



ENCYCLOPEDIA OF WOMEN AND ISLAMIC CULTURES

Women in Uyghur Culture

Dr. Suad Joseph, General Editor

Distinguished Professor of Anthropology and Women and Gender Studies, University of California, Davis

EWIC Staff

- ❖ The Uygher people are a Turkic nation who originate from the region known under the People's Republic of China as Xinjiang. As of 2010, they numbered over ten million, nearly all of them residing in China with 223,000 in Kazakhstan and 45,000 in Turkey.¹
- ❖ The Uyghurs embraced Islam in 934 AD, and their capital, Kashgar, became a center of Islamic Art as well as Turkish, Farsi, and Arabic literature.³
- ❖ The Manchu Kingdom of China invaded what was then East Turkestan in 1759, were quickly expelled, and invaded permanently once more in 1876. The final invasion of East Turkestan secured for the Manchu Empire its North West border, but also brought East Turkestan firmly under Chinese rather than Turkic influence³
- ❖ In the summer of 2008, the local provincial government of Xinjian passed a series of laws that banned beards, burqas, head scarves, and traditional Turkic-Uyghur caps in government-held spaces, including hospitals. By 2014, these bans became more general; it became a criminal offence to display any such signs in public.⁴
- ❖ Uyghur culture traditionally segregates men and women, though women historically have received religious education in seclusion.
- ❖ Historically, the Uyghurs have had powerful and influential female religious leaders and scholars.
- ❖ After the Cultural Revolution of 1966, the government opened primary schools for both genders in the rural regions inhabited by the Uyghurs, and restricted traditional educational systems.⁵
- ❖ The Chinese government regulates religious education within its borders and does not support female leadership.⁶
- ❖ In 2005, Chinese authorities instituted a program to transfer young women from schools to industrial facilities and factories in eastern China.²

¹ <http://uyghuramerican.org/article/xinjiang-authorities-tighten-controls-over-muslim-women.html>

² <http://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/?p=25292%20Policing%20Uyghur%20Women%E2%80%99s%20Religious%20Expression>

³ <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/uyghur.htm>

⁴ <http://cartogracy.com/conflict/uyghurs>

⁵ <http://homepages.utoledo.edu/nlight/uyghpg.htm>

⁶ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2507435/Uighur-women-defy-Chinas-government-continuing-wear-tiny-Taipak-hats.html>

The EWIC Public Outreach Project is funded by the generous support of the Henry Luce Foundation

EWIC is available from BRILL online: <http://brillonline.com/>

<http://sjoeph.ucdavis.edu/>

June 30, 2014, L.T.