer zarar görüyorsa onu savunmak benim asli vazifemdir. Onun için onu savunurum.*"

> beat her to death. Then the police punish him and expel him from the city, not to come nearer than 40 km, and they also cut his stipend. … He says that he's tired of that place because they always talk about human rights but there shouldn't be human rights like this.[132]

When I asked him if this was the reason why he felt more comfortable in Turkey, he said: "Of course, of course. Our religion is closer, our culture is closer… Nobody leaves anyone out for being Muslim, Christian or Alevi."[133]

Although the story he told may sound strange and even obnoxious, in his words Ahad's affinity for Turkey came from religion and culture; and because of such similarities, he felt comfortable living in Turkey. However, what he defined as cultural similarity was not more than reproducing male domination over women. In this regard, his perception of "culture" is dominated by his own subjective definition of Islam which degrades the status of women.

Taking into account the narratives of the same as well as different interviewees, I argue that the phrases "melting" or "blending into" would not be the right choices for defining the place of Uyghurs in the Turkish society. On the contrary, I believe that they exist in a constantly ambiguous state where they simultaneously feel "here" and "there."

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[132] Interview by the author of the thesis, Istanbul: 25.05.2010. "*Ben de kendimi şanslı hissettim iyi ki Türk vatandaşı olmuşum, Avrupa'ya gitmemişim dedim. Hatta Kanada'dan gelen bir arkadaşım vardı, anlattıklarını duyunca üzüldüm. Şimdi o dini olarak muhafazakar bir insan. 13 yaşında bir kızı varmış, başka bir arkadaşıyla af edersiniz öpüşmüş. Babası da dayanamamış, tokat atmış, kızı da bir şey dememiş tabii ki. Kızının arkadaşı gitmiş şikayet etmiş polise. Ertesi gün polisler gelmiş, bir daha kızına bir şey yaparsan seni hapse atarız diye. Adamın da zoruna gitmiş, ondan sonra karısını da dövmüş sen ne biçim çocuk yetiştiriyorsun diye. Hanımı da diklik yapmış, öldüresiye dövmüş o da. Sonra polis babayı şehre 40 km yaklaşmayacak şekilde evden ayırmış, yardım paralarını da kesmiş. … Ben oradan sıkıldım çünkü insan hakları diyorlar ama böyle insan hakları olmamalı diyor. Mesela bir kurban kesilecek onların kurallarına göre kan çıkmadan kesmek lazım diyor.*"

[133] Ibid. "*Tabi tabi. Kültürümüz yakın, dinimiz yakın…Mesela kimseden sen Müslümansın, sen Hıristiyansın, sen Alevisin diye bir dışlanmamız olmadı burada.*"

This ambiguity first becomes salient in the way in which the interviewees define themselves.

From the narratives of the Uyghur interviewees, it is possible to argue that their identity is formed as a result of complex processes, i.e. not only a two-dimensional relation between the immigrants and the host country, but a relationship that is articulated via a multi-dimensional existence that also includes different factors. One such factor is the way in which they define themselves in foreign countries. Moreover, such a definition also delineates the difference between being a "Turk" and being a "Uyghur." Gül Hanım gives a meaningful analogy to explain this difference:

> Abroad, I introduce myself as a Turk. Here, I'm a Uyghur. Think of it this way: [Inside the family] I'm just the daughter of the family. I'm the third child – that's it. I mean, when my brother Mehmet or myself goes abroad, we're always Turks. Even here, I don't really mention [that I'm a Uyghur]. Only when they say to my face, "Where are you from?" I say that I'm from the Turks living in China. "Who are they?" the Uyghur Turks![134]

In other words, being a Uyghur is something that differentiates the Uyghurs from the Turks in Turkey; however, Turkic-ness is something that also includes Uyghur-ness, and it works as a shelter-identity that leaves the Uyghur identity in shadows, though it does not repress it nor eliminate it. Fatma Hanım also gave a similar account when I asked her how she would respond if someone inquired into where she was from: "I say

[134] Interview by the author of the thesis, Istanbul: 27.03.2010. "*Türkiye'nin dışında Türk olarak tanıtırım. İçinde ben Uygurum. Yani şöyle düşünün: ailenin içinde ben kız çocuğuyum, üçüncü çocuğum gibi ayrım yapılıyor ya o kadar. Yani benim kardeşim Mehmet, ben Gül gibi yurtdışına çıktığım zaman her zaman Türk deriz. Burada da ben dile getirmem. Ama benim yüzüme "siz nerelisiniz?" dedikleri zaman ben Çin'de yaşayan Türklerden derim. "O kim?" Uygur Türklerinden!* "

I'm from East Turkestan. I'm from the Uyghur Turks. I say that I'm a Turk, but I also add that I'm a Uyghur Turk."[135]

In order to understand this ambiguous character and how salient it is in living as a Uyghur in Turkey, we also need to examine the perception of "home" for the Uyghurs, and where home truly is for them.

Home/land

As discussed in the introduction of this chapter, "home" does not necessarily connote spatiality, and as such it is not confined to a territorial existence. This conceptualization is significant to understand how the Uyghurs relate to home, how they perceive it, and construct it. Furthermore, their perception also defines their relation to Turkey, and the anomaly created by the idea of "melting in."

Despite the entire demagogy embedded in his narrative, the above-mentioned Ahad would not hesitate to go back to east Turkestan if he had the chance. When asked whether he felt as a part of the Turkish society, he declared that he had no problem, and that when someone asked him where he was from, he simply says, "from the eastern parts."[136] However, when asked whether he would go back if he had the chance, he confidently said:

> Of course, of course, how wouldn't I [want to go back]? The homeland is something different. Now, just think about it for a second. Here, life is nice but over there is the land where your father and grandfather spilled their blood. Your

[135] Ibid. "*Ben doğu Türkistanlıyım diyorum. Uygur Türklerindenim diyorum. Türküm diyorum ama Uygur Türklerindenim diye ekliyorum*."

[136] Ahad: "*Evet hiçbir sıkıntım yok. Mesela bana sokakta nerelisin diye soruyorlar, doğu taraflarından diyorum.*"

> place is right there. You can at least wake up early in the morning and take a fresh breath, but here is not like that. It's nice here; love for this place is different. We left there with a sense of longing, not of hatred. Here is our place of shelter; I see it as a second land (*ikinci vatan*). Of course homeland is "homeland" (*memleket*). You cannot compare it with Turkey. … [Turkey] has opened her arms for me, I didn't feel ostracized here, I just see it as my own homeland. I came to Turkey without any official papers, and yet she gave me citizenship. It would be ungratefulness not to love her.[137]

Ahad's perception of home and homeland is contradictory. While he described Turkey as a second land (*ikinci vatan*) at first distinguishing it from homeland (*memleket*), he also claimed a few sentences later that Turkey was indeed his homeland (*memleket*). However, to explain this contradiction, Ahad's sense of fidelity may be taken into account. Ahad felt the need to be loyal to the country that had given him shelter and a "legal" identity, i.e. citizenship. As he put it, it would be "ungrateful" not to do so. Nevertheless, if we strip the necessary emotion of fidelity from his narrative, his idea of home surfaces: East Turkestan, a land where his ancestors spilled blood.

Indeed, even Yolbars Bey, who described Turkey as a melting pot and claimed that no Turkestanis complainied when they came to Turkey, is not that consistent after all. Although Yolbars Bey believed (or wants to believe) that there was no clash between the Turkestanis, he subtly indicated between the lines that there could in fact a great deal of conflict within this group: "It's just the Kazaks who were a little… They took place in the nationalist, anti-communist discussions, and they supported the *ülkücü*s. Some of

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[137] Ibid. "*Tabi tabi istemez olur muyum? Memleket başkadır. Şimdi bir düşünün buradaki hayat güzel ama orası da babanızın, dedenizin kanının aktığı yer. Mekanınız orada. Hiç olmazsa bir sabah erken kalkıp soluk alırsınız ama burada öyle değil. Burası güzel, buranın sevgisi başkadır. Biz oradan hasretle ayrıldık, nefretle değil. Burası da sığınma yerimizdir, ikinci vatan olarak görüyorum. Tabi ki memleket 'memlekettir'. Türkiye ile onu kıyaslayamazsınız. ... Çünkü bana kucak açtı, ben burada yabancılık çekmedim, kendi memleketim gibi gördüm Türkiye'yi. Elimizde belge olmadan geldim Türkiye'ye oturma izni verdi, vatandaşlık verdi. Sevmemek nankörlük olur.*"

them died."[138] Although Yolbars Bey mentioned the disputes among the Turkestani who are allegedly united among themselves, he also emphasized the differences between the Uyghurs who came during the 1950s and those "new ones" that arrived during the 1980s in terms of having a sense of belonging to Turkey. The "new ones," he claimed, had been unable to adapt to Turkish society. It's interesting to see how unwilling Yolbars Bey was to speak about the problems of the Uyghur community, though he hints at these problems even if he does not elaborate.

Other Uyghurs were not so secretive, and openly talked about the degree of belonging they felt towards Turkey. Fatma Hanım was a scholar who specializes in Turkic languages and culture. She attended one of the best universities in China. She claimed that it was her conscious choice to come to Turkey to receive a better graduate-level education, and that it was not the circumstances that pushed her into emigrating. She has also been to many countries in the world either to travel or to conduct research. Her remarks are also very revealing:

> From the food to the people, I didn't really find it odd. They're like us, warm-hearted and helpful. Besides, they have never treated me as an outsider. Be it my teachers or my classmates, they all have treated me as a sister. So I have not really felt estranged at all, and I got used to it. I also liked Ankara very much. Then I started my Ph.D, and my mother came to visit us. She told us that she was going to find someone for us to marry. I got married, and we went to a lot of countries together, but I never felt detached from Turkey. None of them felt like a place where I feel warm, good and free like here. Our race is similar, our culture is similar, and our language is similar… Those may be the reasons. That's why I prefered Turkey to other countries. I didn't want my children to be detached from our culture. … I love Turkey, and I see it as my own country.[139]

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[138] Yolbars Bey: "*Yalnız Kazaklar biraz şey oldu. Onları da daha çok milliyetçi, komünist karşıtı tartışmalarda vaziyet aldılar ve ülkücülerin yanında yer aldılar. Ölenler oldu.*"

[139] Interview by the author of the thesis, Istanbul: 01.06.2010. "*Yiyeceklerden tut insanlara kadar pek yadırgamadım. Bize benziyor, sıcak kanlı, yardım severler. Bir de bana yabancı gözüyle bakmadılar,*

Although she was unsure about where she actually belonged, her narrative disclosed the love she had for Turkey:

> Sometimes I feel that I belong to Turkey, but because my roots are [in East Turkestan], I think that I belong there. I've lived in a lot of countries. In Japan, Australia, Amsterdam, Vienna… However, I never thought about the order of those states, or the people thereof. I didn't feel anything nor did I feel any concern. But in Turkey, I cannot do this. What is happening in Turkey? My concern for Turkey is as much as my concern for my own country. I read the newspapers, I follow the news. I'm not really interested in politics, but I am interested just as much as anyone else. I believe it's because I see it as my own land (*vatan*).[140]

Although it seems that Fatma Hanım did indeed see Turkey as her own country, for she felt an affection she doesn't feel for any other land, she was still certain that it was not the same as her homeland:

> But [Turkey] can never fill in the longing I feel for the homeland I was born in. In spite of the love I feel for here, every year we save money to go to our homeland together with the children. My mother is there, my father passed away, my sisters, uncles, cousins, aunts, school friends… When I go there, I'm

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hocalarım olsun, sınıf arkadaşlarım olsun. Hepsi bir kardeş gibi baktılar. O yüzden yabancılık hissetmedim çok fazla. Böylece alışmışım. Ankara'yı da çok sevdim. Daha sonra doktoraya başladım. Sonra annem geldi bizi ziyarete. Sizi evlendireceğim dedi. Evlendim, eşimin işi dolayısıyla bir çok ülke gezdik. Ama ben yine de Türkiye'den kopamadım. Bana hiçbiri burası gibi sıcak, kendimi iyi ve özgür hissettiğim bir yer gibi gelmedi. Soyumuzun bir oluşu, kültürümüzün benzer oluşu, dilin benzer oluşu…gibi nedenler olabilir. O yüzden ben diğer ülkelere göre Türkiye'yi tercih ettim. Çocuklarım kendi kültürümüzden çok kopmasın istedim. … Türkiye'yi çok seviyorum, kendi ülkem gibi görüyorum."

[140] Ibid. "*Bazen kendimi Türkiye'ye ait hissediyorum ama köklerim orada olduğu için oraya ait olduğumu düşünüyorum. Ben pek çok ülkede yaşadım. Japonya'da yaşadım, Avustralya'da yaşadım, Amsterdam, Viyana oralarda da yaşadık. Fakat ben oralarda o devletlerin düzeniyle, haklıyla ilgili hiçbir şey düşünmedim, hiçbir şey hissetmedim, kaygılanmadım. Ama Türkiye'de ben bunu yapamıyorum. Türkiye'de neler olup bitiyor, bunu sanki kendi ülkemle ne kadar ilgileniyorsam burada da öyle. Gazeteleri okuyorum, haberleri takip ediyorum. Öyle siyasetle ilgilenen biri değilim ama burada herkes ne kadar ilgileniyorsa ben de kendimi o kadar içinde buluyorum. O yüzden ben kendi vatanım gibi baktığım için böyle oluyor diye düşünüyorum.*"

surrounded by so many different emotions. We are living in a constant state of longing.[141]

In other words, the love and affinity Fatma Hanım had for Turkey were not substitutes for the longing she had for her own homeland, i.e. East Turkestan. Fatma Hanım did indeed love Turkey, but it is still not her home.

Turkey as a Summer-House

Some other Uyghurs were more straightforward in defining home and the place of Turkey vis-à-vis their imagined home; for them, Turkey was not "home" at all. Turhan, Rahim and Mecdettin were three such Uyghurs who were clearer in defining "home" and Turkey. I met Mecdettin in Istanbul before, and he introduced me to his colleagues Turhan and Rahim. They were all in their late 20's, and they have been living in Turkey for around five years. They all hold MA degrees from prominent universities in Turkey. Due to their linguistic capabilities, they all had decent jobs. Every year, all three of them save money to go back to visit their families; and while they were in Turkey, they always save enough to send to their families. Except Mecdettin, they all had applied to acquire Turkish citizenship, simply because staying in Turkey and finding better jobs were their short-term goals. However, their jobs, visits, money transactions and the will to receive Turkish citizenship only would act as factors that reinforced their Uyghur identity rather than strengthening the image of Turkey as their "home" from now on.

[141] Ibid. "*Ama o kendi doğduğum memlekete karşı özlemimi hiçbir zaman burası dolduramaz. Her ne kadar burayı çok sevsem de her sene paralarımızı biriktirip, çoluğu çocuğu alıp memlekete gidiyoruz. Annem orda, babam vefat etti, ablalarım, amcalarım, kuzenlerim, teyzelerim, okul arkadaşlarım…Oraya gittiğimde bambaşka duygulara kapılıyorum. Hep özlem içerisinde yaşıyoruz.*

As such, for all of them, being a Uyghur is more important than being a Muslim, and for them, ethnic characteristics define who they are. As the following paragraphs make clear, this conception is also crucial to understand how they define "home." As Rahim put it:

> What constitute my character are being a Uyghur, a Turk, a Muslim, and a Kashgarian. Since the past, there has always been a discussion about whether being a Uyghur was more important or being a Muslim. … The same is also true in Turkey. When talking to nationalists, being a Turk comes first, then being a Muslim. More religious people say first comes being a Muslim, then comes being a Turk. … I don't think this is a rational question, because Uyghur nationality already has Islam in it. Naturally, I don't put my Muslim character in front. When I say I'm a Uyghur, people realize that you're a Muslim. Naturally, I feel like a Uyghur first, and Muslim next.[142]

Turhan's narrative is also revealing in this respect because for him, too, just like Rahim, being a Uyghur comes first: "I was born as a Uyghur, then a Muslim, because if I wasn't a Uyghur, if I was Chinese, I just wouldn't be a Muslim. It's that simple. If I had been born in Europe, I could have been a Christian. It's because I'm a Uyghur, and our society is Muslim that I'm also a Muslim."[143]

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[142] Interview by the author of the thesis, Zonguldak: 07.08.2010. *"Kişiliğimi oluşturan etmenler Uygur olmamız, Türk olmamız, Müslüman olmamız, Kaşgarlı olmamız..Eskiden beri hep Uygurluk mu önemli, Müslümanlık mı önemli diye tartışılıyordu. ... Türkiye'ye geldikten sonra Türklerde de aynı şeyi varlığını gördüm. Ülkücülerle konuşurken önce Türklük, daha sonra Müslümanlık diyorlar. Daha dindar insanlar önce Müslüman daha sonra Türk diyorlardı. ... Ben de bunun çok mantıklı bir soru olduğunu düşünmüyorum. Çünkü Uygurluk milliyetinin içinde zaten Müslümanlık var. Doğal olarak dini kimliği öne çıkarmıyorum. Ama ben Uygur'um deyince bir insan benim Müslüman olduğumu anlıyor. Doğal olarak ben kendimi önce Uygur, sonra Müslüman hissediyorum.*"

[143] Interview by the author of the thesis, Zonguldak: 07.08.2010. "*Ben ilk olarak Uygurum, sonra Müslümanım. Çünkü ben Uygur olmasaydım Çinli olsaydım Müslüman olmazdım, bu kadar basit. Avrupa'da doğsaydım Hıristiyan olabilirdim. Ben Uygur olduğum için, bizim toplum Müslüman olduğu için müslümanım.*"

This self-perception is essential to defining home and Turkey. It is indeed his Uyghur identity which stood before his Muslim identity that made Turkey hard to call home:

> I just feel like this is both my home and not my home. Although we call ourselves Turks and Muslims, we are on the one hand trying to adapt to this society, and on the other trying to preserve our own character and identity. We do have a longing, but at the same time we don't know what to do once we go back. We are concerned about what we might face back there. We have such a fear.[144]

Just like Turhan, Rahim was uncomfortable in claiming that he felt like he was from Turkey. He described the first day when he arrived in Istanbul, and said how easy it seemed to get used to the city. He first took the subway from Aksaray, and saw the street vendors "who looked like they were from his own village." Moreover, the linguistic similarity also comforted him, and he learned the language very easily. He also believed that the artistic style of the music was also very similar to that of the "Xinjiang Autonomous Region." Indeed, it is very revealing to see that he used the term "Xinjiang Autonomous Region." As indicated in the earlier chapters, the use of Xinjiang and East Turkestan is very complicated, since both terms have political connotations for the Chinese as well as the Uyghurs. However, Rahim did not hesitate to use the Chinese definition of the region. The implications and the underlying factors of this choice will be given in the following pages.

Although Rahim had got used to Turkey without any serious challenges, he still defined himself as a Uyghur: "I still feel like a Uyghur. I think it's pretty hard to

[144] Rahim: "*Buranın ev olduğunu hem hissediyorum, hem hissetmiyorum. Her ne kadar kendimize Türk, Müslüman desek de bir tarafta bu topluma adapte olmaya, bir taraftan kendi kişiliğimizi, kimliğimizi korumaya çalışıyoruz. Hem özlemimiz var, hem ne de gitsek ne yapacağız diye düşünüyoruz. Nasıl bir şeylerle karşılaşırız, onun sıkıntısı var. Öyle bir korkumuz var.*"

become a local (*buralı*)." Moreover, Rahim did not even want to feel like a local. For him, preserving his Uyghur identity was more important. In this regard, he told the story of her sister who wanted to come to Turkey when she graduated from university in China. However, he did not want her to come because he was afraid of her losing her identity:

> My sister wanted to come when she graduated. I told her, "Stay there, live there." I realized this: We are all Turks, all Muslims. It's easy and simple to say this, but at the same time I also know that [some people] come here and stay for 30 years. They are no longer Uyghur Turks but Anatolian Turks. To be honest, I don't want this. Naturally, I want the Uyghur Turkish identity to be more salient in this world. If my sister comes and marries an Uyghur or a Turk, then two of our family will become Anatolian Turks. Then our grandsons will like lentil soup! I don't want that.[145]

That's why he told her sister that she would understand the gravity of the choice he had made thirty years later, when she had maintained her Uyghur identity. In rejecting his sister's wish to come to Turkey, he was not only trying to help his sister preserve her Uyghur identity, but also trying to preserve his own identity, for it was his family who lived in Xinjiang that reminded him of his true self, and reminded him that he should not become an "Anatolian Turk," i.e. not to allow himself to be assimilated by the Turkish culture. To put it in other words, he wished to protect the strong transnational connections to his homeland which would be weakened with any next generations that might be born in Turkey.

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[145] Ibid. "*Kız kardeşim üniversiteyi bitirince gelmek istedi. Ben "orada kal, orada yaşa" dedim. Ben şunu fark ettim…Biz hepimiz Türküz, hepimiz müslümanız, bu iki cümleyi söylemek çok kolay, çok basit, ama bir yandan da şunun farkındayım. Bizim oradan gelmiş, burada 30 sene kalmış. Uygur Türk'ü olmaktan çıkmış, Anadolu Türk'ü olmuş. Ben onu istemiyorum açıkçası. Ben doğal olarak bu dünyada daha çok Uygur Türk'ü kimliğinin kalmasını istiyorum. Benim kız kardeşim gelir, burada bir Uygur ile evlenir veya bir Türk ile evlenir. Bizim aileden o zaman iki kişi Anadolu Türk'ü olacak. Daha sonra bizim torunlar buranın mercimek çorbasını severler. Ben onu istemedim.*"

Mecdettin's narrative is also similar to those of Turhan and Rahim. He said that when he was studying in China, he always had a desire to go abroad, but Turkey was not necessarily the final destination he had in mind. In fact, Turkey did not have any charm that attracted him. It was just a Muslim land where Turks were living, and that was it. That's why he was thinking about Turkey as a bridge that would eventually take him to Europe. Nevertheless, after he came to Turkey, he realized the cultural similarities they had, and it was easy for him to adapt to the Turkish society. He, again, emphasizes the role of language in facilitating the process. However, his narrative also tells us that it is not the cultural similarities that paves the way to assimilation, but the differences that reinforce the migrants' Uyghur identity:

> Still, there is a feeling of estrangement. How to put it? Sometimes, even when I think that I may belong here, the differences become prevalent in music and food. For instance, breakfast. Our breakfasts are not like here. There is no cheese or olive. Over there, we make our breakfast with bread, milk, tea, chestnuts and almonds, and fried food. Maybe you've seen it on the streets of Urumqi, there are street vendor, and you just go and buy it from there. It's because of such a difference that when you put the food in front of me, it just feels strange.[146]

Mecdettin's estrangement is not only confined to food, but also to music. He says that he likes Turkish music, but once when he went to a bar with his friends to celebrate the New Year, the music just felt awkward: "I normally like Turkish music. There, they were all singing together but I felt that I didn't belong there. I also tried to sing with

[146] Interview by the author of the thesis, Zonguldak: 07.08.2010. "*Yine de bir yabancılık var. Nasıl desem? Bazen kendimin ait olabileceğini düşünsem de müzikte, yemekte hemen bu farklılık ortaya çıkıyor. Mesela sabah kahvaltıları. Bizim oradaki kahvaltılar böyle değil, peynir zeytin yok. Bizim orada ekmekle, sütle, çayla, ceviz-bademle, yağda pişen bazı yemeklerle yapılır kahvaltı. Hatta Urumçi'nin sokaklarında görmüşsündür, orada sokakta tezgah olur, alıp giderler hemen. Bu açıdan farklı odluğu için önüme koyduğunda o yemekleri zaten bir yabancı geliyor.*"

them but I neither knew the lyrics nor did I feel any affinity."[147] "It may seem as trivial in a society," says Mecdettin, "but they in fact have grave impacts."[148]

These trivial elements that are marginalized by the "cultural similarities" are indeed the factors that truly define the conception of "home" for the Uyghur migrants. The similarities make you feel like home, but the differences tell you that you are not there. That's why Mecdettin, when he says that he would not want to be born in Turkey "although it is hard to tell why,"[149] does not see Turkey as his home, but as a final destination:

> I cannot really say that Turkey is a crossroad because I'm not thinking about going to a different place, see and understand different things. I no longer have a desire to go to Germany and learn the German culture. I have already learned the feeling of alienation here. Yet, there's also an affinity here. When I have such an affinity, why should I want to march forward? I can say that it is a final destination.[150]

Be it his final destination, he defines Turkey using a very clear analogy: "Let's say Turkey is my beautiful summer house by the sea. It's always summer, and I always live there but one day, I will make it to that tiny spot on the top of the mountain."[151]

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[147] Ibid. "*Ben normalde seviyorum Türkçe müzik…Oradakiler hep beraber söylüyorlardı, bir anda oraya ait olmadığımı düşündüm. Çünkü o şarkıyı ben de onlarla söylemeye çalıştım ama o şarkının ne sözlerini biliyorum ne de bana yakınlık hissettirdi.*"

[148] Ibid."*Sonuçta bu toplumun içinde ufak tefek şeyler gibi gözüküyor ama önemli etkileri var aslında.*"

[149] Ibid. "*Seçeneğim olsa ben yine orada doğmuş olmayı isterdim. Bunun nedenini açıklamak zor tabi*."

[150] Ibid. "*Türkiye geçiş noktası diyemem, çünkü ben artık düşünmüyorum farklı bir yere gidip, farklı şeyler görüp anlamayı. Almanya'ya gidip Alman kültürünü öğrenmek gibi bir arzu, isteğim yok artık. Zaten yabancılık hissini öğrendim burada. Hem de yakınlık var burada. O kadar yakınlık varken ben niye ileri gideyim? Varış noktası diyebilirim."*

[151] Ibid. "*Türkiye deniz kenarında kendime ait güzel bir yazlık diyelim. Hep yaz oluyor, orada yaşıyorum ama bir gün o dağın başındaki ufacık yere gideceğim."*

Going back is a concurrent theme for all of them: Turfan, Rahim, and Mecdettin. They all feel like Turkey is a nice spot to spend time, a summer house to escape from the urban maze. However, they all assuredly claim that once they have a chance, they would not hesitate to go back.

There are also some Uyghurs, who do not think about going back anymore, even though they share the same feeling with the above mentioned interviewees. Osman Bey is one of them. He arrived in Turkey in 1989, but he does not give any details: "If I tell you how I came to Turkey, it would take two months. I cannot tell you. You are just someone I have seen for the first time, how in depth can I tell you? I didn't come to fill my stomach, or to study in Turkey, or to visit relatives."[152] Although he does not give any details, he openly states that he does not have any intention of going back:

> Homeland… That is my mother's house, this is my aunt's. Aunt means a mother's half, right? … My mother passed away, and my father also passed away. I see my aunt as my mother. … In Turkey, I see Turkey as my mother. Over there, I see Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomus Region as my mother. … A child who lost her mother does not have the luxury to lose his aunt. Do you see what I'm trying to say? We don't want to lose our aunt, too. We are trying to uphold this. We want to die for this. We love this. Do you understand?[153]

In other words, Osman Bey sees Xinjiang as a land that is already gone. She's dead, never to resurrect again. He has no choice but to live in a land that is foreign, and yet

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[152] Interview by the author of the thesis, Istanbul: 06.04.2010 "*Ben Türkiyeye nasıl geldim anlatsam 2 ay anlatırım sana. Ben anlatamam ki. Sen ilk defa gördüğüm bir insansın, sana ne derinlikte nasıl anlatayım ki. Ben karnımı doyurmak için Türkiyeye gelmedim, okumak için Türkiyeye gelmedim, akraba ziyareti için de Türkiyeye gelmedim.*"

[153] Ibid. "*Memleket…Ora annemin evidir, bura teyzemin evidir. Yani teyze ne demek, annenin yarısı demek, öyle değil mi? … Yani benim annem vefat etti, babam da vefat etti. Teyzemi ana olarak görüyorum. … Ben Türkiyede annem olarak Türkiyeyi görüyorum, oraya gittiğimde annem olarak ordaki Xinjiang Uygur Otonom bölgesini görüyorum, benim için hiç fark yoktur. İkisine iğne batsa aynı acıyı çekiyorum. … Annesini kaybetmiş bir çocuk için tekrar teyzesini de kaybetme lüksü yoktur. Anladınız mı? Onun için biz teyzemizi de kesin kaybetmek istemiyoruz. Ne demek istediğimi anladınız değil mi? Bunu ayakta tutmaya çalışıyoruz. Bunun için ölmek istiyoruz. Bunu seviyoruz. Anladınız mı?*"

familial, to him. He likes living in this quasi-foreign land, too, but it is because he does not have any other choice. For him, Turkey is a final destination, and the bridges that brought him here already burned down to ashes.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the narratives of Uyghur migrants were analyzed and it was argued that they have a constant feeling of in-betweenness which may be understood from their conceptions of "home." As the narratives reveal, home is indeed an imagined place that the informer feels belonging to. In the case of the Uyghur migrants, I interviewed, the narratives differ, but all of them assert that "home" is not Turkey, but their homeland, i.e. Xinjiang or "East Turkestan."

The time interviewees have spent in Turkey, needless to say, effects their perception of Turkey. Yolbars Bey, who first came to Turkey in 1954, and has lived in Turkey for more than thirty years almost sees Turkey as his homeland – though he adds that he would not hesitate to go back if he had the chance. It is not possible to measure the veracity of his statement, but it still tells us that "East Turkestan" is still not a long-gone dream for him. Just like Yolbars Bey, Ali Bey, who has been in Turkey for more than twenty years also sees Turkey almost as home – a home in which he can stay forever, though only as a permanent visitor.

Ahad and Fatma Hanım, on the other hand, who have been living in Turkey for more than ten years, still feel the longing for their "true" home. They do like living in Turkey, and while doing so, they actually feel engaged in the social life where they even

think about the Turkish political environment; however, they openly claim that if they would definitely go back if they had the chance, for Xinjiang is their homeland.

The narratives of three young Uyghurs who have been living in Turkey for close to five years are clearer in defining the exact place of "home." Despite the ease of getting used to the society, they stated that they never become a "local." As Mecdettin suggested, it was like living in a summer house where you feel comfortable, but always look forward to that day when you will return back to your true home.

In sum, although the level of belonging differs in each of the narratives, all of the migrants I interviewed shared a common perception about home: it is not Turkey. Home is a land that waits for them in an alien country, and even if they may never get the chance to go back and enjoy the life they seek, they still believe that home is where they never are.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Throughout this study, I explored how the Uyghurs position themselves in Turkey. As stated in the Introduction of this study, I tried to provide answers to two questions. The first question was related to the patterns of Uyghur settlement. How do the Uyghurs migrate to Turkey, and is it possible to trace any differences in the migration patterns? The second question was whether the Uyghurs felt anchored in their settlement. In other words do the Uyghurs feel integrated into a greater Turkic society? To answer these questions, I first provided a general history of Xinjiang to inform the reader about the land of the Uyghurs and then analyzed the narratives of the Uyghurs I interviewed.

In the second chapter of my study, I introduced a brief history of Xinjiang since the area is pivotal in the formation of the modern Uyghur identity. The northwestern border of China, Xinjiang, has been a controversial and a very problematic issue for the last two hundred years of Chinese history. The regional problems were reflected as economic, ethnic and even terror-related issues during the Communist era. As this chapter attempted to uncover, the region had historical contacts with the Ottoman Empire and the Republican Turkey, which directly became an issue for the Chinese intellectuals in defining the politics of Xinjiang. Therefore, I pointed out that it was this historical link which created an urge for Uyghurs to immigrate to Turkey starting from the early republican era.

Before the July 5 incident that erupted in the capital of Xinjiang last year, Turkish public opinion was not well informed about the region and the Uyghur people

living either in the region or in diaspora. Due to Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan's furious statements criticizing the Chinese state and police actions, and calling them "almost a genocide," the Turkish media directed its attention to the region for a month. By discussing Sino-Turkish relations, which started after China was given a seat in the UN in 1971, I made relevant connections to Erdoğan's sudden support for Uyghur people. Indeed, as stressed, the Uyghur people have always been supported by the governments and politicians in Turkey to a certain extent, and they have always been a matter of debate in Sino-Turkish relations.

The third examined the patterns of Uyghur immigration to and their settlement in Turkey during the last fifty years. Turkey's migration policies are one of the key factors which have enabled Uyghur settlement in Turkey. According to the Law of Settlement of 1934, people of Turkic origin have the right to migrate to Turkey and find refuge in Turkey. However it would be misleading to assume this as the sole factor for the Uyghur immigrants to choose Turkey as the country of settlement. The discourses of the migrants themselves and their narrations are the main source in describing the reasons for their migration, and the third chapter explains the process of migration through the eyes of the beholders.

In this chapter, I stressed that the Uygur immigration to Turkey first was related to the changing conditions in China, and second to the welcoming policies of Turkey. Moreover, I revealed that there were different motivations for the Uyghurs, for different time periods. For instance, during the 1950s, the immigrants claimed that they were running away from the malevolent Communist policies. However, after the 1978 reforms, traveling and obtaining passports became easier for Uyghurs, and most of them voluntarily emigrated. During the 1990s, on the other hand, most of the immigrants

settled in Turkey mostly to receive better educations. In other words, migration and settlement patterns followed different routes during different periods.

In the fourth chapter, I analyzed how the Uyghurs maintained and even strengthened their own Uyghur identity as opposed to their Turkic identity. In order to disclose this objective, I examined their discourses about "home." In this regard, the interviewees' definition of home was closely scrutinized which in the end revealed that, except for those who had settled in Turkey during the 1950s, "home" for the Uyghur migrants was nowhere but Xinjiang. Turkey is, as one correspondent put it, a "summer house" where they enjoy living, but they never truly believe that they can become a part of the Turkish society. In short, being Uyghur always came before being a Turk, or even being a Muslim.

It can be concluded that different generations of immigrants represent a different sense of belonging and gratitude to Turkey. One of the conclusions that we may draw from the chapters of this study is the difference between the generations. Whereas those that have come earlier have a constant feeling of belonging to Turkey, the younger generations do not have the same intensity of belonging. Compared to the younger generation, the physical attachment of the older immigrants to Xinjiang gradually diminishes. The memories of "home" and "homeland" turn into distant concepts that are re-imagined in a state of permanent loss. Moreover, it also becomes difficult for those who have already obtained Turkish citizenship to make a trip to their homeland to meet their relatives. The younger generation, on the other hand, feels more attached to Xinjiang, and they still have the desire to go back to contribute to the improvement of Xinjiang. The global age they witness and take part in may be explained as the primary reason for this desire and motivation. In an age when distances are no longer an obstacle

for instant communication, the younger generation is willing to become a part of this world where they can share the benefits of the economic rise of China, and prove to be the global brokers that establish the necessary contacts between Xinjiang and the outside world.

This study examined the formation of Uyghur identity in Turkey through the experiences of the Uyghurs themselves. I believe that a study which can compare and contrast the social conditions of all the Turkic groups living as immigrants in Turkey would be very fruitful to understanding how the Turkic immigrants position themselves within a wider framework, and how they in fact distance themselves from the dominant nationalist discourses that are prevalent in Turkey. This study was just a modest attempt to understand a limited portion of this greater scheme. However, the weak points of the study should also be stated.

The inadequacy of this study, apart from the analytical and theoretical insufficiency, stemmed from the lack of "participant observation" in the Uyghur immigrants' daily life. Uyghur community's distrust to outsiders was the main obstacle which prevented me to reach more interviewees and improve the content of my interviews. In general, Uyghur people in Turkey are afraid of spies who would collect information that might harm them; they might face the danger of persecution when they travel back; their associations in Turkey might be closed down, and their relatives in Xinjiang might be disturbed. Especially Uyghurs who endured political oppression in Xinjiang refrained either from giving open answers to my questions or introducing me to their families. Therefore, within the scope of this study and under those circumstances there emerged a lack of informant categorization. For instance, I was unable to draw general statistical information on Uyghur migrants' demographic situation, occupation,

educational background etc. or their consumption practices, social status, and religious practices. Additionally, I was incapable of making a distinguished discursive analysis which focused on gender difference. Even though the situation of Uyghur immigrant women within the community was in mind during the interviews, I never had the chance to reveal a notable analysis of Uyghur women in Istanbul. It is hoped that further studies on this specific group of migrants would explore the subject on a wider scope.

APPENDIX

The information on Uyghur informants:

Name	**Age**		**Nationality**	**Occupation**	**Stay in Turkey**
Hamdi	65	M	Turkish	Political Activist	>40 years
Memed	73	M	Turkish	Academic	<30 years
Gül	47	F	Turkish	Academic	<30 years
Osman	55	M	Turkish	Medical Doctor	<30 years
Ahmed	45	M	Turkish	Merchant	<30 years
Hasan	40	M	Turkish	Merchant	<30 years
Bahar	35	F	Turkish	Housewife	<30 years
Hasiyet	33	F	Turkish	Housewife	<30 years
Ramize	49	F	Turkish	Merchant	>30 years
İsmail	53	M	Turkish	Merchant	<30 years
Ahad	43	M	Turkish	Political Activist	<30 years
Mecdettin	29	M	Chinese	Doctoral Student	<10 years
İmin	51	M	Turkish	Freelance Journalist	Born in Turkey
Yolbars	70	M	Turkish	Retired	>50 years
Fatma	41	F	Turkish	Academic	<20 years
Turhan	28	M	Chinese	Freelance Interpreter	<10 years
Rahim	30	M	Chinese	Freelance Interpreter	<10 years

*All the names are pseudonyms.

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Bahar, 35. Interview by the author of the thesis, Istanbul: 24.04.2010

Hasiyet, 33. Interview by the author of the thesis, Istanbul: 24.04.2010

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Ahad, 43. Interview by the author of the thesis, Istanbul: 25.05.2010

Mecdettin, 29. Interview by the author of the thesis, Istanbul: 25.05.2010; Zonguldak: 07.08.2010

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