

Preface to the Revised and Updated Edition

In the summer of 2020, to write a new chapter updating *Eurasian Crossroads* is both an urgent task and a premature effort. The fifteen years since I finished the book have seen many momentous events and trends for the Xinjiang region and its indigenous peoples, as they have for China and for the broader global context that shapes life in eastern Central Asia. Now that CCP policies have created a situation so dire that commentators debate using words like ‘genocide’ and ‘holocaust,’ the need to record and publish what is happening in Xinjiang has never been more pressing.

And yet the crisis is on-going. Chapter 8 of the current edition references news items from the very day I finished the draft. It cites a report from the same week. I have thus tried—as in the book as a whole—to write about the contemporary from a perspective that includes the past within its purview. Sadly, that viewpoint has led me to conclude that the current repression of Xinjiang’s peoples may be unprecedented, but it is not unrelated to what has gone before. CCP attitudes and policies did not *inevitably* lead to digital totalitarianism, concentration camps, forced labour, and a state project to reduce the Uyghur population—but they did lead to these atrocities, which are not a disjuncture from the past so much as a cancerous outgrowth of it. CCP colonialism with Chinese characteristics today shimmers with twenty-first-century technophilia, but its stench is familiar.

Still, though the horrors continue, this edition must go to press sometime. Seldom does an author want his book to become outdated, but I hope that the words of this preface will come to sound overblown—and sooner rather than later.

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There is a bigger on-going story, and likely a graver threat, that I have not discussed in the new chapter: the effects of global climate change on the Xinjiang region and its peoples. In the first edition I wrote of the rapid retreat of the Tianshan and Kunlun glaciers as an ominous sign. Despite the alarming pace at which average global temperatures are increasing, fifteen years is but an instant on the geographical timeline, and for this edition, my cursory and inexpert review of Xinjiang hydrological and climatological studies reveals no recent pattern that I could reliably summarise as a historian. Warming continues, and the cultivated area has extended to cover as much of Xinjiang as is feasible. But over the last decade, warming has produced more precipitation in some parts of the region and less in others; while glaciers continue to retreat in the Kunlun, some in the Tianshan may be accumulating more snowpack. I, at least, could not draw clear conclusions from this regarding water supply in Xinjiang.

There is a clearer pattern on the demand side of the water equation, however. The development boom, city-building and expansion of thirsty agriculture have increased Xinjiang's water needs. Intensified PRC use of water upstream on the Yili and Irtish is reducing water downstream in Kazakhstan and Russia. And over the past decade the PRC-planned and public-private economy has moved water-intensive cotton-growing and textile manufacture from eastern China to concentrate it massively in Xinjiang. Xinjiang now grows about one quarter of the world's raw cotton, on both large-scale *Bingtuan* farms with mechanised harvesting and on smaller private plots. Millions of spindles from factories in the Pearl River Delta and other eastern Chinese industrial centres have been reinstalled in Xinjiang, and massive yarn factories have been built to supply the garment industry across China and abroad. Xinjiang cotton can be found anywhere—including in garments made in Vietnam and sold under a 'Xinjiang cotton' label at Muji stores—but also hidden in the mix of cotton types spun into yarn and circulated throughout global supply chains. One wonders if, in addition to exploiting the last, cheapest pool of workers in PRC (involuntary labour from internment camps), the goal of the Chinese textile industry is to exploit Xinjiang's remaining water as profitably as possible, until the last snowfield melts.

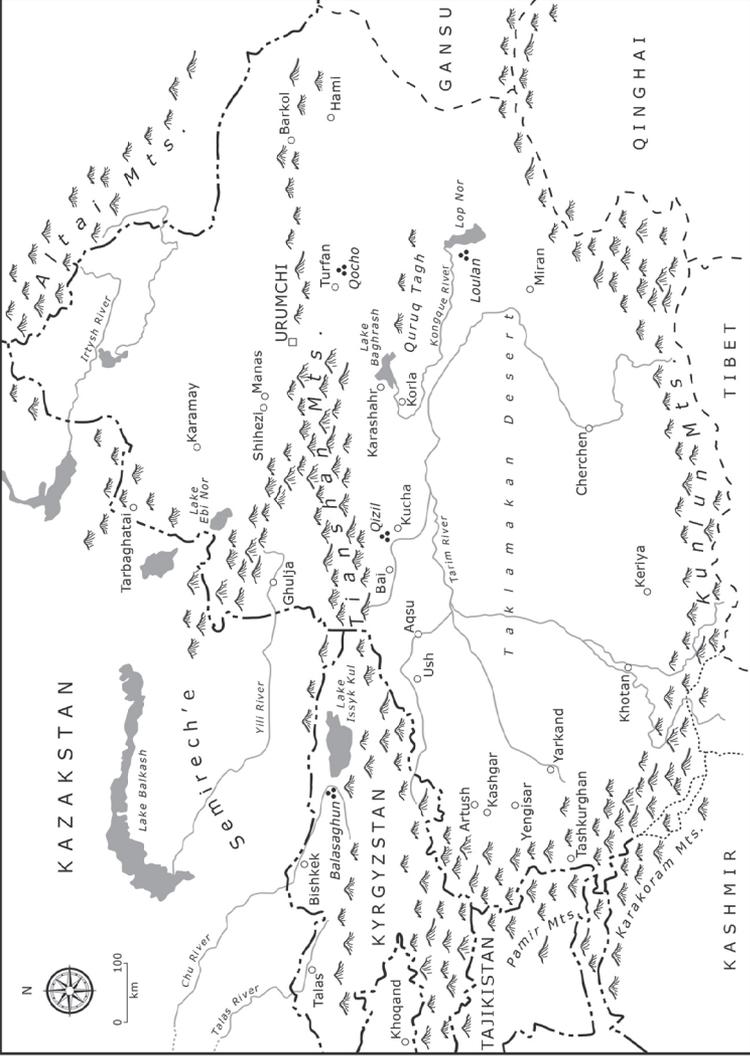
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There is at least one Xinjiang-related trend of the past fifteen years that is hopeful: the explosion of scholarly interest and academic publishing about the region and its Uyghur, Kazakh, and other indigenous peoples. My quick

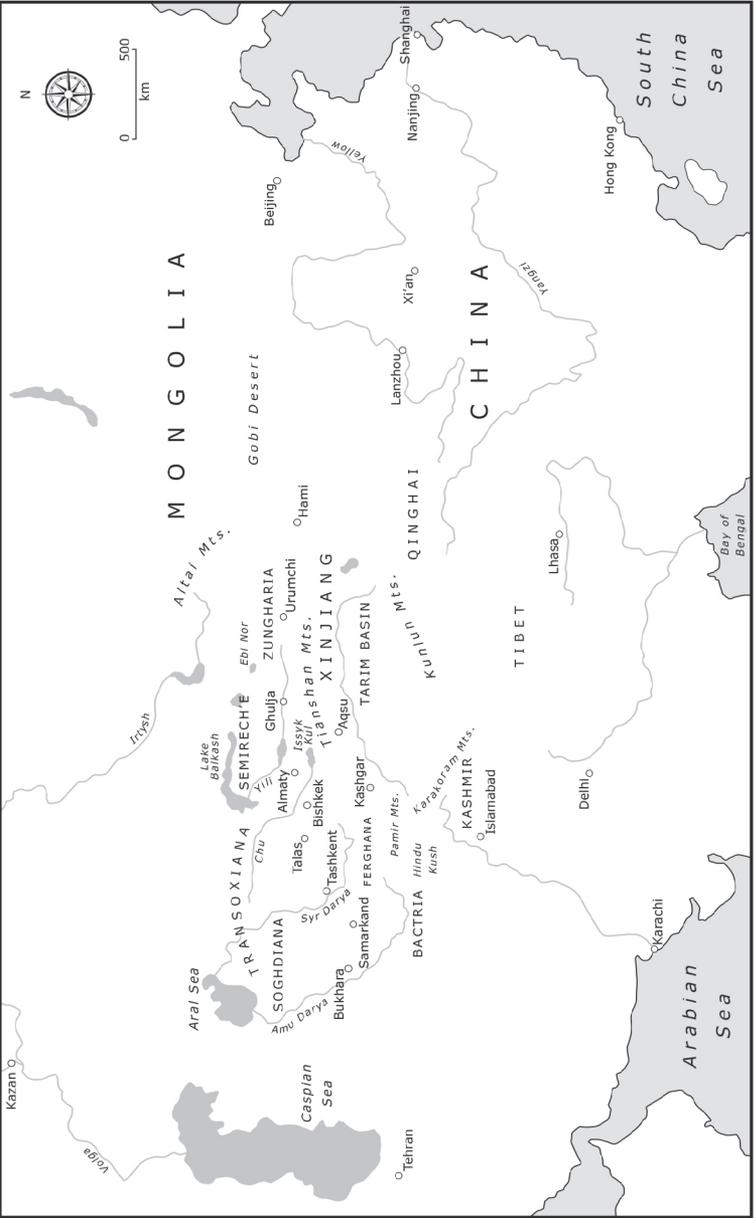
count found some three dozen new books in English since 2005—at least eight volumes published in 2020 alone. I was astounded to see how many works, now standard on any Xinjiang studies reading list, have come out since I compiled the bibliography for the first edition of *Eurasian Crossroads*. These include books, dissertations, and significant articles by Elise Anderson, Ildikó Bellér-Hann, Gardner Bovingdon, David Brophy, Darren Byler, Sandrine Catris, Chen Yangbin, Michael Clarke, Tom Cliff, Jay Dautcher, Mahesh Debata, Arienne Dreyer, Josh Freeman, Timothy Grose, Guo Rongxing, Han Enze, Rachel Harris, Justin Jacobs, Kwangmin Kim, Judd Kinzley, Ondřej Klimeš, James Leibold, Benjamin Levey, Li Yuhui, Nathan Light, Noda Jin, Chiara Olivieri, Onuma Takahiro, Peter Perdue, Lauren Restrepo, Rune Steenberg Reyhé, Alessandro Rippa, Sean Roberts, Lisa Ross, Eric Schluessel, Joanne Smith Finley, Sugawara Jun, Shinmen Yasushi, Rian Thum, David Tobin, Edmund Waite, and Adrian Zenz—and certainly others whom I’ve missed (and to whom I apologize). That incomplete list includes only authors of works discussing Qing and later periods published in English. I regret that I have not been able to do justice in this second edition to this wealth of new scholarship (to do so would have entailed major revisions of the original chapters). But I have included their major and representative works in the revised bibliography and thank these colleagues and others who have contributed so much to the field.

This second edition is dedicated to two other great scholars: Rahile Dawut and Ilham Tohti. I hope that I will soon be able to offer them a copy myself.

J.A.M
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Map 1: The Xinjiang Region



Map 2: Xinjiang, China and Central Eurasia

