Preface and Acknowledgements

This book is a survey history of a region at the centre of Eurasia. Now known as Xinjiang (pronounced 'Hsin-jeeang'), this area has been known by many names in the past. One of those old names, 'Chinese Turkestan', might well have served as this book's title. 'Turkestan' was a term medieval Islamic writers applied to the northern and eastern parts of Central Asia—the lands of the Turkic-speaking nomads, as opposed to the Persian-speaking dwellers in the oases. Marco Polo also used this name. When Tsarist forces conquered Central Asia in the nineteenth century they followed suit, calling their new imperial acquisition 'Turkestan'. Logically enough, European writers around the same time began to refer to those parts of Central Asia further east, those under the control of the Qing dynasty, as 'Chinese Turkestan', distinguishing it from Russian Turkestan.

Though old, the term 'Chinese Turkestan' retains a certain relevance. Xinjiang has for a millenium and a half been a land of Turkic-speaking peoples, now represented by Kazakhs, Kirghiz, and mainly the Uyghurs, who comprise the bulk of the non-Han Chinese population in the region. On the other hand, Xinjiang—as opposed to parts of Central Eurasia lying west of the Pamirs—has also long had close contacts with China, and for most of the time since the mid-eighteenth century it has lain under the control of Beijing. In this way, Xinjiang is indeed both Turkic and Chinese.

However, the term 'Chinese Turkestan' is controversial. Although the People's Republic of China (PRC) frequently refers to 'China's Tibet'—and even publishes an English-language propaganda magazine under that title—any reference to 'Turkestan' evokes the two short-lived 'Eastern Turkestan Republics' of the 1930s and 1940s, as well as the names of more recent Uyghur separatist groups. Since the PRC officially maintains that Xinjiang has

been part of China since the first century BCE, any allusion to the region's other past political and ethnic identities is unwelcome. It is the eighteenth-century term 'Xinjiang' by which the PRC and the rest of the world now refers to the area; the term 'Turkestan' only appears in China if carefully quarantined in quotation marks and attributed to Western colonialists or contemporary terrorists.

On the other hand, Uyghur nationalists, who consider the Xinjiang region their own homeland unjustly invaded and conquered by China, likewise have little use for the label 'Chinese Turkestan', though for opposite reasons: the term codifies the region's modern Chineseness.

The name 'Chinese Turkestan' thus reflects a key characteristic of the region's history—its ethnic diversity and situation at the overlap of cultural realms—and crystallises the problem of reconciling ethnic and political identities, a problem that has troubled this continental crossroads for most of the past century.

I am neither a Chinese nationalist nor a Turkic nationalist (rather, I like to consider myself a friend of both Han and Uyghur peoples and, more generally, of China). Still, no student of the region's history can escape the politics that suffuses Xinjiang studies today. It pervades the secondary literature, be it PRC publications or Uyghur websites. Scrutiny from Beijing forces even non-Chinese scholars to think and rethink what they write and say in public settings. (The draft of a recent volume of collected articles about Xinjiang by Western scholars was smuggled to China, translated, circulated, and rebutted internally in the PRC before it had even been published in the United States.) US military expansion into Central Asia, the casting of Xinjiang tensions as part of the 'global war on terror', and the incarceration of Uyghurs in the US prison camp and off-the-books legal purgatory at Guantanamo means that Washington too has a growing interest in the Uyghurs and Xinjiang—an interest that makes the PRC in turn suspicious. Any effort to sort out the history of the Xinjiang region is complicated by these political concerns. Moreover, besides the rival primordialist claims on the region—is the region 'Chinese' since ancient times, 'Uyghur' since ancient times, or something else?—there are other issues with contemporary implications. What has been the role and nature of Islam in the area? What are the benefits and drawbacks of Xinjiang's twentieth-century development and globalisation? How have Uyghurs and other minority peoples in the PRC fared under the policies of the Chinese Communist Party? Is Uyghur dissent tied to international Islamist terror networks?

Although I address these and similar fraught questions in the following pages, the goal of this book is not to weigh in on the political issues besetting Xinjiang today. Rather, I hope to provide an overview to the history of a region that has played an important role in world history, but for which there is no good introduction in English. Xinjiang, as the hub of the Silk Road and point of contact of various Eurasian peoples and cultures, has long fascinated readers for its diversity and exoticism. But for precisely these reasons, the sources for the study of the region's history are challenging, requiring specialised knowledge and access to materials ranging from artefacts unearthed in the desert and paintings daubed on the walls of caves, to texts in Tokharian, Türk, Soghdian, Tibetan, Mongolian, Manchu, classical Chinese, Chaghatai and Persian, not to mention important secondary works in Chinese, Russian, Japanese, French, Turkish, German and other modern languages. These materials are scattered in libraries and museums across the globe. Moreover, Xinjiang has in one way or another been part of the histories of the Tibetan, Arab, Turkic, Mongol, Russian as well as Chinese empires, so its historiography involves place names and personal names in multiple languages. Specialists in one of these historiographies may well struggle with terms from another.

Although there are important specialised works in English on Xinjiang history, for the non-specialist reader these have been somewhat hard to find and hard to grasp without considerable background knowledge. One great challenge has been precisely the lack of a general history to provide that background—I encountered this problem myself some years ago when I first began my study of the Qing empire in Xinjiang. This book, then, is an attempt to fill that gap with a synthetic survey of the history of the Xinjiang region from earliest times to the present—from Tienshanosaurus to the twenty-first century, one might say. Obviously, I have had to be selective, and my coverage is more detailed for more recent periods, with the twentieth century receiving the closest attention. I have written this book for a general audience including students, travellers, journalists, politicians and policy-makers, as well as specialists in the history of China or Central Asia who wish to know more about Xinjiang. I believe, moreover, that even Xinjiang specialists will find something new in these pages: I have, for example, written the first attempt at a general history of the region since 1978. I do not pretend to have scoured every possible source or to be an expert on all aspects of Xinjiang history; still, I have tried to base my survey on the most recent scholarship. The notes and bibliography should lead anyone who wishes into the specialised literature on particular periods and topics.

Although this book is intended primarily as a straightforward source of information, in the course of writing it I have identified certain themes that run through Xinjiang's history. These, I hope, lend the subject matter a certain unity despite the long time span and variety of peoples and regimes covered. For example, as mentioned above, the term 'Chinese Turkestan' encapsulates the cultural and political multiplicity of this region, its quality of overlap rather than exclusivity. As the crossroads of the Silk Road, Xinjiang lay astride routes linking the Mediterranean Basin, Persia, India, Russia, and China. Xinjiang was thus both conduit and melting pot for the transfer of arts, technologies, ideologies and trade items across Eurasia. Palaeolithic hunter-gatherers crossed Xinjiang, as did early Eurasian farmers and nomads after them. Monks, missionaries, traders, soldiers, settlers and tourists followed thereafter. Xinjiang was also a meeting point for nomadic and sedentary societies, for the pastoralist Hunic, Turkic and Mongol peoples from the steppes and the farmers of the Tarim Basin oases.

Each of these peoples, ideas and products has been part of the region's history. Many peoples and cultures met in this region; extant artefacts and indeed the very faces of the region's inhabitants bear the stamp of those encounters. Although for much of the twentieth century Xinjiang has seemed a backwater, more recently its global linkages have expanded quickly and the region is now firmly enmeshed in global as well as pan-Eurasian networks. One main theme to be traced below, then, is Xinjiang's intermediate position, its role as a conduit, and its linkages to other places.

Any visitor to Xinjiang is struck by its geography. In an arid, wide-open region not only are geographic features—vast deserts, high mountains, broad steppes, snow-fed rivers—more visible, they also exercise more perceptible historical effects. Certain patterns of Xinjiang's past, notably the tendency of nomads based in the north (where one could raise horses) to control and tax the oases of the south (where one could raise grain), arise from its geography. As discussed in detail in Chapter 1, this feature of Xinjiang's geography also embroiled it in the enduring rivalry between nomadic powers based in Mongolia (which communicates easily with northern Xinjiang) and states based in north China. Likewise central to the area's history is the role of water in supporting and limiting agriculture, settlement and urbanisation. Developments in the eighteenth century led to a rupture with past geopolitical patterns, a decline of nomad power, easier control of Xinjiang from north China, and increased Chinese settlement in the area. Nevertheless, efforts to integrate Xinjiang more closely with China still depend upon water supplies,

which in turn remain dependent on the region's basin and range geography. Global warming, moreover, now threatens the future of those water sources. The role of geography and the environment, then, is a second theme arising at various points in this book.

As mentioned above, much of the writing of Xinjiang history in recent times has been shaped by contemporary nationalistic agendas. From a dispassionate point of view, however, any attempt to use history to claim the Xinjiang region as more 'Chinese' or more 'Uyghur' or even as a home for 'Europeans' (an assertion inspired by mummies from the Tarim Basin) is off the mark. The continental, racial and national categories with which we are accustomed today do not readily apply to earlier historical eras. The names which we ascribe to peoples in Xinjiang through history derive more from historiographical convention than from genetics. Throughout most of their history the population centres in southern Xinjiang have been ruled either by tribal powers based in northern Xinjiang, Semirech'e or Mongolia; by dynasties based in north China, sometimes comprised of Han Chinese, sometimes of Inner Asian élites; or by local ruling families made up of Mongol imperial descendents or orders of Islamic shaykhs claiming descent from the prophet Muhammad. Conventionally for those periods we write the name of the ruling power (Han, Hephthalite, Western Turk, Qarakhanid, Qara Khitay, Uyghur, Yarkand Khanate, Zunghar, Qing) over the space Xinjiang occupies on the map. However, the subject population did not change with each new conquering élite, though the new rulers augmented the local population and cultural characteristics that had evolved over time. Religions came and went (Buddhism flourished then gave way to Islam), and languages of majority populations shifted (from Indo-European to Turkic to Sinic). The modes of social organisation and identity in this context, then, are themselves interesting subjects of analysis, as are the ways in which ruling powers accommodated ethno-linguistic, religious and socio-economic diversity among subject peoples in a diverse and fluid area. To assert a simplistic national identity upon this rich and fluid past is a meaningless and ill-advised endeavour, particularly when the contenders are such hard-to-define, historically evolving notions as 'Uyghur' and 'Chinese.' The history of Xinjiang is the history of many interacting peoples, cultures and polities, not of a single nation.

Thus a third theme runs through the narrative that follows: the variety of ways in which people in the Xinjiang region were organised and organised themselves. We do not have the right kind of sources to discuss 'identity' of Xinjiang peoples in detail for any time before the twentieth century. However,

as we trace the region's political-military vicissitudes and the ebb and flow of various cultural influences, we may strive to understand how political life and social identity were structured in a place and time with no single prevailing national identity. Though local oasis identities were no doubt strong, for many of Xinjiang's inhabitants broader associations were also possible. These included affinities based on language (Tokharian, Turkic, Chinese, Soghdian); on religion (Mahayana or Theravada Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Nestorianism, Islam and various Sufi orders or particular holy men and their shrines); on tribal lineages (Qarakhanid, Chinggisid Mongol, Zunghar, Kazakh); on loyalties to distant dynasties and their imperial metropoles (Chang'an, Lhasa, Balasaghun, Moscow, Beijing); or to far-flung commercial and familial networks (the Soghdians, Chinese merchant guilds). Xinjiang's history provides examples of many kinds of overlapping political and social groupings before the racial or national categories of 'Turkic', 'Uyghur' and 'Chinese' became current in the twentieth century.

Because over the past two millennia Xinjiang has fallen under many empires and been entered into many historiographies, the places of the region have many names. The city of Turfan—or cities very near its current site—for example, has been known at various times and in various languages as Jushi, Gaochang, Qocho, Qarakhoja, Turpan and Tulufan. Southern Xinjiang is referred to in the literature as Kashgaria, Altishahr, Huibu, Nanbu, Little Bukharia, the Tarim Basin and Eastern Turkestan. Even today many cities have two names and more than two spellings: Ghulja, Kuldja, Kulja, I-ning and Yining are all the same place—a large city in north-western Xinjiang.

There is no simple solution to the challenges of Xinjiang place names. One cannot simply pick a standard form and stick with it, because for historical, linguistic and political reasons there is no universally accepted standard. Were I in this book to call the main city in south-western Xinjiang by the Chinese name commonly appearing on today's maps, for example, it would be 'Kashi'. Would readers then recognise this as the same city that Marco Polo, the *New York Times* and most of the historical literature calls 'Kashgar'? Even the modern Uyghur spelling in modified Arabic script, 'Qäshqär', differs from that in older texts written in Arabic scripts.

I have chosen, therefore, the following compromise. My main goal is not to be consistent, but to guide non-specialist readers through the onomastic thicket of Xinjiang history. Thus I generally use the place name most appropriate or recognisable for a given time period; this is usually the name most

commonly used in the secondary literature about that period. In the index and at first appearance in each chapter, however, I gloss that name with other names for the same place, especially where both Turko-Mongolian and Chinese names are current for a single city. Where possible I use linguistically accurate transcriptions, but I avoid most diacriticals and do not value technical accuracy above easy recognition and pronunciation by the reader. Although some people still use them, I eschew old spellings based on the romanisation system introduced for Uyghur in the 1960s in the PRC (*yengi yeziq*). This system had many problems and has now been officially abandoned.

Many of these same concerns apply to personal names, the spellings of which are, if anything, even more varied in the literature than those of place names. Here too I have adopted user-friendliness as my main principle. Where I have been able to ascertain their standard spelling in modern Uyghur, however, I have attempted to transcribe modern Uyghur names consistently from the Uyghur, rather than either Arabic or Chinese form.

In the course of writing this book I have received help from many institutions and individuals. I am thankful for summer and sabbatical support from the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service and the Graduate School of Georgetown University. In addition, Georgetown's National Resource Center for Eurasian, Russian and East European Studies (CERES) has on two occasions funded my research for this project through its Title VI grant from the Department of Education.

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whose hospitality I enjoyed. The staff at the photo-archive at the Musée Guimet graciously allowed me to preview a large collection of photos from the Pelliot collection before they were fully ready for posting on the web.

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I finished a previous book on my wedding anniversary, and have done so again this time. Though Madhulika no doubt suspects that I undertake these books mainly as an excuse for a host of ineptitudes, much credit is due to her for both the growing number of books and for the (rather more quickly) growing number of anniversaries.

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J.A.M.
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