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Exodus of Kashgar

At two time zones from Beijing, a border city, a crossing along the legendary route of the silk, beyond the desert of Taklamakan, in the deep Western China, this is where the city of Kashgar is located or, better, resurrects. The cradle of the Uigurian civilization, this antique city still shines under the boiling sun of Xinjiang as the emblem of resistance, like the last act of witness of a century-old culture that is about to die out crushed by the Chinese government iron grab. The land of silk and spices merchants, Kashgar, has since a long time modified its historical appearance in favor of an unavoidable and probably physiological modernity: the arrival of the railway, of the airport, a reasonable flow of tourism contributed to modify its physiognomy. Despite the evident signs of progress, the strong Islamic faith, the proud Uigurian spirit that one can still breathe in the old districts, seem never to abandon this city. The soul of the Uigurian culture still resists. It resists till when its roots are cut, till when its blood is dried out. And this is exactly what the Chinese government is trying to do. When the Xinjiang population revealed its will to become independent from the rest of China, the central government immediately answered with the intervention of the army: two-hundred Uigurian deaths during the riots in July, 2009. By an act of internal colonialism, Beijing is uprooting the culture of this people in favor of the “official” Chinese culture that uniforms and unifies the whole country under the same flag, the same religion, the same way of thinking and behaving. We might say that in Xinjiang a real ethnic replacement is taking place: the Uigurian are being eradicated in favor of the Hans (the main Chinese ethnical group). The project to erase this century-old culture is affecting also the Kashgar city planning. The plan includes the demolition of the old historical districts, that are UNESCO patrimony. The activity has already started: the old mud and straw walls are being picked down while the bulldozers fill up the truck boxes with the debris. The old craftsmen shops for copper chiseling, wool carding, are destined to disappear forever, together with the colors and perfumes of the old. At the same time, a few kilometers from downtown, Chinese masons work at full rate to construct new buildings that will house the families that automatically decided to move over. The new flats are granted free in exchange of a voluntary move. Otherwise, Beijing will know how to convince the families to change home. In the meantime, under the statue of Mao, who, with his hand stretched out seems to still lead China towards a profitable future, the advertisings of the new districts cover up the walls, leaving a sign of restlessness and concern on the faces of the Uigurians.



The old city of Kashgar, patrimony of UNESCO, is one of the main commercial centres on the silk road since centuries.



This family, currently living in the old Kashgar, falls within the transfer program that the Chinese government is putting forth in order to fully evacuate the town historical centre.



The Islamic-style historical buildings preserve in themselves the perfumes of the markets, the voices of the merchants that have always animated the streets of this fascinating town.



This antique workshop, where copper is processed, is destined to disappear. The program of Beijing is to demolish the whole historical district and, with it, all the handicraft activities that liven it up.



Still today, like centuries ago, the craftsmen chisel and manufacture their products by hand.
Perhaps, they will be able to continue doing this for a short time only.



A wool workshop in the old town.



A part of the historical area has already been pulled down. The workers hit hard with their picks to bring forth the project of the Chinese government for the complete demolition of the old town.



**The power of persuasion of advertising anticipates the forced transfer to the new districts.
Wherever, images of the new peripheral buildings are displayed.**



This woman walks on the debris of her house as if she was looking for the reasons of this destruction.



The powerlessness of this woman in front of the debris of her house is the symbol of the difficulties that the Uigurians are facing in the unequal confrontation with the Beijing government.



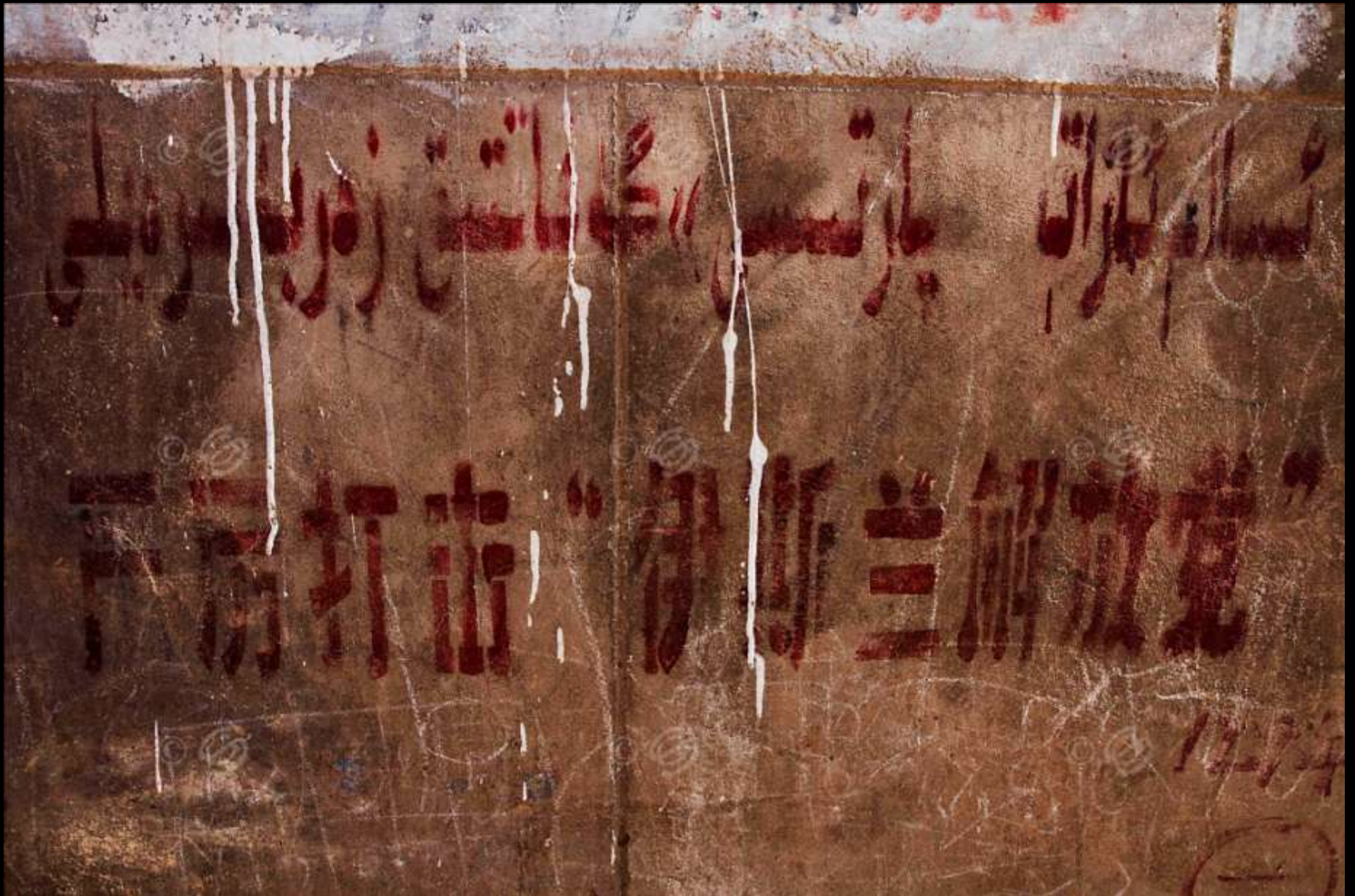
People looks disbelieving at the effects of the “renovation” project that the government is implementing.



Two girls who, to return to their house, are forced to come across the actual aspect of the destructive idea of a government that is completely cancelling their town, their culture and their past, in favour of a future homologated to the will of the main China ethnical group, the Han.



An inside fresco: the Xinjiang is a meeting point between the Far East and the Islamic culture of Central Asia.



A sign of the presence of the Islamic Liberation Party that would like the Xinjiang to be independent from China.



A distressing and discouraging scenario : centuries of history crumbled under the strokes of the Beijing hegemony.



The Chinese government is trying to cancel the century-old culture of the Uigurian population. The exodus that is taking place in Kashgar is just one of the chapter of the history that is marking the Xinjiang.



The bulldozers are demolishing the historical buildings downtown. This man assists powerless to the destruction that is happening in Kashgar.



This man seems to emerge from the debris astonished and incredulous looking for his house.



Two Uighurian girls in the scenario where the Kasghar tragedy is happening.



A woman, on her house terrace, looks incredulous to the scenario around her.



The statue of Mao Tse Tung at the centre of Kashgar seems to lead China toward a prosperous and rich future. Who knows if people from Xinjiang accepts to follow this way that is now putting their history in the hands of Beijing.



The Chinese government puts number one first: the Xinjiang is strategic and Beijing does not even think about a possible scission of this remote western area from the rest of the country.



People looks sceptical at the posters of the new buildings that will rise at the outskirts.



Kashgar is invaded by advertising posters concerning the new buildings in progress. The transmitted idea of a new, modern and fantastic future, does not include the safeguard of the Uigurian cultural essence, but it just considers it an obstacle, a problem to be cancelled.

The new Kashgar: this panoramic wheel seems an invitation to assess the Uigurian issue under a new point of view.





At the town outskirts, the new palaces are nearly ready to welcome the exodus of the refugees.



**Chinese masons working for the construction of new buildings. The work site is open even during the night.
China has no time to loose: the race toward the wellness is a train that nobody can stop.**



A whole district is mushrooming at the outskirts of Kashgar: this is the new idea of China that Beijing is imposing to Xinjiang.