

Uyghurs subculture in China

Saturday, April 27, 2024 9:30 AM (30 minutes)

Early Chinese historians documented that the practices of the "Western Hu" referring to early Central and Inner Asians, did not align with Chinese customs. Recently, China has experienced dissatisfaction in its dealings with the Uyghurs, who are considered distant descendants of the Hu. The region inhabited by the Uyghurs has great political, economic, and demographic importance for the Beijing administration (Dwyer 1,2). Xinjiang is situated on the northwestern frontier of China, sharing borders with Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. Xinjiang has a Uyghur population of 22.64 million according to a 2013 census, along with smaller communities of Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Oyrat Mongols, Sibes, Chinese Muslims (Huis), and other ethnicities (Dwyer 2; Pawan 81,82). The Uyghurs in Xinjiang are dedicated to preserving their identity as people from the oasis, the Silk Road, and Turkic Central Asia. Many Uyghurs assert their distinctiveness from the Han Chinese and identify themselves as a milli, or in this case, a "nationality". Uyghurs have preserved a distinct identity based on their ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic differences from the Han Chinese majority. Contemporary Uyghur identity is shaped by unique cultural characteristics and their contrast with mainstream Chinese culture, known as Zhonghua minzu. The strong ethnic identity and differences in Xinjiang have caused cultural conflicts between ethnic minorities and the Han Chinese, contrasting with Beijing's unification policy of different ethnic groups via Chinese nationalism (Erkin 418).

In this paper, we will explore the different facets of the Uyghurs subculture namely by identifying the national concepts and identity, religion, etiquette and norms, communication practices, social organization and gender roles, and last but not least the do's and don'ts. In addition, we would like to analyze three of the most important Uyghur cultural artifacts namely, the local architecture, the Meshrep festival, and the fractal designs of Uyghur Quman hats. We will substantiate our analysis by using qualitative data as well as the quantitative data proposed by Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Our paper aims to understand where the Uyghur culture sits within the dominant Han culture of China. Moreover, it is worth noting that Uyghurs do not reside in mainland China only, but are also spread across Central Asian countries—especially Kazakhstan; as well as the intensified cultural clashes between the Han and the Uyghurs since the Urumchi riots in 2009. We believe that our question will help shed more light on this topic seen the lack of research due to the restrictions and censorship imposed by the Chinese government on the Uyghur minority group.

Title

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Session Classification: Morning Talks

Track Classification: Modern Languages and Arts