

CHAPTER 9

Uyghur Newspapers in Republican China: The Emergence of Mass Media in Xinjiang

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In the first half of the 1930s, a number of independent experiments in native-language publishing were carried out in Xinjiang's Turkic-speaking communities. In Ili, Chöchäk (Tarbaghatai), Kashgar and Aqsu, newspapers printed in the local vernacular quickly found purchase among an expanding literate population. Despite the success of these publishing initiatives, they were soon overtaken by political events. In the mid-1930s, Xinjiang warlord Sheng Shicai aligned his new government with the USSR and began constructing a Soviet-style administration in the province, complete with Stalinist cultural policies. As Sheng tightened his control over the province, the Xinjiang state gradually absorbed all four independent newspapers, integrating them into a growing network of state-controlled print media. Over the next decade, this state publishing system produced a steadily increasing volume of periodicals and books in Uyghur, a language and national category that the provincial government, following Soviet policy, officially recognized in 1935. This was no gradual evolution from manuscript culture to mass printing, as charted by historians of print culture in the West. Soviet ideology and precedent, which the Sheng administration largely adopted, called for bringing Uyghur print culture to full maturity as quickly as possible, in order to put Uyghurs on the fast track to socialist modernity.

This chapter charts the rise and fall of Xinjiang's independent press in the 1930s, and provides an analysis of the Xinjiang state press over the subsequent decade. The narrative will conclude in the mid-1940s, when centralized state control over Xinjiang's print media slackened, and multiple voices once more emerged in the province's publications. In addition to tracing the development of Uyghur-language publishing in Republican-era Xinjiang, the chapter will draw on a plethora of sources to shed light on the reception of Uyghur newspapers in the 1930s and 1940s, and the reading practices through which the newspapers were encountered. It will be argued that Uyghur publications in late Republican Xinjiang were widely read, at least in many parts of the province, and that their influence on local culture

* Special thanks are due the anonymous reviewer of this piece, whose comments and suggestions have been most helpful.

and self-perception was likely substantial. Indeed, the emergence of modern Uyghur identity can hardly be understood outside the context of an expanding native-language print culture in the mid-20th century. By reconstructing the early days of Uyghur-language mass printing in Xinjiang, this chapter will lay the groundwork for understanding how mass media helped shape public opinion and identity in the emerging Uyghur nation.

1. Early Newspapers in Xinjiang

In 1910, the reformist currents precipitating the Xinhai Revolution reached Xinjiang's Ili region, in the far northwest corner of the Qing Empire. As the empire stumbled and ultimately collapsed, and the shape of its successor state remained uncertain, reform-minded soldiers and officials in Ili experimented with a form of mass communication previously unknown in the region: newspapers. In 1910, the Chinese-language *Ili Vernacular News* (*Yili Baihua Bao* 伊犁白話報) began publication, with a sister paper called *Ili Prefecture News* (*Ilä Wiläyitining Giziti*) printed by mimeograph in handwritten Turkic (Some sources also mention Manchu and Mongol editions.). Both papers were obliged to close in late 1911 amidst the headwinds of Xinhai, but a successor paper known as *New Bulletin* (*Xin Bao* 新報) began printing in early 1912. The following year, as Xinjiang's new governor Yang Zengxin outmaneuvered Ili's rebellious officers and brought the region back under provincial control, *New Bulletin* was shuttered as well, and newspaper publishing in Ili ceased for the time being.¹

Not long after suppressing newspaper publishing in Ili, Yang established his own newspaper in Xinjiang's capital, Ürümqi (then known in Chinese as Dihua 迪化). Printed only in Chinese, and published every few days on a somewhat irregular basis, *Xinjiang News* (*Xinjiang Gongbao* 新疆公報) concerned itself mostly with state proclamations and bureaucratic affairs, and seems not to have made a deep impression beyond the province's thin stratum of Chinese-speaking officialdom. In 1928, after Governor Yang was assassinated under mysterious circumstances, he was succeeded by his protégé Jin Shuren. In comparison to the deeply conservative Yang, Jin was something of a reformer, and within a year he had replaced Yang's modest state bulletin with two new Chinese-language periodicals: a thick monthly devoted to official announcements (*Xinjiang Sheng Zhengfu Gongbao* 新疆省政府

¹ On the Chinese language *Yili Baihua Bao*, *Xinjiang Gongbao*, and *Tianshan Ribao*, this section primarily follows C. Wei and L. Ai, "Jiefang qian Xinjiang baoxue shi zongshu." *Xiyu yanjiu* 4 (2005): 79–111. On the Turkic-language *Ili Prefecture News*, see T. Zerdin, "Ilida gezitning barliqqa kelishi wä u besip ötkän musapä." *Ili däryasi* 2 (1995): 86–96; M. Erzin, "Ili wilayiti geziti' häqqidä." *Kitab munbiri* 3 (2012): 29–31, 50.

公報) and a newspaper called the *Tianshan Daily* (*Tianshan Ribao* 天山日報). The *Daily* published national and international news, mostly reprinted from other papers and typically rather stale by press time, as well as more up-to-date provincial news from its own sources. Poetry and other literary works appeared on the back page. The newspaper was published six days a week, and paid subscriptions were available by mail.

Despite its limitations, the stated mission of the *Tianshan Daily* was to “enlighten the people,” and the paper was Xinjiang’s first provincial-level periodical intended for a popular audience. Yet although the *Daily*’s founding documents mention an edition of the paper to be printed in the “Turban” (*Chan* 纏) language—i.e., the language of the province’s Turkic Muslim agriculturalists, then known in official parlance as *Chanmin* 纏民 or *Chantou* 纏頭, meaning “turban-wearers”—no Turkic-language issues of the newspaper have come to light.² For its first few years, then, the *Daily* seems to have been printed only in Chinese, a language spoken at the time by perhaps five to ten percent of Xinjiang’s population, and read by even less. For the Ürümchi-based state to communicate directly with the province’s Turkic majority, Turkic-language mass printing and mass literacy would be needed. Both would come to Xinjiang with startling rapidity in the mid-1930s.³

Yang Zengxin had governed Xinjiang from 1912 to 1928 largely by maintaining the administrative structures and policies of the late Qing. His successor Jin Shuren, while hardly a radical, instituted a number of new policies that departed from Yang’s status quo and upset the delicate post-Qing balance of power in the province. Jin’s decision to abolish the hereditary monarchy in the oasis of Qumul (Hami) in eastern Xinjiang, and to redistribute land in the oasis to Han settlers from Gansu, sparked a rebellion that spread quickly across the province. One oasis after another slipped from the Ürümchi government’s grasp, until in 1933 the capital itself was threatened by rebel troops. With inner China split between warring factions and increasingly menaced by an expansionist Japanese Empire, no help for Jin’s beleaguered regime was forthcoming from Beijing. As rebel armies closed in on Ürümchi, a charismatic young officer named Sheng Shicai successfully led government troops in defense of the city. In April 1933, Jin, having lost the confidence of Xinjiang’s civil and military

² Wei and Ai “Jiefang qian”: 82–83.

³ Some secondary sources mention a Uyghur-language (or proto-Uyghur) newspaper called *Ang* (Consciousness), said to have been established in Kashgar in 1918. If this paper was printed, however, it left few traces. *Yengi Hayāt*, a newspaper published in Kashgar in the 1930s, averred that “in previous years, having fallen behind the whole world in all respects, our Xinjiang (Eastern Turkistan)... had in this 20th-century culture utterly lacked newspaper publishing.” Given that the head editor of *Yengi Hayāt* was the same Qutluq Haji Shewqi usually mentioned as the publisher of *Ang*, this would seem to call the existence of the earlier newspaper into question. “Shingjāng mātbu’āti.” *Yengi Hayāt*, 13 May 1935: 2. Qutluq Haji Shewqi is mentioned as the publisher of *Ang* in B. Liu and I. Utuq, eds. *Uyghur ädäbiyati tarikhı* 3 (Beijing: Millätlär nāshriyati, 2006): 278–9.

officials, was removed from office by a coup and replaced by Sheng. For the next decade, Sheng would be the central political actor in the province.

With Ürümchi in turmoil, Turkic Muslim revolutionaries in southern Xinjiang took advantage of the breakdown in provincial authority and declared the establishment of an Eastern Turkistan Republic, centered around the southwestern city of Kashgar.⁴ Founded in November 1933, the republic lasted only a few months, but left a deep impression in local consciousness—not least because the intellectuals associated with the short-lived state also founded a longer-lasting institution: Kashgar's first newspaper. Printed under various mastheads—*Eastern Turkistan Life* (*Sharqiy Turkistān Hayāti*), *Free Turkistan* (*Ärkin Turkistān*), and eventually *New Life* (*Yengi Hayāt*)—the newspaper was established in July 1933, several months before the republic was founded.⁵ Printed weekly at first, the paper began appearing twice a week in its second year. Despite chronic difficulties in enforcing timely payment of subscription fees, the newspaper's print run rose from nearly a thousand in late 1934 to over two thousand by summer 1936. The paper's growth coincided with the expansion of Kashgar's Turkic-language school system, and interest in *New Life* seems to have been substantial in Kashgar and beyond. By fall 1935 the newspaper's masthead noted that a postal fee would be charged to subscribers in other cities.⁶

The early 1930s also saw a revival of newspaper publishing in Ili, where the province's first Turkic-language papers had been printed two decades before. Although details remain somewhat sketchy, sources concur that *Ili River Newspaper* (*Ili Däryasi Giziti*) was up and running in Ghulja, Ili's largest city, by 1932, after earlier efforts to publish the paper had been less successful. The eminent dramaturge Zunun Qadir, who grew up in Ili and published his first work in *Ili River Newspaper*, recalled that the paper would be passed around with great interest in its early years, and that lines would form outside the newspaper office on printing days.⁷

⁴ The best English-language treatment of this historical episode is Y. Shinmen, "The Eastern Turkistan Republic (1933–1934) in Historical Perspective," in *Islam in Politics in Russia and Central Asia (Early Eighteenth to Late Twentieth Centuries)*, eds. S. Dudoignon and H. Komatsu (London: Kegan Paul), 2001: 133–64.

⁵ For more on the newspaper's background, see E. Naby, "Political and Cultural Forces among the Uighurs: The Struggle for Change—1930s," *The American Asian Review* 5.2 (1987): 98–111.

⁶ *Yengi Hayāt*, 7 Nov. 1935. Copies were clearly circulating in northern Xinjiang; articles from *New Life* were reprinted in the Chöchäk paper *Our Voice* (see below) in the mid-1930s, and letters from correspondents across the province appeared regularly in *New Life*'s pages. Print runs were sometimes listed on *New Life*'s masthead.

⁷ Zerdin, "Ilida gezitning barliqqa kelishi"; M. Tokhsunup and Z. Tahir, "1950-yilidin burun Ilida chiqqan gezitlar toghrisida," in *Ili tarikh materiyallari (1–5)*, ed. Siyasiy Kengäsh Ili Qazaq aptonom oblastliq komitetining tarikh materiyallar komiteti (Ghulja: Ili Jinshing soda chäklik mäs'uliyät shirkiti, 2009): 528–39.

The establishment and popularity of *Ili River Newspaper* were closely linked to Ili's position as the primary entry point for Russian and subsequently Soviet influence in the province. This was true not only because Ili's publishers imported much of their printing equipment from the USSR. In the 1920s and early 1930s, Soviet influence was a major factor in the substantial expansion of primary education in Ili's Muslim community, education which sometimes bore a distinctly Russian or Tatar flavor. Ili's new schools, like those in Kashgar, helped generate a stronger demand for printed material; and as in Kashgar, publishing and education were deeply intertwined, with the same presses printing both newspapers and textbooks.

Not long after newspapers were established in Ili and Kashgar, *Our Voice* (*Bizning Tāwush*) began publication in Chöchäk, a border town in northwestern Xinjiang where Soviet influence was also substantial. The masthead of *Our Voice* listed the newspaper's founding date as 21 May 1934, though some sources suggest a predecessor to the paper may have been published earlier. The four-page newspaper was published each Friday, with print runs fluctuating between 400 and 600. Within a few months of the newspaper's founding, the masthead began to list separate prices for subscribers in other towns, suggesting a significant readership beyond Chöchäk.⁸ Like some other parts of northwestern Xinjiang, Chöchäk had large Uyghur and Kazakh populations as well as a sprinkling of Tatars, and *Our Voice* was printed in a compromise between Uyghur and neighboring Turkic languages, with occasional articles printed in (and specified as) Kazakh.⁹

The creation of *Our Voice* was closely connected to the Society for the Promotion of Education (*Nashr-i Ma'ārif Jām'iyāti*), a Chöchäk organization founded on local initiative—and without government permission—in summer 1933, a few months after Sheng Shicai took power. In fall of that year the Society, having collected money from education-minded locals, opened a teacher training class in Chöchäk and ordered printing presses from the USSR. New schools opened quickly, and by the end of 1935 were serving over a thousand pupils.¹⁰ Textbooks for the new schools—sometimes written in the same Turkic lingua franca as the newspapers—were printed on the *Our Voice* press, and lesson plans were serialized in the newspaper.¹¹

⁸ Indeed, the paper was read as far away as Nanjing, where translations from *Our Voice* were occasionally published in the Guomindang-affiliated *Chini Turkistān Āwāzi*; e.g., *Women de sheng* (tr. Aisha), "Sa'erte ne, Weiwu'er ne?" *Chini Turkistān Āwāzi* 1.6 (Dec. 1934): 29–30.

⁹ For more on Chöchäk's inter-Turkic lingua franca, see T. Tashbayef, "Chöchäk orta q tili toghrisida." *Shinjang täzkirichiliki* 2 (2001): 57–62.

¹⁰ "Nashr-i ma'ārif jām'iyätining hisābi." *Bizning Tāwush*, 20 Dec. 1935: 2.

¹¹ An example from one of these serialized lesson plans is Chüwächäk 'Nashr-i ma'ārif,' "Ibtidā'iy ikkinchi sinif üçün." *Bizning Tāwush*, 25 Oct. 1935: 2. Textbooks for sale are advertised in "I'lānlār." *Bizning Tāwush*, 3 May 1935: 4. See below image for the cover of one of the textbooks printed in the Chöchäk lingua franca by *Our Voice*.

Chöchäk's Society for the Promotion of Knowledge doubtless drew inspiration from similar associations in Russian (and later Soviet) Central Asia, where Muslim reformers had spent decades working to build an education system that drew on Western knowledge and methods while retaining local control and some degree of Islamic content. As in Chöchäk, these associations often relied in large part on private contributions for their funding, and tended to combine educational and publishing initiatives.¹² Reformists in Russian and Soviet Central Asia regarded newspapers as a key element of their modernizing efforts, and their enthusiastic rhetoric on the social role of newspapers was frequently echoed by their counterparts in Xinjiang.¹³ This was part of a broader rhetorical resemblance between Xinjiang's Muslim reformers and their counterparts to the east and west. The metaphor of an "awakening" people, for example, was as perennially popular in Xinjiang as it was in Russian Central Asia and inner China.¹⁴

In late 1935, *Our Voice* reported that "another comrade" had set up shop to the south, where the Aqsu County Education Office's publishing section had established the *Aqsu News* (*Aqsu Uchuri*) in October of that year.¹⁵ *Aqsu News* was initially published in a weekly run of fifteen copies, each handwritten on two single-sided pages and intended for display on a wall—a popular format then in the USSR, and in Xinjiang in subsequent years.¹⁶ Within a year, the newspaper had acquired a small printing press, and was flourishing under editor Ermiya Effendi, better known today as the poet Nimshehit.¹⁷ While no surviving issues of this newspaper have yet come to light, *Our Voice* reported that *Aqsu News* included articles on scholarship and literature, religion and society, history and current events, while *New Life* declared

¹² The very name of the Chöchäk society directly recalled one of the organizations set up in early Soviet Turkistan, the Nashri Maorif. A. Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015): 148–9. See also A. Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998): 117–27. The title *Our Voice*, too, was anticipated by a short-lived Tatar-language newspaper published in 1917 by the All-Russian Muslim Military Council. M. Mukhariamov, *Oktiabr' i natsional'nyi vopros v Tatarii: Oktiabr' 1917–Iiul 1918* (Kazan: Tatarskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1958), 74–81.

¹³ E.g., "İjtimā'iy ishlerimiz heqinde." *Bizning Tāwush*, 3 Jan. 1936: 1. Similar rhetoric appeared frequently in all of Xinjiang's contemporary newspapers.

¹⁴ Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*: 124; J. Fitzgerald, *Awakening China: Politics, Culture, and Class in the Nationalist Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). Abdukhaliq Uyghur's poem "Awaken," written during the high tide of local educational reformism in Republican Xinjiang, remains popular in Uyghur communities to this day. See A. Uyghur, *Achil* (Ürümchi: Shinjang khālq nāshriyati, 2008): 23–4.

¹⁵ "Yänä bir yoldāsh." *Bizning Tāwush*, 13 Dec. 1935: 2.

¹⁶ On wall newspapers in the USSR, see P. Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917–1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 237–9.

¹⁷ Yengi Hāyāt, "Aqsudā yengi bir räfiq." *Yengi Hāyāt*, 1 Nov. 1936: 2.

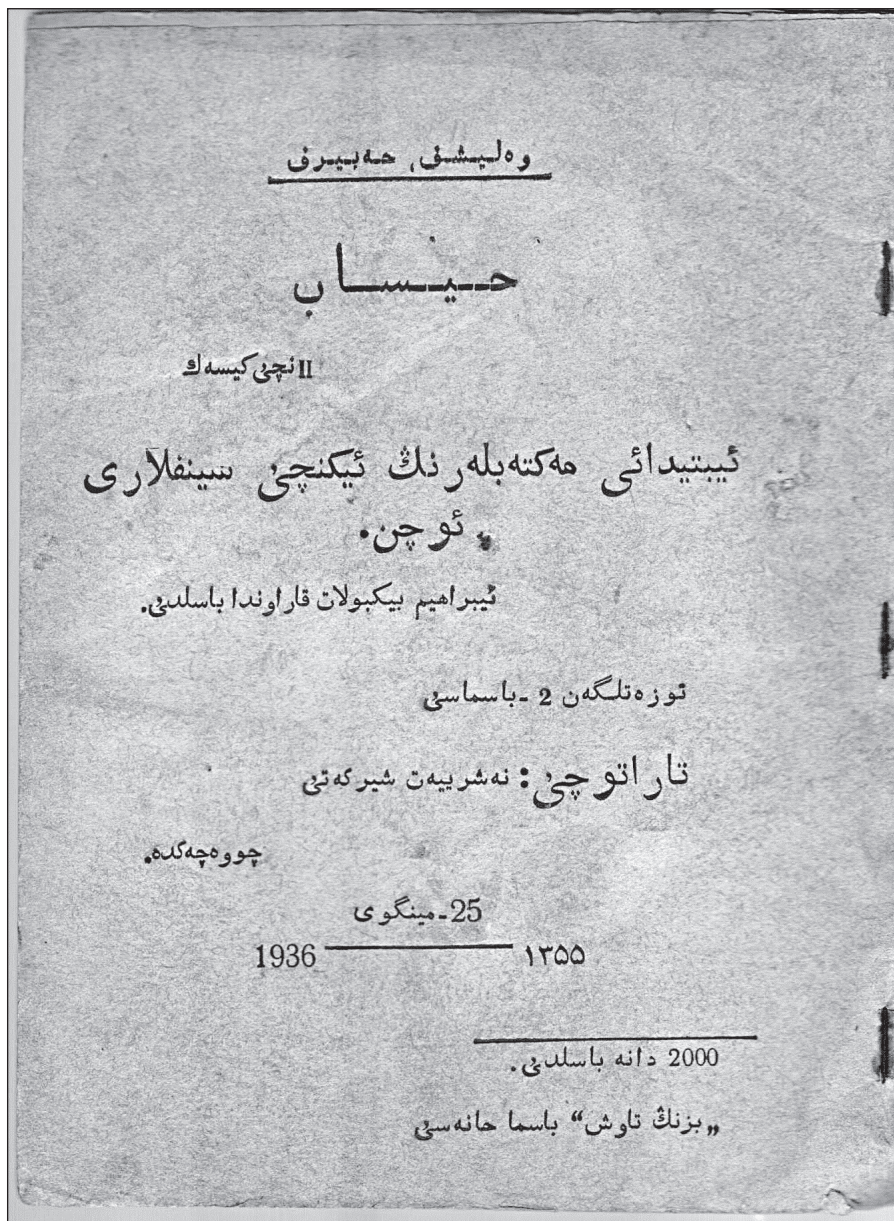


Figure 9. 1. 2nd-Grade Arithmetic Textbook Printed on *Our Voice* Press in 2000 Copies, 1936.

that it was “apparent from reading [*Aqsu News*] that the work of education and learning is progressing vigorously in Aqsu.”¹⁸

In the first half of the 1930s, then, independent local efforts had established Uyghur-language (or quasi-Uyghur) newspapers in at least four of Xinjiang’s cities, from Chöchäk in the north to Kashgar in the south. The second half of the 1930s would see an explosion of Uyghur-language publishing in Xinjiang, as the provincial government began to involve itself directly in Uyghur mass culture. While a small number of Uyghur writers and intellectuals attained vast cultural power and cachet during this rapid state-directed expansion of print culture in Xinjiang, the government’s new interest in mass printing would soon undermine independent outlets like the four described above.

2. Sheng’s Revolution and the Birth of the Xinjiang Gazette

Under Sheng Shicai, Xinjiang’s government carried out an unprecedented realignment of state-society relations. Soon after seizing the reins of power from Jin Shuren, Sheng struck a fateful bargain with the USSR. The Soviets would rescue Sheng’s besieged government in Ürümchi if he would cooperate with them in remaking the province along Soviet lines, and allow the USSR to extract the province’s natural resources. With the provincial government’s military position deteriorating by the day, and the Chinese central government preoccupied with the threat from Japan and communist insurgents, Sheng had little choice but to accept the terms of Stalin’s bailout. In late 1933 and early 1934, Soviet planes strafed rebel positions around Ürümchi, and continued Soviet support allowed Sheng’s forces to regain control of the province—though for the next few years Kashgar maintained some level of autonomy, while Khotan remained beyond the provincial government’s reach. By the mid-1930s, Soviet advisors and specialists were pouring into the province, where they assisted Sheng in setting up a Stalinist state, complete with secret police and Soviet-style official culture. Working in concert with these Soviet advisors as well as local intellectuals and activists across the province, Sheng’s government instituted a program of native-language education, mass culture and popular mobilization that would permanently reshape life in Xinjiang.

One of Xinjiang’s most significant imports from the USSR in this period was Soviet nationality policy. In the 1920s, the small Xinjiang émigré community in Soviet Central Asia had received state recognition as the Uyghur ethnic group; in

¹⁸ “Yänä bir yoldāsh”; Yengi Hayāt, “Aqsudā yengi bir räfiq.” For recollections of *Aqsu News* from several individuals involved with the paper in the mid-1930s, see I. Äsqiri, ed. “Azadliqtin ilgiri Shinjangning här qaysi jaylirida nāshir qilin’ghan gezit-jurnallar toghrisida äslimilär.” *Shinjang tarikh materiyyalliri* 32 (1992): 147–81.

1935, this category was officially applied in Xinjiang as well, with some modifications. (Notably, the Uyghurs of the Ili region were demarcated separately as Taranchis.)¹⁹ Soviet doctrine held that mass literacy and native-tongue education were prerequisites for a pre-national people's evolution into a modern nation; and once a populace was literate, the Stalinist state saw print as an ideal medium for propaganda and social control.²⁰ Publishing in Uyghur and other local languages was thus a priority of early Soviet advisors in Xinjiang.²¹ Following the USSR's established model, they set up shop in the provincial capital, and began building outward.

One of the central institutions of Sheng's Xinjiang was an extensive network of Enlightenment Associations (Uy. *Aqartish Uyushmasi*, Ch. *Cujinhui* 促進會), province-wide cultural organizations set up on the basis of ethnicity and deeply involved in education and publishing.²² Among the first acts of the Uyghur Enlightenment Association was the establishment of a Uyghur-language newspaper in Ürümchi, intended to serve as the Association's official print organ. A number of Uyghur and Tatar intellectuals from Xinjiang and the USSR were placed in charge of the newspaper, which printed its first issue on 25 January 1935. Meshür Roziev, a Soviet agent who operated in mid-1930s Xinjiang under the nom de guerre Mansur Effendi, played a key role. Among the many hats he wore during his time in Xinjiang, one was Vice Chair of the Uyghur Enlightenment Association, and Roziev served as head editor of the new newspaper for much of its first couple years of publication.²³

The newspaper tried on several names, including *New Xinjiang* (*Yengi Shinjang*) and *Xinjiang Uyghur Gazette* (*Shinjang Uyghur Geziti*), before settling

¹⁹ The definitive work on the development of the Uyghur national concept in the USSR is D. Brophy, *Uyghur Nation: Reform and Revolution on the Russia-China Frontier* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016).

²⁰ For a detailed study of Stalinism as reflected in Russian-language newspaper publishing, see J. Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin!: Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

²¹ What follows will be an account of Uyghur-language print culture in Xinjiang during the Sheng era. Comparable developments took place in Kazakh and Mongol print culture in the province during the same period, and deserve separate treatment elsewhere.

²² On the Uyghur Enlightenment Association, see H. Zuo, *Xinjiang Weiwu'er wenhua cujinhui yanjiu* (MA thesis, Xinjiang daxue, 2005).

²³ M. Roziev, *Uyghur ziminida: küresh tarikhidin yadname* (Almaty: self-published, 2007): 41–64; M. Rozi, “‘Shinjang geziti’ning täräqqiyat tarikhidin qisqichä äslimä.” *Shinjang tarikh materiyyalliri* 23 (1987): 350–77. While Roziev played a major role in setting editorial policy for the newspaper and published extensively in its pages, he did not always oversee day-to-day operations, due to his sundry responsibilities and frequent travel. When Zunun Qadir brought one of his poems to the Ürümchi offices of the *Xinjiang Gazette* in 1936, he found himself unable to publish it; chief editor Mansur Effendi (Roziev's alias), whose signature he needed, was nowhere to be found. Z. Qadir, *Zunun Qadir äsärliri* (Ürümchi: Shinjang khälq nāshriyati, 1992): 623–4.

finally on *Xinjiang Gazette* (*Shing Jāng Geziti*).²⁴ The paper was initially published weekly, in mimeographed print runs of a few hundred copies.²⁵ Within months, new machinery and personnel arrived from Ili and Chöchäk, where Uyghur-language publishing had deeper roots; later, more equipment and experts were brought in from the Soviet Union, where Uyghur newspapers had been printed since the 1920s.²⁶ The print quality and circulation of the *Xinjiang Gazette* increased rapidly, and before long the paper began appearing twice a week. The newspaper enjoyed an impressive influx of talent, including some of the province's best-known literati and most experienced editors, as well as some of the first Uyghur students to return to Xinjiang from study in the USSR.²⁷ Contemporary sources place the *Gazette*'s semiweekly print run at 2,300 or 4,300 in 1937; 4,200 in 1938; and around 10,000 in 1940.²⁸ Local branches of the *Gazette*, discussed in detail below, reached thousands more.

From the mid-1930s through the mid-1940s, the *Xinjiang Gazette* was also one of the province's more significant book publishers—taking its branch presses into account, perhaps the most significant. In 1940 alone, the *Gazette*'s press printed well over half a million books in Chinese, Uyghur, Kazakh and Russian.²⁹ Propaganda imperatives guided some of this printing, with Uyghur translations of Governor Sheng's speeches and writings printed voluminously as books and pamphlets by the *Gazette* print shop, often after having been serialized in the *Gazette* and its branch papers.³⁰ The *Gazette* also serialized Meshür Roziev's pseudonymous publications and reprinted them in booklet form.³¹ Loyal service to the Sheng administration

²⁴ For simplicity's sake, I will refer to the newspaper in the body of the text simply as the *Xinjiang Gazette*, regardless of its official name at a given point in time.

²⁵ In his memoir, Roziev gives higher figures for the circulation of the early *Xinjiang Gazette* than those in most contemporary and subsequent accounts. Roziev, *Uyghur ziminida*: 56–8; cf. "Ijtima'iy ishlirimiz heqqide." *Bizning Tāwush*, 3 Jan 1936: 1; Yengi Hayāt Idārasi, "Gizite oqughuchilirimizghe!" *Yengi Hayāt* 22 Feb. 1937: 4; Rozi, "Qisqichā āslimā."

²⁶ M. Erzin, *Uyghur Sovet metbuatining tarikhī* (Almaty: Qazaqstan, 1980).

²⁷ Roziev, *Uyghur ziminida*, 51–8; Rozi, "Qisqichā āslimā."

²⁸ The 2,300 figure for 1937 is from Xinjiang Weiwu'er zizhiqu difangzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui and "Xinjiang tongzhi: Baoye zhi" bianzuan weiyuanhui, *Xinjiang tongzhi: Baoye zhi* (Ürümchi: Xinjiang renmin chubanshe, 2009): 293; the 4,300 figure for 1937 is from a Chinese journalist who worked at the paper in the 1930s: D. Zhou, *Xinjiang shi nian* (mss, 1948): 51–2. The 1938 statistic is from J. Chen, *Xinjiang niaokan* (Chongqing: Jian zhong chubanshe, 1943): 106. The 1940 statistic is from S. Bai, "Yi nian lai yinshua shiye de fazhan." *Fandi zhanxian* 5.4 (1941): 40–3.

²⁹ Bai, "Yi nian lai": 42.

³⁰ E.g., Shing Shi Säy, *Urumchidā otkuzulgān 2nchi yilliq "7nchi Iyul" khāfirā yighinidā dāhimiz Dubān Jānāblirining sozligān nuṭuqi* (Ürümchi: Shing Jāng olkuluk gāzit khānā mātba'asi, 1939); Shing Shi Säy, *Hökümāt āldidiki muhim wāzifilār* (Ürümchi: Xinjiang wenhua shudian, 1939). (The latter book was distributed by Xinjiang wenhua shudian, but printed on the *Xinjiang Gazette* press.)

³¹ 'Abdullā Dāmollā Muḥammad Ḥāji and Maṣṣūr Effendi, *Jahān'girlik wa Shing Jāng dā millāt mās'lasi* (Ürümchi: Shing Jang Uyghur giziti mātba'asi, 1936); Maṣṣūr Effendi, *Shing*

seems to have been highly correlated with book publication; one of Sheng's most prominent clerical supporters, 'Abd al-Ghafur Damolla, was honored with a posthumous volume after his murder in 1936.³² As the printing capacities of the press improved, the first Xinjiang Provincial Women's Assembly, led by Sheng's wife Qiu Yufang 邱毓芳, published their proceedings in hard-bound *Gazette* volumes in 1942.³³

Propaganda was far from the only focus of book publishing, however. Many, perhaps most, of the books published by the *Gazette* were textbooks for use in Xinjiang's schools.³⁴ Almost from the time of its founding, then, the *Gazette* played a key role in book publishing and news distribution, and was poised to remold Uyghur mass culture and deeply influence public opinion. Clearly, this was an institution any autocrat would find most useful.

3. Centralization and Control

In 1936, Sheng's administration removed the *Xinjiang Uyghur Gazette* (as it was then known) from the purview of the Uyghur Enlightenment Association and merged it with the Chinese-language *Xinjiang Gazette* (formerly the *Tianshan Daily*), under the direct control of the governor's office and the provincial government.³⁵ This was one in a series of steps Sheng took to monopolize control of publishing in Xinjiang.³⁶ Unlike the preceding Yang and Jin administrations, Sheng's government would prove very much a patron of Uyghur-language publishing, in keeping with the nation building doctrine of Sheng's Soviet patrons. Given his appreciation for the power of the press, however, Sheng was little inclined to permit local actors to exercise that power without the supervision of his trusted lieutenants. Not long after he took office, Sheng began dispatching these lieutenants to key sites of independent publishing around the province, with the aim of centralizing Xinjiang's press around the capital like spokes on a wheel.

In August 1934, a new official arrived to take charge of the Ili region: Sheng's

Jāng dā millāt mās'lāsi (Ürümchi: Shing Jang Uyghur gizit khānāsi, 1936).

³² 'Abd al-Ghafur *Dāmollā*, *Dāmollā* 'Abd al-Ghafur ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Kāshghāri ning āsiri dur (Ürümchi: Shing Jāng Uyghur gezit khānāsi, 1936).

³³ Qurultāy tāshwīqāt bölümi, *Shing Jāng olkuluk birinchi nobātlık khotun-qiz wākilālār qurultāyining khātirā dāftāri* (Ürümchi: Shing Jāng gizit idārasi, 1942).

³⁴ This primary school reader was typical: Shing Jāng mādāniy ālāqā uyushmisi, *Oqush kitābi: 3-kitāb: bāshlān'ghuch maktāplār uchun* (Ürümchi: Shing Jāng gāzit mātba'asi, 1940).

³⁵ Xinjiang ribao she zhi ban, *Xinjiang ribao she zhi (1949–1990)* (Ürümchi: Xinjiang ribao she, 2005): 15.

³⁶ P. Qadiri, *Ölkä tārīkhi* (Altay nashriyati, 1948): 101–2.

father-in-law, Qiu Zongjun 邱宗浚. For decades a hotbed of underground organizations and rebellion, Ili would now be under the watchful eye of a man with intimate ties to Xinjiang's new ruler. Within a couple months of Qiu's arrival in Ili, the well-equipped print shop of the *Ili River Newspaper* was obliged to start printing the *Ili Xinjiang Gazette* (*Ili Shingjāng Gāzitāsi*) as well, thus marking the establishment of the provincial newspaper's official Ili branch. With the resources of the state fully behind the *Ili Xinjiang Gazette*, *Ili River Newspaper* was soon squeezed out of the market, and ceased printing by the end of 1935. The content of Ili's new newspaper mostly overlapped with that of its predecessor, but the chain of command now stretched back to Ürümchi.³⁷ At the same time, a number of experienced editors and managers at *Ili River Newspaper* were summoned to the capital to take up leading posts at the new provincial paper—a transfer of talent that had the effect of weakening local autonomy in Ili's newspaper business, even as it provided the relocated Ili intellectuals a unique opportunity to shape the emerging Uyghur mass culture in Xinjiang.

Kashgar was a tougher nut to crack. Since 1934, the city and its environs had been governed in an uneasy coalition between the provincial government and a local Uyghur faction loyal to Mahmud Muhiti, commander of the Kashgar garrison. After the demise of Kashgar's Eastern Turkistan Republic, Commander Muhiti and his troops had set up shop in the city, where Muhiti's prestige was considerable. Sheng, unsurprisingly, saw Muhiti's quasi-state as a threat to his own authority in Kashgar, but Muhiti's sizable garrison placed a military solution beyond Sheng's reach for the time being.³⁸ In the ensuing stalemate, city government was divided between Muhiti's loyalists and Sheng's appointees, while Muhiti allies among the literati were ascendant in the predominantly Uyghur city's cultural and intellectual life. The newspaper *New Life*, which in 1933–4 had been house organ of the Eastern Turkistan Republic, soon came to be closely associated with Muhiti's faction. Sheng's administration, conscious of the newspaper's role in shaping Kashgar public opinion, did not like what it saw. To ensure that the ideology and policies of the Ürümchi government would remain unchallenged in the press, Sheng needed to curb the independence of *New Life*, and he needed to do it with cajoling and browbeating rather than military force. He had just the man for the job.

Soviet agent Meshür Roziev, alias Mansur Effendi, one of the *Xinjiang Gazette*'s founding editors and a prolific writer, was well known throughout Xinjiang

³⁷ H. Lai, *Yili shidi wenji* (Hong Kong: Yinhe chubanshe, 2005): 55; Yili Hasake zizhizhou difang zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui, ed. *Yili Hasake zizhizhou zhi* (Ürümchi: Xinjiang renmin chubanshe, 2004): 864–5; Zerdin, "Ilida gezitning barliqqa kelishi." The founding date of the *Ili Xinjiang Gazette*, 10 Oct. 1934, was noted on the masthead of subsequent issues.

³⁸ On the complexities of Mahmud Muhiti's tenure in and eventual flight from Kashgar, see A. Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims in Chinese Central Asia: A Political History of Republican Sinkiang 1911–1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986): 137–44.

by early 1936, when Sheng sent Roziev and several other high-ranking officials on an inspection tour of southern Xinjiang.³⁹ Making their way through the oasis cities and towns of the Tarim Basin, Roziev and the other members of the Southern Xinjiang Inspection Team (*Nanjiang shicha tuan* 南疆視察團) spent much of their time berating local officials who had failed to fully implement Sheng's Six Great Policies in their communities. Roziev, seasoned in Soviet-style exhortative management, usually played bad cop. After a whirlwind tour of mass meetings and private interviews across central and southwestern Xinjiang, the Investigation Team arrived in Kashgar for their most delicate assignment.

Soon after entering the city, Roziev made the acquaintance of Qutluq Haji Shewqi, long-time chief editor of *New Life*, whom he soon sized up as an enemy of Marxism-Leninism and a "standard-bearer of pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism."⁴⁰ Wasting no time, on his second day in Kashgar, Roziev paid a visit to Mahmud Muhiti's barracks. After a strained but respectful conversation on general political topics, Roziev broached to Muhiti the subject of Kashgar's feisty local newspaper. "Why does *New Life* refrain from promoting the government's Six Policies program? It didn't even report our arrival in the district. Why?" Muhiti responded curtly that Roziev could ask the editor. Roziev, shifting from the ultra-polite second-person pronoun *sili* to the merely polite *siz*, got down to brass tacks. "Your Honor has his finger in every pot; you are the leader," he declared, implying that Muhiti was responsible for the newspaper's content. Muhiti replied that he and his comrades had shed blood for their people's liberation, and were entitled to care for the people's welfare as they saw fit: "You were not involved in the revolution, so how dare you assume to tell us what to do?" Switching back to the respectful *sili*, Roziev inquired about *New Life*'s editor: "What sort of man is the honorable Qutluq Haji Shewqi? I hear he is your close associate, a loyal ally." Muhiti heaped praise on the editor, but Roziev was unimpressed. The meeting ended inconclusively.

Not long after, Roziev and Muhiti both attended a meeting in Kashgar to discuss the affairs of the local Enlightenment Association, which unlike its counterparts in other cities functioned largely independently of the provincial government and was closely linked to Muhiti's faction.⁴¹ Roziev proposed that the Association turn over responsibility for its finances to the government, and that the Association—as well as its publishing enterprises, including *New Life*—thereby submit to Ürümchi's jurisdiction. Muhiti, unsurprisingly, registered strong opposition to the idea—though given *New Life*'s constant financial woes, the offer of government funding might have seemed attractive to some.⁴² In the end, Roziev and his colleagues

³⁹ Roziev provides a detailed account of this journey in his memoir, *Uyghur ziminida*.

⁴⁰ Roziev, *Uyghur ziminida*: 226–40.

⁴¹ Qadiri, *Ölkä tārīkhi*: 106.

⁴² By early 1937, *New Life* reported that the Xinjiang state was paying the lion's share of its

were unable to bring Kashgar's Enlightenment Association to heel, but did manage to install Sheng's ally Lang Daoheng 郎道衡 as executive of *New Life*, while Qutluq Haji Shewqi retained his post as head editor. Lang was from Sheng's hometown, and they had studied together in Japan—personal ties which for the time being protected him from Sheng's overarching suspicion.⁴³

Soon after, in June 1936, *New Life* announced that it would henceforth straddle the Ürümchi-Kashgar fault line by serving simultaneously as “an official newspaper of the government as well as the print organ of the [Kashgar] Uyghur Enlightenment Association.”⁴⁴ The newspaper's masthead changed immediately to reflect this. Later in the year, the Ürümchi government bought *New Life* a Soviet printing press with a Uyghur typeface closer to the style used in Xinjiang's other papers, and ordered the construction of a new office for the newspaper next to Kashgar's civil administration complex.⁴⁵ *New Life*, which had relied since its inception on a printing press run by Swedish missionaries in Kashgar, was thereby brought into bureaucratic and typographic conformity with the *Xinjiang Gazette*'s other branches.

Even as these turf battles raged behind closed doors, the appearance of calm was maintained in public. Roziyev, in a speech at a large festival in Kashgar, took pains to praise Mahmud Muhiti and his allies, and to stress their common cause with the Ürümchi government. A few months later, after the newspaper had set up shop in its new building next to the local government offices, Muhiti publicly congratulated the paper and thanked “Xinjiang's pro-culture and pro-development government” for its role in purchasing the new printing press.⁴⁶

This tense coexistence lasted about a year. *New Life* continued to be printed under its old title, even while its editors now answered—at least in theory—to the *Xinjiang Gazette* head office in Ürümchi. Lang Daoheng recalled that the affairs of the paper continued relatively unchanged under his management. “The paper's content was still the same old *New Life* content. Furthermore, the *Xinjiang Gazette* head office had no lines of communication with the branch office [in Kashgar], and no press releases or editorial directives were provided; the branch office had to fend for itself.”⁴⁷ Toward the end of 1936 the newspaper did make efforts to embrace a

expenses. Yengi Hayât Idārasi, “Gizitā oqughuchilirimizghā!” *Yengi Hayât*, 22 Feb. 1937: 4.

⁴³ Lang was one of the “Ten Big Experts” that Sheng Shicai invited to Xinjiang from inner China; his own account of his career in Xinjiang is given in Lang Daoheng, “‘Shi da boshi’ xiao zhuan” “十大博士” 小传. *Wulumuqi wenshi ziliao* 1 (Ürümchi: Xinjiang qinnian chubanshe, 1982): 83–96.

⁴⁴ Idārā, “Bildurush.” *Yengi Hayât*, 1 Jun. 1936: 4.

⁴⁵ Āqārtu uyushmä bāshliqi Hāji ‘Abdallāh, “Mubārāk bolsun.” *Yengi Hayât*, 20 Aug. 1936: 1; Idārā, “Kāshghārdā yengi mātba’ā khānāmiz ichildi.” *Yengi Hayât*, 20 Aug. 1936: 1.

⁴⁶ “Manşur Effendining nuṭuqi.” *Yengi Hayât*, 16 April 1936: 2; Sijāng: Maḥmud Muḥiti, “Yengi mātba’ā mubārāk bolsun.” *Yengi Hayât*, 27 Aug. 1936: 1.

⁴⁷ Lang, 1980. “‘Xinjiang ribao’ de pianduan.” *Xinjiang wenshi ziliao xuanji* 6 (Ürümchi: Xinjiang renmin chubanshe, 1980): 174–8.

Soviet-style “correspondent” model of journalism, wherein local activist-reporters would write in to the paper on topics dictated partially by the political climate. (A *New Life* correspondent’s duties would include “recording the ill intentions of bad people who oppose the government’s policies.”)⁴⁸ The paper’s overall content and editorial line, however, shifted only gradually, and Qutluq Haji Shewqi stayed on as chief editor.⁴⁹ Events finally came to a head in spring 1937, when increasing pressure from Sheng caused Mahmud Muhiti to flee to India and touched off a new uprising in Kashgar. As Soviet warplanes entered Xinjiang at the Ürümchi government’s request and bombed rebel targets across the south, Sheng extended Stalin’s Great Purge to the province’s intellectuals. By the end of the year, southern Xinjiang was firmly under Ürümchi’s control, and Qutluq Haji Shewqi had been arrested and executed.⁵⁰

Chöchäk’s newspaper *Our Voice* also put up a fight. In early 1936, a branch of the *Xinjiang Gazette* was established in Chöchäk, where it printed editions in both Uyghur and Chinese and took orders directly from the head office in Ürümchi.⁵¹ The Uyghur edition of the *Chöchäk Xinjiang Gazette* was printed on the *Our Voice* press, at least in its early months, and for a time the two papers seem to have competed for readership.⁵² Niyaz Ishaqi, prominent local educator and long-time editor of *Our Voice*, managed to stay in business for a while, but was ultimately forced to shutter his paper. One source has him subsequently working as an editor at the new *Chöchäk Xinjiang Gazette*.⁵³ Before long, though, he too was caught up in the unfolding purge, and multiple sources report that he was arrested in 1937 and killed in Sheng’s

⁴⁸ Gizitā Idārāsi, “Shingjāng Kāshgher gizitā shō’bā idārāsining mukhbirliqi uchun tokhtātqān qarārnāmā.” *Yengi Hayāt*, 29 Oct. 1936: 2. On the role of worker and peasant correspondents in Soviet journalism and society, see Kenez, *Birth of the Propaganda State*, 233–7.

⁴⁹ The carefully balanced roles for Ürümchi and Kashgar appointees, as well as the increased involvement of the state in local publishing and intellectual life, was underlined once more in March 1937 when Lang Daoheng and Qutluq Haji Shewqi were confirmed as co-chairs of Kashgar’s Propaganda Department (Uy. *Tāshwiqāt bölümi*, Ch. *Xuanchuan bu* 宣傳部). The department had sections devoted to translation, literature and publishing. “Kāshghardā 4nji ayniing 12sidā bolādurghān nemāyishghe täyyärgärlik qilmāq uchun shenjāng yāmulidā 3nji ayniing 9nji kuni sā’āt 3dā mājilis ichilib hār bölümlärgä tobändäkichä bāshliq wā ä’zälär säyländi.” *Yengi Hayāt*, 15 Mar. 1937: 2.

⁵⁰ Liu and Utug, *Uyghur ädäbiyati tarikhi* 3: 278–82.

⁵¹ Tacheng shi difang zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui, ed. *Tacheng shi zhi* (Ürümchi: Xinjiang renmin chubanshe, 1995): 602–4.

⁵² The only 1936 issue of the *Tacheng Xinjiang Gazette* that has yet come to light lists its publisher as “‘Bizning Tāwush’ bāsmākhānāsi.” See *Chüwāchäk Tārbāghātāy khāwārli*, 12 April 1936, held at Stanford University Library.

⁵³ S. Äzizi, *Ömür dastani (eslime I): zulum zindanlirida* (Beijing: Millätlär nāshriyati, 1990), 470. Äzizi reports that when he arrived in Chöchäk in December 1937 to take up work at the *Chöchäk Xinjiang Gazette*, Niyaz Isaqi (sic) was working at the paper as assistant head editor.

prisons.⁵⁴ *Our Voice* gave way to Ürümchi's voice.

Aqsu News did not fare much better. While detailed contemporary accounts are lacking, individuals who had been involved with the paper later recalled that the head editor was arrested by Sheng's police, and his mimeograph confiscated. Some local intellectuals managed to revive the paper for a short time, but in 1937 they threw in the towel, and their leader left Aqsu. Around the same time, the Aqsu branch of the *Xinjiang Gazette* was founded, reportedly employing some of *Aqsu News*' former writers, and housed—much like its Kashgar counterpart—in the local civil administration complex.⁵⁵ With the *Aqsu News* supplanted by the Aqsu branch of the provincial *Gazette*, the final vestiges of genuinely autonomous publishing in Xinjiang had been brought under the watchful eye of Sheng's rapidly Stalinizing administration.

Things were changing in Ürümchi as well. In October 1937, Sheng called a mass public meeting to announce the uncovering of a conspiracy to overthrow Xinjiang's government, backed by an unlikely alliance of Japanese imperialists, Uzbek nationalists and Trotskyists. Arrest warrants fell thick and fast, as officials and intellectuals across the province were ensnared in the widening net. With rival power centers in Kashgar and Khotan neutralized, Sheng moved to further consolidate his authority by removing many of the individuals who had helped establish his regime. The purge reached deep into the *Xinjiang Gazette* offices, in Ürümchi as well as in the local branches elsewhere in the province. Even Meshür Roziyev, then vice chair of the provincial *Gazette* and one of Sheng's most influential Soviet advisors, was imprisoned and eventually repatriated to the USSR.⁵⁶ *New Life* chief Lang Daoheng was recalled from Kashgar to Ürümchi, placed in charge of a textbook editing and translation office, and unceremoniously jailed a month later—old school ties to Sheng notwithstanding. Lang was finally released in 1942, whereupon he once again took up a post at the provincial *Gazette* in Ürümchi.⁵⁷

Others were not so lucky. The bloody winter of 1937–8 claimed the lives of numerous Xinjiang officials and literati, including some of the province's most prominent Uyghur writers and intellectuals. Hamit Hakimi, who had worked as a translator and editor at Chöchäk's *Our Voice* before taking up a job at the *Xinjiang Gazette* in Ürümchi, was among the many casualties of Sheng's first purge.⁵⁸ Amidst the fear and the indiscriminate denunciations, it counted for little that Hakimi, one of

⁵⁴ Äsqiri, "Azadliqtin ilgiri": 148; T. Taxibayefu, "Tacheng diqu jiefang qian chuban shi jianjie," in Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi, Yili Hasake zizhizhou weiyuanhui and Wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui, ed., *Yili wenshi ziliao hedingben (6–10 ji)* (Yining: Jinsheng jingmao youxian ziren gongsi, 2009): 276–82.

⁵⁵ Äsqiri, "Azadliqtin ilgiri": 162–5; Xinjiang Weiwu'er zizhigu, *Baoye zhi*: 56; see also Qadiri, *Ölkä tārīkhi*: 101–2.

⁵⁶ Zhou, *Xinjiang shi nian*: 79–82; Roziyev, *Uyghur ziminida*: 319–45.

⁵⁷ Lang, "Shi da boshi": 94.

⁵⁸ Liu and Utug, *Uyghur ädäbiyati tarikhi* 3: 389–90.

relatively few bilingual writers in 1930s Xinjiang, had played an indispensable role as translator of Sheng's speeches and other works.⁵⁹

Yet the *Xinjiang Gazette* continued to flourish. The USSR provided up-to-date printing technology as well as technical personnel, and a Soviet engineer designed a new and much larger building for the flagship paper in Ürümchi, with construction completed in 1939. Other equipment and personnel arrived from inner China. One perpetual problem was the inadequate supply of newsprint, with one writer observing in 1941 that paper production remained the most significant problem in Xinjiang's publishing industry. For a time the USSR provided newsprint for Xinjiang's papers, though in the mid-1940s—when Soviet aid was no longer forthcoming—visitors to the *Gazette* reported that the print shop was using a horse-powered paper mill.⁶⁰ Particularly after Sheng's purges began, the paper was sometimes short of staff; but this problem was partially alleviated when a number of Chinese Communist Party members arrived in Xinjiang from Yan'an at Sheng's invitation, with some of them filling vacant posts at the *Gazette*'s central and branch offices.⁶¹ Even more significantly, the expansion of Uyghur-language schooling in the province, particularly in Ili, had helped create a deep bench of talent for the newspaper to draw on by the late 1930s. This younger generation was well versed in the political and cultural idiom of Sheng-era Xinjiang, as well as the more vernacular form of written Uyghur that was increasingly standard in the province's publications.

The total circulation of the *Xinjiang Gazette* newspapers expanded throughout this turbulent period. In the early 1940s, the provincial *Gazette*, previously a semi-weekly publication, began printing every other day, with a print run that stayed steady at around 5,000 per issue.⁶² Meanwhile, the print runs of the *Gazette*'s branch newspapers continued to grow. Having displaced Chöchäk's *Our Voice*, the state-supported *Chöchäk Xinjiang Gazette* soon achieved a weekly print run substantially

⁵⁹ Among others, these included Sheng's political manifesto, *Hokumät äldidiki muhim wäzifilär* (cited above).

⁶⁰ Bai, "Yi nian lai"; X. Liu, "Kang Ri zhanzheng shiqi de 'Xinjiang ribao'." *Wulumuqi wenshi ziliao* 11 (1986): 1–18; Qadiri, *Ölkä tarikhi*: 159.

⁶¹ While the emphasis given these CCP agents in PRC historiography has been disproportionate, they did play an undeniable role in the functioning and development of the *Gazette* between 1938 and 1942. Zhong gong Xinjiang Weiwei'er zizhiqu weiyuanhui dangshi gongzuo weiyuanhui, ed. *Kang Ri zhanzheng shiqi Zhongguo gongchandang ren zai Xinjiang ribao she de huodong* (Ürümchi: Xinjiang renmin chubanshe, 1993).

⁶² Total yearly distribution figures for the Ürümchi *Xinjiang Gazette* seem to have remained relatively constant from 1940 through 1943, with the circulation per issue falling somewhat after 1940 as the number of issues per week increased. Compare the total 1940 figures given by Bai Shan with the figures for the subsequent three years cited in H. Yang, *Minguo Xinjiang xinwen shiye yanjiu* (MA Diss., Xinjiang daxue, 2006): 18; Liu, "Kang Ri zhanzheng": 11–2; and Y. Zan, "Cong shubao shiye de fazhan kan kang ri zhanzheng shiqi Wulumuqi de minzu guanxi," *Wulumuqi wenshi ziliao* 10: 65–8.

exceeding *Our Voice* at its peak.⁶³ The Aqsu branch of the *Xinjiang Gazette*, whose independent predecessor *Aqsu News* had in 1935 been circulated in fifteen handwritten copies a week, had by 1940 achieved a weekly mimeographed print run of about 1,500 copies.⁶⁴ In 1939, the *Xinjiang Gazette* opened a branch in Khotan, perhaps the first Uyghur-language newspaper to be published in any quantity in this major population center, and by early 1942 the *Khotan Xinjiang Gazette* was published weekly in a print run of over 5,000.⁶⁵

Yet despite the impressive expansion of Xinjiang's Uyghur-language print culture during this period, the question of the papers' actual readership and influence inevitably arises. Following the Sheng administration's successful centralization of publishing in the province, Xinjiang's newspapers were by the late 1930s fully controlled and subsidized by the state. Given the administration's emphasis on controlling and expanding these newspapers, it is clear that the Ürümchi government (and likely also its Soviet patrons) saw them as a medium with potentially broad readership and influence. Even so, if newspaper publishing in Sheng's Xinjiang was driven by state policy and ideology rather than reader demand, the mass printing of papers cannot be assumed to imply the mass reading of papers. In the early Soviet Union, newspaper print runs were sometimes increased without a corresponding rise in reader demand, in order to satisfy political imperatives from the center and justify increased state subsidies. Coercion was utilized at times to increase the subscriber base for Soviet papers, and unsold copies piled up in distribution offices.⁶⁶ The historiography of reading in Republican-era Xinjiang cannot draw on contemporary readership studies of the sort carried out by sociologists in the early USSR, or on fieldwork investigations like those of early Maoist China. Indirect evidence, however, will enable us to draw some conclusions about Uyghur newspapers' readership.

4. Lost Puppies and Stolen Stamps

In May 1941, a five-month-old shepherd puppy with pointy ears got lost near the Prefectural Hospital in Ili. A few days later, the dog's owner placed a notice in the *Ili Xinjiang Gazette*, offering a reward to anyone who could find the dog, which answered to the name "Zund."⁶⁷ Notices and advertisements of this sort appeared

⁶³ Zhou, *Xinjiang shi nian*: 51–2.

⁶⁴ The print run for most issues in this period was listed on the masthead.

⁶⁵ Äsqiri, "Azadliqtin ilgiri": 173–81; Wei and Ai, "Jiefang qian Xinjiang baoxue shi": 86. For the print run, see the masthead of *Khotan Shingjang Giziti*, 12 Jan. 1942.

⁶⁶ M. Lenoe, "NEP Newspapers and the Origins of Soviet Information Rationing," *The Russian Review* 62.4 (1963): 614–36.

⁶⁷ Unsigned ad, *Ili Shingjang Giziti*, 14 May 1941: 4.

frequently in the local editions of the *Xinjiang Gazette* in the decade following Sheng's ruthless consolidation of publishing power in Ürümchi. While the main editorial line of local newspapers after the mid-1930s followed closely the direction set by the provincial government, the branch papers' local news, literary offerings, editorials and advertisements continued to distinguish them from the flagship publication in Ürümchi, and from each other. As mentioned above, local content in Kashgar's *New Life* changed only gradually after Sheng's handpicked editor Lang Daoheng assumed official leadership of the newspaper. Lang, like most of the loyal retainers Sheng placed in charge of the *Gazette*'s various branches, could not read Uyghur, a fact which would have limited the Ürümchi government's direct control over Uyghur-language branch papers' day-to-day operations.

Advertisements, while seemingly the most ephemeral of the newspapers' locally distinctive forms of content, provide some of the most useful indicators of the papers' geographic and social penetration. The effort and expense required to place an advertisement in any medium implies an assumption that enough potentially interested parties will encounter the ad to justify its placement. While government notices would likely have been printed without charge in Xinjiang's Republican-era papers, placing a notice or advertisement would have been relatively costly for most Xinjiang residents—and thus worthwhile only if the papers were actually distributed and read. A close look at advertisements and other privately placed notices, and a consideration of their intended audiences, can therefore help shed light on the readership of Xinjiang's early Uyghur newspapers.

Particularly frequent were notices for lost personal seals, the stamps without which no official business can be transacted in China. The notices usually specified that any documents stamped with the seals after their date of loss should be considered null and void, and sometimes requested assistance in finding the misplaced seals. Seal owners' professional affiliations and locations were often listed, providing some indication of the newspapers' social and geographical exposure. In the early 1940s, the Aqsu *Xinjiang Gazette* carried notices of lost seals from prefectural residents like Rashid the Baker, Helim the Hospital Employee, Muhammad 'Abd al-Ghafur the Driver, and Wensu County merchant Muhammad Niyaz.⁶⁸ In a 1936 issue of Kashgar's *New Life*, Niyaz Haji Osman Haji Oghli, proprietor of an "education store" in the neighboring town of Yengisar, gave notice that his lost stamp was no longer valid.⁶⁹ The ubiquity of announcements for lost stamps might be ascribed in part to a desire to disclaim responsibility for documents stamped with

⁶⁸ Muḥammad Niyāz, "I'lān." *Shing Jāng Giziti: Āqsu Nāshri*, 22 Mar. 1941: 4; Nāwāy Rāshid bin Aqshāl Qāsim Oghli, untitled advertisement, *Shing Jāng Giziti: Āqsu Nāshri*, 5 Apr. 1941: 4; Dokhturkhānā khizmatchisi Ḥālim, "I'lān." *Shingjāng Giziti: Āqsu Nāshri*, 14 Nov. 1942; "I'lānlär." *Shing Jāng Giziti: Āqsu Nāshri*, 18 Jan. 1941: 4.

⁶⁹ Niyāz Ḥāji 'Osmān Ḥāji Oghli, "I'lān." *Yengi Hayāt*, 11 May 1936: 4.

a purloined seal. Yet a pro forma legal motivation cannot satisfactorily explain why some such ads ran in multiple consecutive issues of the same newspaper, or why some advertisers, like Muhammad ‘Abd al-Ghafur the Driver, offered a reward to anyone who could return a lost stamp.⁷⁰

Members of other communities also sometimes gave notice of misplaced items in the Uyghur newspapers. In spring 1946, a traveler named Zong Fuguang checked into a Kashgar hotel carrying a bundle of books and documents wrapped in a sheet. A certain Mr. Liu in Ürümchi had entrusted him to deliver these items to an official named Shang in the city of Yarkend, but during Zong’s stay in the Kashgar hotel, the bundle disappeared. Advertising repeatedly in the *Kashgar Xinjiang Gazette*, Zong offered a hefty sum to anyone who could produce the missing items.⁷¹ Less urgent notices included one in a 1941 issue of the *Ili Xinjiang Gazette* by an Uzbek gentleman named Burhan Ali, of Andijan neighborhood in Ghulja, who offered a reward to anyone who could find two stolen rugs. In the same issue of the Ili paper, a resident named Varaninkov promised to reward anyone who could provide information on his lost cow to the local Russian authorities.⁷²

Livestock always seemed to be wandering off, judging by the frequent notices in Xinjiang’s local newspapers, which often included physical descriptions of the misplaced horses and cows. In October 1937, the Ili Public Security Bureau’s #2 Branch announced in the local Gazette that its office had spent several days caring for two lost horses, one black and one gray. Their owner was encouraged to come pick them up as soon as possible; if they remained unclaimed, they would be sold.⁷³ In a poignant 1936 notice in Kashgar’s *New Life*, ‘Abd al-Ghafur Akhund wrote that his thirteen-year-old son had disappeared on his way home from school earlier that month. ‘Abd al-Ghafur asked that “anyone in town or countryside who has heard anything” please report it to the Kashgar Education Office.⁷⁴

More prosaic were the advertisements for various products: tea or textbooks in Kashgar, beer or shoes in Ili.⁷⁵ Some advertisers hoped to sell houses, while others sought to attract customers to restaurants. When a Russian resident of Ili advertised

⁷⁰ “I’lānlār.” Another typical notice offering a reward for a lost stamp is “I’lānlār.” *Chuwächäk Shing Jāng Giziti*, 12 Sep. 1943: 2.

⁷¹ Zong Fuguang, “Muhim I’lān.” *Kunduluk Qāshqār Shingjāng Giziti*, 12 Mar. 1946: 2. Reprinted 18 Mar. 1946: 2.

⁷² “I’lānlār.” *Ili Shingjāng Giziti*, 9 May 1941: 4.

⁷³ “Māl yoqātghānlār diqqätigä.” *Ili Shingjāng Giziti*, 7 Oct. 1937: 1.

⁷⁴ ‘Abd al-Ghafur Akhund, “I’lān.” *Yengi Hayāt*, 21 May 1936: 4.

⁷⁵ A local teahouse offered two kinds of tea to Kashgar residents in “I’lān: yāxshi chāy iching.” *Yengi Hayāt*, 11 Feb. 1935: 2. Alphabet primers and other items were advertised in Māṭbā’a Mudiri Wurutnikuf [Vorotnikov], “I’lān.” *Yengi Hayāt*, 19 Dec. 1935: 4. An ad for the “New Asia” Beer Company appeared in *Ili Shingjāng Giziti*, 26 Sep. 1941: 4. Shoes as well as other goods were advertised in Denyujang Ching, “Bildurushlār.” *Ili Shingjāng Giziti*, 25 Nov. 1942: 4.

a newly opened cafeteria (referred to by the Russian *stolovaya*), he took pains to note that the chef was a Muslim.⁷⁶ Ads for training courses of various types—truck driving lessons in Aqsu, a military translation course in Ürümchi—were often repeated in multiple issues.⁷⁷ In a September 1941 issue of the *Ili Xinjiang Gazette*, two separate ads encouraged silk worm farmers to bring their cocoons in for sale.⁷⁸

The ads and notices reviewed above, and the numerous others in Xinjiang's Republican-era newspapers, give a sense of the demographics and locations the newspapers were expected to reach. Ads and notices in the *Ili*, Aqsu and Kashgar papers were regularly placed by individuals from multiple counties in each of these prefectures, consistent with other evidence suggesting a widely distributed subscriber base for these periodicals. The advertisements also give some suggestion of the social and professional groups exposed to the newspapers: merchants, teachers, farmers and others.

The numerous and varied advertisements and notices in Xinjiang's Republican-era newspapers suggest that the papers were expected to be widely distributed and read. Yet even after years of Soviet aid, accompanied by Sheng's consecutive three-year plans of modernization and industrialization, Xinjiang's transportation and communications infrastructure remained underdeveloped into the 1940s, and literacy among adults was far from universal. In a culture that had for centuries centered around oral and manuscript literature, the habit of newspaper subscription had only just begun to form. How did the region's Uyghur newspapers successfully navigate this challenging terrain, and lay the groundwork for Uyghur mass culture in Xinjiang?

5. Subscribers, Readers and Listeners

When the *Xinjiang Gazette* began its province-wide expansion in the 1930s, roads and postal service remained rudimentary in many parts of Xinjiang, and acquiring a newspaper might mean a two-hour cart ride to the nearest large town. Newspapers were expensive, and in most locales only a small minority of individuals took out subscriptions, with many newspaper copies going to schools and various other

⁷⁶ A typical house ad was 'Abdallāh, "Ilānlār." *Ili Shingjāng Giziti*, 18 June 1941: 4; this ad was reprinted the following two days. The "stolovaya" ad is Pältoski, "Bildurush." *Ili Shingjāng Giziti*, 22 June 1941: 4; also Pältoski, "Bildurush." *Ili Shingjāng Giziti*, 24 June 1941: 4.

⁷⁷ The truck driving training course ads include "I'lān." *Shing Jāng Giziti: Āqsu Nāshri*, 29 Mar. 1941: 4; "I'lān." *Shing Jāng Giziti: Āqsu Nāshri*, 5 April 1941: 4. The military translation course, to be held in Ürümchi, was advertised in the *Ili* newspaper: "Bildurush." *Kunduluk Ili Shingjāng Giziti*, 18 Jun. 1941: 4, with the notice reprinted the next few issues.

⁷⁸ *Ili Tusān Gunsi Kāturi*, "Bildurush"; Ismā'il Āliwānof, "Yifāk quruti bāqqā dihqānlirimiz diqqätige." *Ili Shingjāng Giziti*, 26 Sep. 1941: 4.

institutional subscribers. In many smaller towns and villages, literacy rates remained low, especially among people past school age. Despite these inauspicious circumstances, subscription rates for Uyghur-language newspapers grew rapidly, and their influence in Uyghur society likely exceeded what even their peak circulation numbers would suggest.

Traditional reading practices in Uyghur communities, which often involved a significant oral and communal element,⁷⁹ may have provided a model for the way in which some citizens encountered the newspapers. State officials encouraged imams to read the papers to their congregations, and school administrators urged teachers to use them in their classrooms.⁸⁰ Newly literate children, having used newspapers as curricular material at school, sometimes read them aloud to their parents at home. Store owners kept newspapers in their shops for customers to peruse, and in the bazaars, neighborhoods and villages, literate people would read or summarize the paper to those unable to read.⁸¹ The ranks of the literate grew rapidly, especially among the younger generation, as Sheng's Soviet-style education policies led to the exponential growth of Xinjiang's school system, as well as literacy classes for children and adults in towns and villages across the province.⁸²

Among a population with limited prior exposure to periodical literature, popularizing the purchase and reading of newspapers would require a certain amount of exhortation. In some cases, this took the form of simple salesmanship. In late 1935, for example, a salesman was dispatched far and wide to peddle subscriptions to the fledgling *Xinjiang Uyghur Gazette* (precursor of the *Xinjiang Gazette*), and a year later the *Gazette* reported fielding subscription requests from all across the

⁷⁹ For a detailed study of reading practices in Xinjiang before the era of mass print, see R. Thum, *The Sacred Routes of Uyghur History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014): 114–22, and *passim*.

⁸⁰ In 1936, one high-ranking Kashgar official proposed that in order to increase exposure to newspaper content among school pupils and mosque-goers, teachers and imams lacking funds for newspaper subscriptions could receive financial assistance from *waqf* endowments. Mishu Chu Jāng Nizām al-Dīn, “Gizitlār kop tārālsā idi.” *Yengi Hayāt*, 10 Feb. 1936: 1–2. A school principal in Yengisar announced the same year that he had signed up all of his school's teachers for newspaper subscriptions. Yengiḥiṣār mäktāb mudiri Zākırjān İbrāhım Zāde Turfāni, “Gizitālār hāqındā bir otinish.” *Yengi Hayāt*, 13 Feb. 1936: 3.

⁸¹ Mishu Chu Jāng Nizām al-Dīn, “Gizitlār köp tārālsā idi”; Zākırjān İbrāhım Zāde Turfāni, “Gizitālār hāqındā bir otinish”; Abdullā Dāmollā Muḥammad Hāji, *Jahān'girlik*: 30–48; Roziyev, *Uyghur ziminida*: 56–7; Rozi, “Qisqichā āslimā”: 353; interview (July 2014) with a man who grew up in Ghulja in the 1930s and 1940s.

⁸² Xinjiang's contemporary newspapers abound with announcements and descriptions of literacy classes in nearly every corner of the province, as well as pieces extolling the benefits of reading. Ruzi Mömini of Abad (Awat) County in Aqsu reported in 1940 that a woman came to him in a dream and inspired him to attend a literacy class, after which he could “read and understand any kind of newspaper or journal.” Rüzī Mömini, “Oqub säwādlıq boldum.” *Shing Jāng Giziti: Āqsu Nāshri*, 7 Sep. 1940: 4.

province. Even then, the newspaper continued busily sending out sample copies to attract subscribers. A 1936 issue of the paper concluded with an ad inquiring, “Brother, have you become a subscriber to *Xinjiang Uyghur Gazette*?”⁸³

Some individual subscribers to Xinjiang’s newspapers were signed up during intensive subscription campaigns, often orchestrated by various branches of the Uyghur Enlightenment Association. In 1940, on a single autumn day in Aqsu’s Awat County, the local Enlightenment Association successfully urged over a hundred people to subscribe to the provincial *Xinjiang Gazette*, the *Aqsu Gazette*, and other *Gazette* branches elsewhere in the province. In the first half of 1944, the Enlightenment Association of Kashgar’s Märkit County gathered a dozen new subscribers for the provincial *Xinjiang Gazette* as well as twenty-one new subscribers for the *Gazette*’s Kashgar edition. By March 1946, the *Kashgar Xinjiang Gazette* reported that the Enlightenment Association of Kashgar Prefecture had garnered for the newspaper more than a thousand subscribers.⁸⁴ The degree of coercion in these subscription drives likely varied, but given the omnipresent literacy campaigns and new schools, as well as the relative paucity of available printed matter, the newspapers thus distributed likely found an audience.

This is particularly so given the substantial cost of newspaper subscriptions at a time when Xinjiang’s Uyghur population was struggling economically and inflation was rampant. Scholars note the difficulty of determining distribution and readership of the Soviet press in its earliest years, given that newspapers were largely free of charge, with print runs determined primarily by their publishers’ bureaucratic pull and ideological aims.⁸⁵ Xinjiang’s newspapers, on the other hand, charged for subscriptions from their earliest days, and actively sought individual subscribers. Furthermore, contemporary sources make it clear that these subscribers were not mere notches in the newspapers’ bureaucratic belts; they were crucial for the papers’ survival in a nascent publishing industry that remained at least partially demand-based. Repeated requests for the payment of overdue subscription fees can be found in the pages of nearly all of Xinjiang’s Republican-era newspapers, with particularly plangent appeals in Kashgar’s *New Life*. In April 1935, the editors of this perpetually cash-strapped newspaper implored 400 delinquent subscribers to send in their overdue fees, “given that our newspaper readers are not feeble impoverished folks.” After further reminders, the *New Life* office was by mid-1936 reduced to dispatching its employees to personally collect late subscription fees. By early 1937, the

⁸³ “Weiwen Xinjiang ribao chuban qishi.” *Xinjiang ribao*, 25 December 1935: 1; “Bildurush.” *Shing Jāng Uyghur Giziti*, #24 (50) May 1936: 4; *Shing Jāng Uyghur Giziti*, 7 Dec. 1936: 4.

⁸⁴ Sābit Kānjiyof, “Tāshwiq nātijäsi.” *Shing Jāng Giziti: Aqsu Näshri*, 16 Nov. 1940: 4; Semet Semeri, “6 āyliq tāshwiq yākūni.” *Qeshqer Shingjang Giziti*, 24 July 1944: 3; “Gāzitämisning kunduluk bolup chiqishi häqqidä soz.” *Kunduluk Qāshqār Shingjāng Giziti*, 10 Mar 1946: 1.

⁸⁵ Kenez, *Birth of the Propaganda State*: 224–5.

newspaper began threatening that subscribers' overdue fees would be collected by their local magistrates.⁸⁶

In addition to the many subscriptions purchased by individuals, "collective subscriptions" to Xinjiang's papers were often taken out by schools, government offices and other organizations, a practice also widespread among Soviet newspapers.⁸⁷ The *Khotan Xinjiang Gazette* sold many of its copies to state institutions and quasi-state organizations throughout the Khotan region: county governments, Uyghur Enlightenment Associations, farmers' unions.⁸⁸ In many parts of the province, the local and provincial newspapers could be found in reading rooms, though not all of these were well trafficked. One reading room in Kashgar City attracted only twenty-five or thirty visitors a day after it opened in 1934, a fact its administrators attributed to "our people having grown up under the oppression of the [pre-Sheng] dictatorial regime." The room's administrators felt obliged the following year to reassure potential visitors that their names would not be turned over to any outside party.⁸⁹ A decade later, a reading room in Kashgar's Märkit County reported only 789 visitors in the first half of 1944, at a time when the Kashgar *Gazette* had enjoyed some success in signing up new subscribers in the same county. In Aqsu's Wensu County, the Uyghur Enlightenment Association's reading room noted in 1942 that many young visitors seemed to be drawn primarily by the reading room's billiards table.⁹⁰

While the precise extent of their readership may remain unclear, it is likely that Uyghur newspapers substantially influenced communal self-perception in Republican Xinjiang, far more lastingly than they influenced public opinion with the ideological campaigns—anti-imperialism, the Six Great policies—that were their more explicit fare. In the 1930s and 1940s, when hometown identities and loyalties often prevailed over any broader sense of community or nationality in Xinjiang, the province-wide circulation of newspapers written in a common vernacular, and often identified specifically as Uyghur on the masthead, would have helped familiarize

⁸⁶ Yengi Hayāt Idārasi, "Bildurush." *Yengi Hayāt*, 12 Apr. 1935: 2; Yengi Hayāt Idārasi, "Omüm gezitā oqughuchilirimizghā i'lān." *Yengi Hayāt*, 13 Jan. 1936: 2; Idārā, "Yengi Hayātghē mushtiri olghān muhtārām burādärlirimizghā..." *Yengi Hayāt*, 18 May 1936: 4; Kāshghār gizitā Yengi Hayāt, "Omüm gizitā oqughuchilirigā muhim bildurush!" *Yengi Hayāt*, 25 Jan. 1937: 4.

⁸⁷ On subscription drives and collective subscriptions for Soviet newspapers, see Lenoe, "NEP Newspapers": 622–5.

⁸⁸ Nāshriyāt Bölümi, Untitled, *Khotān Shingjāng Giziti*, 12 Jan. 1942: 4.

⁸⁹ M. Tursun, "Qirā'at khānā idārāsīdin mā'lumāt." *Yengi Hayāt*, 4 Jul. 1935: 2. A few months later, the reading room administrators found it necessary to once again reassure potential visitors of their benign intentions: T. R., "Qirā'atkhānādin (I'lān)." *Yengi Hayāt*, 21 Nov. 1935: 3.

⁹⁰ Semet Semeri, "6 āyliq tāshwiq yākūni"; "Qirā'at khānā yolghā qoyuldi." *Shingjāng Giziti: Aqsu Nāshri*, 23 May 1942: 4.

Turkic-speaking Muslims across the province with the idea of a Uyghur community transcending individual oases.

Uyghur publishers and journalists understood this larger community as their potential readership, and worked to stimulate the province-wide circulation of periodicals. As early as 1935, *New Life* in Kashgar was encouraging its readers to subscribe to Ürümchi's *New Xinjiang* (an earlier incarnation of the *Xinjiang Gazette*) and Chöchäk's *Our Voice*.⁹¹ The October 1940 subscription drive carried out by the Enlightenment Association of Awat County in Aqsu garnered as many subscribers for the Kashgar paper as for the Aqsu branch, as well as a couple subscribers for the Ili newspaper and a much larger number for the provincial *Gazette*.⁹² In 1942, perhaps an eighth of the *Ili Xinjiang Gazette*'s Uyghur-language copies (and more than two-thirds of its Kazakh-language copies) were sent to subscribers and distributors beyond the city of Ghulja, where it was printed.⁹³ These far-flung subscriber bases proved vexing for many a newspaper accountant, perpetually obliged to remind distant subscribers of overdue fees.⁹⁴ Still, their efforts were not in vain, as the ever-widening circulation of newspapers began to draw the province's far-flung oases into a shared community of print. In April 1936, *New Life* printed a poem from an admirer in Ghulja, 800 miles to the north: "The press founded in Kashgar / Scatters light to the people's hearts." The following year the paper printed a panegyric from a well-wisher in Altay, the most distant city in the province: "*New Life* is our broad spiritual orchard / Let it flower and live with honor."⁹⁵

6. Coda: Polyphony, 1944–9

In 1942, after eight years running Xinjiang as a Soviet satellite, Sheng Shicai thought he saw his chance to break free of Stalin's embrace. As the Soviet Union reeled from the German invasion, Sheng expelled Soviet advisors and agents from the province, with Soviet army units finally departing in 1943.⁹⁶ At the same time, Sheng imprisoned and in some cases executed perceived Soviet sympathizers among

⁹¹ Kashghār Yengi Hayāt Idarəsi, "'Omūmi wātāndāshlirimiz diqqātlirighā.'" *Yengi Hayāt*, 20 May 1935: 1. *New Life* continued in later issues to encourage readers to subscribe to *New Xinjiang*, providing detailed info on fees and vouching for the paper's high quality. "Bildurush." *Yengi Hayāt*, 10 Jan. 1936: 4.

⁹² Šābit Kānjiyof, "Tāshwiq nātijəsi."

⁹³ *Yili Hasake zizhizhou zhi*, 865.

⁹⁴ "Idārämizdä mäjlis." *Shingjāng Giziti: Āqsu Nāshri*, 23 May 1942: 4.

⁹⁵ Ghulja 'Ājiz, "Kāshghār mātba'āsighā Ghuljādin." *Yengi Hayāt*, 1 April 1935: 2; Nūr al-Dīn 'Abd al-Akhlaqī, "Āltāy āltun tāghliridin sālām." *Yengi Hayāt*, 27 Feb. 1936: 1–2.

⁹⁶ For a summary of Xinjiang politics in this period, see J. Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007): 210–30.

Xinjiang's native population. The bloodletting was especially ferocious within the government and its publishing organs, with the initial generation of Uyghur *Xinjiang Gazette* editors largely wiped out in a series of purges ending only in 1944.⁹⁷

To fill the bureaucratic void created by his purges and to reassert Chinese sovereignty over Xinjiang, Sheng invited Guomindang (Chinese Nationalist Party) agents and troops into the province beginning in mid-1942. Before long, Guomindang offices had been set up in Ürümchi and throughout Xinjiang, and Guomindang officials involved themselves in everything from local theater to newspaper publishing.⁹⁸ Guomindang loyalists were placed in charge of the *Xinjiang Gazette*'s head office, and remaining Uyghur journalists and editors with perceived Soviet leanings were replaced by others considered more congenial to Guomindang ideology and policy.⁹⁹ The pro-Soviet propaganda in Xinjiang's Uyghur-language periodicals was soon replaced by equally strident Guomindang propaganda, and articles on Gorky gave way to quotations from Confucius.¹⁰⁰ While the content had changed, Xinjiang's print media was still speaking in one voice; but dissent was in the air.

In winter 1944, northern Xinjiang exploded in rebellion.¹⁰¹ Erratic and heavy-handed policies from Ürümchi and Beijing had led to widespread disaffection among the area's Turkic Muslims, both Uyghurs and Kazakhs, a state of affairs which did not escape the notice of Soviet authorities. Still smarting from Sheng's desertion, the Soviets were eager to obtain renewed access to northern Xinjiang's mineral riches, and in the festering discontent they saw an opening. By summer 1944, would-be rebels were crossing from Chöchäk into Soviet Kazakhstan, where they set up an underground revolutionary organization with assistance from a Soviet agent who introduced himself as 'Abdulla Ramazanov—better known to history as Meshür

⁹⁷ In 1942 alone, Märüp Sä'idi, Ayup Mänsuri, and Khelil Sattari, *Xinjiang Gazette* editors who had begun their careers at *Ili River Newspaper*, were executed in Sheng's prisons. *Uyghur ädäbiyati tarikhı* 3: 369–413 includes biographies of these and other writers who fell victim to the terror.

⁹⁸ Quṭb al-Dīn Hāmid, "Ärtistlärgä mukāfāt birildi." *Khotān Shingjāng Giziti*, 2 Oct. 1945: 3; A. Rehimof, "Qārghiliqta mukhbirlär gruppāsi uyushturuldi." *Khotān Shingjāng Giziti*, 8 Jan. 1945: 3.

⁹⁹ For a sense of Xinjiang Gazette office politics under Guomindang rule, see Z. Zhang, *Zai lishi de jiafeng zhong: yi Zhang Zhizhong xiansheng* (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1986); F. Li, "Guomindang tongzhi shiqi de 'Xinjiang ribao'." *Xinjiang wenshi ziliao xuanji* 2: 74–91.

¹⁰⁰ "Mäksim Gorkī," published in *Kunduluk Ili Shingjāng Giziti*, 17 Jun. 1941: 3, was a typical cultural offering from Sheng's socialist period. During the Guomindang ascendancy that followed, Confucius was ubiquitous in provincial newspapers; e.g., the quotation gracing the masthead of *Chuwächäk Shingjāng Giziti*, 12 Sept. 1943.

¹⁰¹ A detailed account of these events can be found in L. Benson, *The Ili Rebellion: The Moslem Challenge to Chinese Authority in Xinjiang, 1944–1949* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1990).

Roziev, erstwhile advisor to Sheng Shicai and co-founder of the *Xinjiang Gazette*.¹⁰² The well-armed uprising began in the town of Nilqa in October 1944, and the next month claimed the city of Ghulja, economic and cultural hub of the Ili region. In November, a new government was proclaimed: the Eastern Turkistan Republic (ETR), a name that echoed the separatist state that briefly ruled Kashgar in 1933–4. The new ETR, with Soviet military support, expanded rapidly, and by the time a ceasefire was signed with the Guomindang in Ürümchi in September 1945, the ETR's territory encompassed the districts of Ili, Tarbaghatay (centered around Chöchäk) and Altay.

The ETR leadership was dominated by intellectuals and writers, many of whom took a strong interest in journalism. One of the new republic's first acts was the establishment of an official newspaper in Ghulja, where the ETR government was based. *Liberated Eastern Turkistan (Āzād Sharqi Turkistān)* was printed on the former *Ili Xinjiang Gazette* press in no less than six languages: Uyghur, Kazakh, Mongol, Chinese, Sibe and Russian.¹⁰³ As the rest of northern Xinjiang fell to ETR troops, the other newspapers of the north were reborn as ETR organs: the *Altay Xinjiang Gazette* became *Free Altay (Erikti Altay)*, and the *Chöchäk Xinjiang Gazette* was replaced with *The People's Voice (Khälq Awazi)*, whose name echoed the earlier Chöchäk paper *Our Voice*.¹⁰⁴ Smaller papers sprang up in the other counties of the ETR, including some which had never before had local newspapers.¹⁰⁵ The ETR state and its quasi-governmental organizations directly administered most publishing organs, and the republic's proliferating periodicals hewed faithfully to state policy.¹⁰⁶

Meanwhile, press adherence to state directives was slackening in the Guomindang-controlled seven districts of southern and eastern Xinjiang. In 1945, with the ETR army at the gates of Ürümchi, Chinese sovereignty over the province had stood in jeopardy once again. The crisis precipitated a change in leadership, as Chiang Kai-shek loyalist Wu Zhongxin, in charge of Xinjiang since Sheng's departure, was replaced with Zhang Zhizhong, a left-leaning Guomindang general with a track record of successful negotiations with the Communist Party. Zhang swiftly opened negotiations with the ETR and its Soviet patrons, and by 1946 had successfully turned a cold truce into a warm honeymoon. ETR and Guomindang representatives were brought together in a unity government based in Ürümchi, and

¹⁰² Shinjang üç wilayät inqilabi tarikhini yezish-tährirläsh komiteti, *Shinjang üç wilayät inqilabigha da'ir chong ishtar khatirisi* (Ürümchi: Shinjang khälq nāshriyati, 1995): 15–6.

¹⁰³ Zerdin, "Ilida gezitning barliqqa kelishi."

¹⁰⁴ Äsqiri, "Azadliqtin ilgiri": 154–5; Taxibayefu, "Tacheng diqu": 279–80.

¹⁰⁵ S. 'Ömäri, "Nāshriyāt ishliri kengäymäkdä." *Inqilabi Sharqi Turkistān*, 7 Apr. 1947: 3.

¹⁰⁶ For an analysis of national ideology as expressed in ETR publications, see O. Klimeš, *Struggle by the Pen: The Uyghur Discourse of Nation and National Interest* (Leiden: Brill, 2015): 233–47.

a detailed peace agreement was hammered out.

A key tenet of the peace agreement was freedom of speech and of the press—a stipulation which Zhang seems to have done his best to honor. Within months of the peace accord's ratification, independent newspapers sprang up across Guomindang-ruled Xinjiang. In Kashgar, the local branch of the *Xinjiang Gazette* was temporarily replaced by a newspaper called *Consciousness* (*Ang*),¹⁰⁷ while a new publication called *Teacher* (*Mu'allim*) began publication in the same city. In Ürümchi, a thrice-weekly periodical called *Freedom* (*Ärk*) emerged as a mouthpiece for pan-Turkist Guomindang allies. Across the south of the province, independent Uyghur-language newspapers were established in counties with little or no history of newspaper printing: *Voice of Unity* in Bügür, *Nightingale of the Meadow* in Toqsun, *Taklamakan* in Lopnur and numerous others.¹⁰⁸

Meanwhile, a disjunct emerged between the Chinese section and the Uyghur-Kazakh section of the *Xinjiang Gazette* head office in Ürümchi. After the ETR-Guomindang peace treaty was signed, the Uyghur and Kazakh editions of the *Gazette* took an openly pro-ETR stance, and called for fuller implementation of the treaty's terms. As an ETR journalist put it, "*Xinjiang Gazette* in Ürümchi, which had been singing to the tune of the dictatorial government, began to speak also of the people's interest."¹⁰⁹ At the same time, the *Gazette*'s Chinese edition maintained an editorial policy of support for the Guomindang authorities. With tensions rising, General Zhang agreed to the Ili government's request to split the *Daily* in two. The Uyghur and Kazakh sections were reorganized as a separate bureau and placed under ETR supervision, while the Chinese section remained under the purview of the Guomindang government in Ürümchi.¹¹⁰

By 1946, then, the *Xinjiang Gazette* had lost its monopoly on Uyghur-language journalism in the province; and for the first time since Sheng had centralized Xinjiang's newspapers in the mid-1930s, competing views on politics and society could be encountered in Xinjiang's press. As the balance of power in the province shifted continually over the next few years, Xinjiang's print media was repeatedly reorganized and reoriented, a complex process which merits separate treatment. In late 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) displaced the Guomindang from the

¹⁰⁷ It is possible that reports of a much earlier Kashgar newspaper called *Ang* (see above), for whose reported 1918 publication no evidence has come to light, were inspired in part by this 1946 newspaper.

¹⁰⁸ 'Ömari, "Näshriyät ishliri kengäymäkdä." For an account of Kashgar's Teacher newspaper, see M. Noruz, "Bitim mäzgildiki 'Mu'allim' Geziti." *Shinjang tarikh materiyyalliri* 32: 182–5.

¹⁰⁹ 'Ömari, "Näshriyät ishliri kengäymäkdä."

¹¹⁰ Li, "Guomindang tongzhi": 85–6; Xinjiang Weiwu'er zizhigu, *Baoye zhi*: 57, 60; I. Äsqiri, "'Shinjang geziti' toghrisida qisqichä äslimä." *Shinjang tarikh materiyyalliri* 26 (1989): 208–9; Shinjang üç wilayät ingilabi, *Shinjang üç wilayät*: 241.

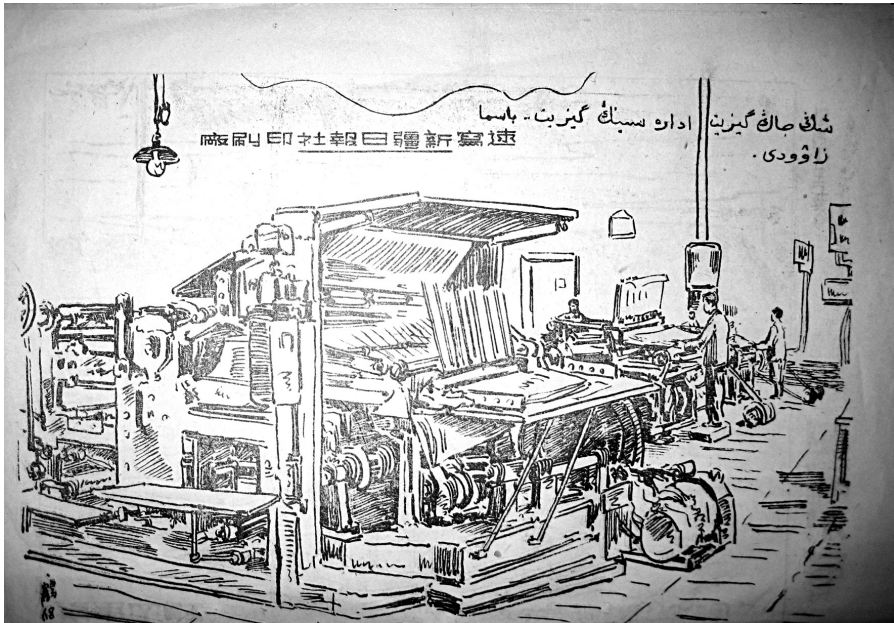


Figure 9. 2. Xinjiang Gazette Print Shop

Source: *Qingbai huakan* 清白畫刊 7 (Ürümchi: Qingbai huakan she, Aug. 1946), n. p.

province, and by the following year had reasserted Chinese sovereignty over the ETR's territory. Soon after the CCP's assumption of power in Xinjiang, the Party reestablished unified control over the province's Uyghur-language media, and was able to swiftly propagate its ideology and edicts among the Uyghur population—a capability that was crucial to establishing the emerging party-state's authority and legitimacy in a community with no previous Party presence. At the dawn of CCP rule in Xinjiang, then, Uyghur publishing infrastructure stood prepared to deliver the new government's message to every corner of the province. Two decades of Uyghur publishing, with all its complexities and reversals, had given rise to a mature Uyghur-language print culture in Xinjiang.

This chapter has explored the institutional development and popular reception of Uyghur publishing—with newspaper publishing at its core—in those two decades. Further research is merited to extend the analysis further, and to examine the influence of native-language print culture on Uyghur public opinion and identity in the 1930s and 1940s. The wide circulation of newspapers in a language identified and understood as Uyghur, based on the vernacular of Xinjiang's Turkic agriculturalists, was arguably one of the prime forces reifying the Uyghur national category officially introduced by the Ürümchi government in 1935. The newspapers helped lend tangibility and popular resonance to a category which had initially been

articulated by a relatively small group of intellectuals and officials. The language used in the newspapers, increasingly standardized over the course of the 1940s, brought the construct of linguists and literati into the everyday. The Uyghur language was quotidian, and it was useful: for news, for commerce, for exhortation.

Continued study of the early Uyghur periodical press promise yield insight into the connections between print culture and nation building under authoritarian political systems. And further exploration of Xinjiang's early periodicals will continue to enrich our understanding of modern Uyghur history in important ways. While the study of broad trends and major events in 20th-century Xinjiang has advanced considerably in recent years, Much remains to be understood about the day-to-day realities underlying those trends and events. Newspapers, often called the second hand of history, can help open up for us these vistas of the everyday.