

# Islam in China

## Accommodation or Separation?

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China's Muslims face their second millennium under Chinese rule. Many of the challenges they confront remain the same as they have for the last 1,400 years of continuous interaction with Chinese society, but many are new as a result of China's transformed and increasingly globalized society, and especially the watershed events of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the subsequent "war on terrorism." Muslims in China live as minority communities amid a sea of people who, in their view, are largely pork-eating, polytheist, secularist, and *kafir* (heathen). Nevertheless, many of their small and isolated communities have survived in rather inhospitable circumstances for over a millennium. Though small in population percentage (about 2% in China, 1% in Japan, and less than 1% in Korea), their numbers are nevertheless large in comparison with other Muslim states. For example, there are more Muslims in China than in Malaysia, and more than in every Middle Eastern Muslim nation except Iran, Turkey, and Egypt. East Asia is also increasingly depending on mainly Muslim nations for energy and cheap labor, thus raising the importance of its Muslim diasporic communities for international and domestic relations. Japan has a rather small resident Muslim community, estimated to be less than 10,000, however, recent waves of Middle Eastern and South Asian migrant laborers to Japan's large industrial cities suggest that the total Muslim population in Japan could be nearing the one million mark. Though these communities are temporary in terms of residency, they have as strong an impact on Japan's rather insular society as the Turkish and Kurdish populations in the Scandinavian heartlands (which now have surpassed 10 percent). As Lipman<sup>1</sup> insightfully noted, these long-term Muslim communities have often been

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<sup>1</sup> Lipman 1997, p. 2.

the “familiar strangers” found in small enclaves throughout Asia. And if Kosovo and Bosnia are to serve as lessons, failure to accommodate Muslim minorities can lead to national dismemberment and international intervention. Indeed, China’s primary objection to NATO involvement in Kosovo centered on its fear that this might encourage the aiding and abetting of separatists, with independence groups in Xinjiang 新疆, Tibet, and perhaps Taiwan, clearly a major Chinese concern.

This paper will seek to examine Muslim minority identity in Asia with specific reference to China, not only because it is where this author has conducted most of his research, but also because with the largest Muslim minority in East Asia, China’s Muslims are clearly the most threatened in terms of self-preservation and Islamic identity. However, it is hoped that lessons gleaned from the Chinese case might be useful for other Muslim communities in East Asia, and perhaps elsewhere in Asia as well. Most relevant is the thesis put forth that successful Muslim accommodation to minority status in Asia can be seen to be a measure of the extent to which Muslim groups allow the reconciliation of the dictates of Islamic culture to their host culture, be it Chinese, Japanese, Korean, or other. This goes against the opposite view that can be found in the writings of some analysts of Islam in China, such as Raphael Israeli and Michael Dillon, that Islam in the region is inherently rebellious and that Muslims as minorities are always problematic to the security of a non-Muslim state.<sup>2</sup>

## Islam in China

Islam in China has primarily been propagated over the last 1,300 years among the people now known as “Hui” 回, but many of the issues confronting them are relevant to the Turkic and Indo-European Muslims on China’s Inner Asian frontier. “Hui teaching” (Huijiao 回教) was the term once used in Chinese to indicate “Islam” in general, and probably derives from an early Chinese rendering of the term for the modern Uighur people. According to the reasonably accurate 1990 national census of China, the total Muslim population is 17.6 million, including: Hui (8,602,978); Uighur (7,214,431); Kazakh (1,111,718); Dongxiang 东乡 (373,872); Kyrgyz (141,549); Salar (87,697); Tajik (33,538); Uzbek (14,502); Bonan (12,212); and Tatar (4,873). The Hui speak mainly Si-

<sup>2</sup> Israeli 1978; Dillon 1997.

no-Tibetan languages; Turkic-language speakers include the Uighur, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Tatar; combined Turkic-Mongolian speakers include the Dongxiang, Salar, and Bonan (Bao'an 保安), concentrated in Gansu's 甘肃 mountainous Hexi 河西 corridor; and the Tajik speak a variety of Indo-Persian dialects. It is important to note, however, that the Chinese census registered people by nationality, not religious affiliation, so the actual number of Muslims is still unknown, and that all population figures are influenced by politics in their use and interpretation.

While the Hui have been labeled the "Chinese-speaking Muslims", "Chinese Muslims", and most recently, as "Sino-Muslims",<sup>3</sup> this is misleading since by law all Muslims living in China are "Chinese" by citizenship, and many Hui speak many of the non-Chinese languages where they live, such as the Tibetan, Mongolian, Thai, and Hainan 海南 Muslims, who are also classified by the state as Hui. Yet most Hui are closer to the Han Chinese than the other Muslim nationalities in terms of demographic proximity and cultural accommodation, adapting many of their Islamic practices to Han ways of life, which has often become the source for many of the criticisms of Muslim reformers. In the past, this was not as great a problem for the Turkish and Indo-European Muslim groups, as they were traditionally more isolated from the Han and their identities not as threatened, though this has begun to change in the last forty years. As a result of state-sponsored nationality identification campaigns over the course of the last thirty years, these groups have begun to think of themselves more as ethnic nationalities, something more than just "Muslims". The Hui are unique among the fifty-five identified nationalities in China in that they are the only nationality for whom religion (Islam) is the only unifying category of identity, even though many members of the Hui nationality may not practice Islam.

Resulting from a succession of Islamic reform movements that swept across China over the last 600 years, one finds among the Muslims in China today a wide spectrum of Islamic belief. Archaeological discoveries of large collections of Islamic artifacts and epigraphy on the southeast coast suggest that the earliest Muslim communities in China were descended from Arab, Persian, Central Asian, and Mongolian Muslim merchants, militia, and officials who settled first along China's

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<sup>3</sup> For the debate over the definition of Hui and reference to them as "Sino-Muslims", see Lipman 1997, p. xxiv.

southeast coast from the seventh to tenth centuries, and then in larger migrations to the north from Central Asia under the Mongol Yuan dynasty in the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries, gradually intermarrying with the local Chinese populations, and raising their children as Muslims. Practicing Sunni, Hanafi Islam, residing in independent small communities clustered around a central mosque, these communities were characterized by relatively isolated, independent Islamic villages and urban enclaves that related with each other via trading networks and recognition of belonging to the wider Islamic *umma*, headed by an *ahong* 阿訇 (also written 阿洪, or *aheng* 阿衡, from the Persian, *akhond* = preacher) who was invited to teach on a more or less temporary basis.

Sufism began to make a substantial impact in China proper in the late seventeenth century, arriving mainly along the Central Asian trade routes with saintly *shaykhs*, both Chinese and foreign, who brought new teachings from the pilgrimage cities. These charismatic teachers and tradesmen established widespread networks and brotherhood associations, including most prominently the Naqshbandiyya, Qadiriyya, and Kubrawiyya. The hierarchical organization of these Sufi networks helped in the mobilization of large numbers of Hui during economic and political crises in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, assisting widespread Muslim-led rebellions and resistance movements against late Ming and Qing imperial rule in Yunnan 云南, Shanxi 山西, Gansu, and Xinjiang. The 1912 nationalist revolution allowed further autonomy in Muslim concentrated regions of the northwest, and wide areas came under virtual Muslim warlord control, leading to frequent intra-Muslim and Muslim-Han conflicts until the eventual communist victory led to the reassertion of central control. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Wahhabi-inspired reform movements, known as the Yiheiwani 依黑瓦尼 (also written 伊黑瓦尼, or Yihewani 伊赫瓦尼, from the Arabic *Ikhwan* = brethren, viz. *Ikhwan al-Muslimin* = Muslim brothers), rose to popularity under nationalist and warlord sponsorship, and were noted for their critical stance toward traditionalist Islam as too acculturated to Chinese practices, and Sufism as too attached to saint and tomb veneration. These movements of Islam influenced all Muslim nationalities in China today; however, they found their most political expression among the Hui who were faced with the task of accommodating each new Islamic movement with Chinese culture. Among the northwestern Muslim communities, especially the Uighur, their more recent integration into Chinese society as a result of Mongo-

lian and Manchu expansion into Central Asian has forced them to reach social and political accommodations that have challenged their identity. In terms of integration, the Uighur as a people represent perhaps the least integrated into Chinese society, while the Hui are at the other end of the spectrum, due to several historical and social factors that I will discuss below.

### **Uighur Indigeneity and the Challenge to Chinese Sovereignty**

In 1997, bombs exploded in a city park in Beijing on 13 May (killing one) and on two buses on 7 March (killing two), as well as in the north-western border city of Urumqi (Wulumuqi 乌鲁木齐), the capital of Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, on 25 February (killing nine), with over thirty other bombings in 1996, six in Tibet alone. Most of these are thought to have been related to demands by Muslim and Tibetan separatists. Eight members of the Uighur Muslim minority were executed on 29 May 1997 for alleged bombings in northwest China, with hundreds arrested on suspicion of taking part in ethnic riots and engaging in separatist activities. Though sporadically reported since the early 1980s, such incidents have been increasingly common since 1997 and are documented in a recent scathing report of Chinese government policy in the region by Amnesty International.<sup>4</sup> A very recent report in the *Wall Street Journal* of the arrest on 11 August 1999 of Rebiya Kadeer, a well-known Uighur business woman, during a visit by the United States Congressional Research Service delegation to the region, indicates China's random arrests have not diminished since the report, nor is China concerned with Western criticism.<sup>5</sup>

As we consider the interaction of Uighur Muslims with Chinese society, we must examine three interrelated aspects of regional history, economy, and politics. First, Chinese histories notwithstanding, every Uighur firmly believes that his ancestors were the indigenous people of the Tarim basin, which did not become known in Chinese as Xinjiang ("new dominion") until the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, I have argued elsewhere that the constructed "ethnogenesis" of the Uighur, the current national identity of the people today known as the Uighur, is a rather recent phenomenon related to Great Game rivalries, Sino-So-

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<sup>4</sup> AI 1999.

<sup>5</sup> *WSJ* 1999.

viet geopolitical maneuverings, and Chinese nation-building.<sup>6</sup> While a collection of nomadic steppe peoples known as the “Uighur” existed from before the eighth century, this identity was lost from the fifteenth to twentieth centuries. It was not until the fall of the Turkish Khanate (552–744 C.E.) to a people reported by the Chinese historians as Huihe 回纥 or Huihu 回鹘 that we find the beginnings of the Uighur Empire. At this time the Uighur were but one collection of nine nomadic tribes, who, initially in confederation with other Basmil and Karlukh nomads, defeated the Second Turkish Khanate and then dominated the federation under the leadership of Koli Beile in 742.

Gradual sedentarization of the Uighur, and their defeat of the Turkish Khanate, occurred precisely as trade with the unified Tang state became especially lucrative. Sedentarization and interaction with the Chinese state was accompanied by socio-religious change: the traditional shamanistic Turkic-speaking Uighur came increasingly under the influence of Persian Manichaeism, Buddhism, and eventually, Nestorian Christianity. Extensive trade and military alliances along the old Silk Road with the Chinese state developed to the extent that the Uighur gradually adopted cultural, dress and even agricultural practices of the Chinese. Conquest of the Uighur capital of Karabalghasun in Mongolia by the nomadic Kyrgyz in 840, without rescue from the Tang who may have become by then intimidated by the wealthy Uighur empire, led to further sedentarization and crystallization of Uighur identity. One branch that ended up in what is now Turfan took advantage of the unique socioecology of the glacier-fed oases surrounding the Taklamakan and were able to preserve their merchant and limited agrarian practices, gradually establishing Khocho or Gaochang 高昌, the great Uighur city-state based in Turfan for four centuries (850–1250).

The Islamicization of the Uighur from the tenth to as late as the seventeenth centuries, while displacing their Buddhist religion, did little to bridge these oases-based loyalties. From that time on, the people of “Uighuristan” centered in Turfan who resisted Islamic conversion until the seventeenth century were the last to be known as Uighur. The others were known only by their oasis or by the generic term of “Turki.” With the arrival of Islam, the ethnonym “Uighur” fades from the historical record. It was not until 1760 that the Manchu Qing dynasty exerted full and formal control over the region, establishing it as their “new do-

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<sup>6</sup> Gladney 1990, p. 3.

minions" (Xinjiang), an administration that lasted barely one hundred years when it fell to the Yakub Beg rebellion (1864-1877) and expanding Russian influence.<sup>7</sup> The end of the Qing dynasty and the rise of Great Game rivalries between China, Russia, and Britain saw the region torn by competing loyalties and marked by two short-lived and drastically different attempts at independence: the short-lived proclamations of an "East Turkestan Republic" in Kashgar in 1933 and another in Yining 伊宁 (Ghulje) in 1944.<sup>8</sup> As Andrew Forbes has noted, these rebellions and attempts at self-rule did little to bridge competing political, religious, and regional differences within the Turkic people who became known as the Uighur in 1934 under successive Chinese Kuomintang 国民党 (KMT) warlord administrations.<sup>9</sup> Justin Rudelson's<sup>10</sup> recent work suggests there is persistent regional diversity along three, and perhaps four macro-regions: the northwestern Zungaria plateau, the southern Tarim basin, the southwest Pamir region, and the eastern Kumul-Turfan-Hami corridor. The recognition of the Uighur as an official Chinese "nationality" (*minzu* 民族) in the 1930s in Xinjiang under a Soviet-influenced policy of nationality recognition contributed to the widespread acceptance today of continuity with the ancient Uighur kingdom and their eventual "ethnogenesis" as a bona fide nationality. The "nationality" policy under the KMT identified five peoples of China, with the Han in the majority. This policy was continued under the Communists, they eventually recognizing fifty-six nationalities, with the Han occupying a 91 percent majority in 1990.

The "peaceful liberation" by the Chinese Communists of Xinjiang in 1949, and its subsequent establishment of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region on 1 October 1955, perpetuated the Nationalist policy of recognizing the Uighur as a minority nationality under Chinese rule.<sup>11</sup> This nationality designation not only masks tremendous regional and linguistic diversity, it also includes groups such as the Loplyk and Dolans that have very little to do with the oasis-based Turkic Muslims who became known as the Uighur. At the same time, contemporary Uighur separatists look back to the brief periods of independent self-rule under Yakub Beg and the Eastern Turkestan Republics, in addition to

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<sup>7</sup> For the best treatment of the Yakub Beg rebellion, see Kim 1986.

<sup>8</sup> Benson 1990.

<sup>9</sup> Forbes 1986, p. 29.

<sup>10</sup> Rudelson 1997.

<sup>11</sup> Shahidi 1984, p. 244.



the earlier glories of the Uighur kingdoms in Turfan and Karabalghasun, as evidence of their rightful claims to the region. Contemporary Uighur separatist organizations based in Istanbul, Ankara, Almaty, Munich, Amsterdam, Melbourne, and Washington, D.C., may differ on their political goals and strategies for the region, but they all share a common vision of a unilineal Uighur claim on the region, disrupted by Chinese and Soviet intervention. The independence of the former Soviet Central Asian Republics in 1991 has done much to encourage these Uighur organizations in their hopes for an independent “Turkestan”, despite the fact the new, mainly Muslim Central Asian governments have all signed protocols with China in the spring of 1996 that they would not harbor or support separatist groups.

Within the region, though many portray the Uighur as united around separatist or Islamist causes, Uighur continue to be divided from within by religious conflicts, in this case competing Sufi and non-Sufi factions, territorial loyalties (whether they be oases or places of origin), linguistic discrepancies, commoner-elite alienation, and competing political loyalties. These divided loyalties were evidenced by the attack in May 1996 on the *imam* of the Idgah Mosque in Kashgar by other Uighurs, as well as the assassination of at least six Uighur officials in September 1996. It is also important to note that Islam was only one of several unifying markers for Uighur identity, depending on those with whom they were in cooperation at the time. For example, to the Hui Muslim Chinese, the Uighur distinguish themselves as the legitimate autochthonous minority, since both share a belief in Sunni Islam. In contrast to the nomadic Muslim peoples (Kazakh or Kyrgyz), Uighur stress their attachment to the land and oasis of origin. In opposition to the Han Chinese, the Uighur will generally emphasize their long history in the region. This suggests that Islamic fundamentalist groups such as that of Taliban in Afghanistan (often glossed as “Wahhabiyya” in the region) will have only limited appeal among the Uighur. It is this contested understanding of history that continues to influence much of the current debate over separatist and Chinese claims to the region.

Amnesty International has claimed that the round-ups of so-called terrorists and separatists have led to hurried public trials and immediate, summary executions of possibly thousands of locals. One Amnesty International estimate suggested that in a country known for its frequent executions, Xinjiang had the highest number, averaging 1.8 per week, most of them Uighur. Troop movements to the area, related to the



nationwide campaign against crime known as “Strike Hard” launched in 1998 that includes the call to erect a “great wall of steel” against separatists in Xinjiang, have reportedly been the largest since the suppression of the large Akto insurrection in April 1990 (the first major uprising in Xinjiang that took place in the Southern Tarim region near Baren Township, which initiated a series of unrelated and sporadic protests). Alleged incursions of Taliban fighters through the Wakhan corridor into China where Xinjiang shares a narrow border with Afghanistan have led to the area being swamped with Chinese security forces and large military exercises, beginning at least one month prior to the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack. These military exercises suggest that there was growing government concern about these border areas even before the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack. Recently, under US and Chinese pressure, Pakistan returned one Uighur activist to China, apprehended among hundreds of Taliban detainees, which follows a pattern of repatriations of suspected Uighur separatists in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan.

International campaigns for Uighur rights and possible independence have become increasingly vocal and well organized, especially on the internet. Repeated public appeals have been made to Abdulahat Abdurixit, the Uighur People’s Government Chairman of Xinjiang in Urumqi. Notably, the elected chair of the Unrepresented Nations and People’s Organization (UNPO) based in The Hague is a Uighur, Erkin Alptekin, son of the separatist leader, Isa Yusuf Alptekin, who is buried in Istanbul where there is a park dedicated to his memory. Supporting primarily an audience of approximately one million expatriate Uighurs (yet few Uighurs in Central Asia and China have access to these internet sites) there are at least twenty-five international organizations and web sites working for the independence of “Eastern Turkestan” based in Amsterdam, Munich, Istanbul, Melbourne, Washington, D.C. and New York. Since September 11<sup>th</sup>, each of these organizations has disclaimed any support for violence or terrorism, pressing for a peaceful resolution of on-going conflicts in the region. The growing influence of “cyber-separatism” and international popularization of the Uighur cause concerns Chinese authorities, who hope to convince the world that the Uighurs do pose a real domestic and international terrorist threat.

The second pressing issue is economic. Since 1991, China has been a net oil importer. It also has 20 million Muslims. Mishandling of its Muslim problems will alienate trading partners in the Middle East, who

are primarily Muslims. Already, after an ethnic riot on 5 February 1997 in the northwestern Xinjiang city of Yining, which left at least nine Uighur Muslims dead and several hundreds arrested, the Saudi Arabian official newspaper *al-Bilad* warned China about the “suffering of [its] Muslims whose human rights are violated”. Turkey’s Defense Minister Turhan Tayan officially condemned China’s handling of the issue, and China responded by telling Turkey to not interfere in China’s internal affairs. Muslim nations on China’s borders, including the new Central Asian states, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, though officially unsupportive of Uighur separatists, may be increasingly critical of harsh treatment extended to fellow Turkic and/or Muslim co-religionists in China.

Unrest in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region may lead to a decline in outside oil investment and revenues, that are already operating at a loss. Recently, Exxon reported that its two wells came up dry in China’s supposedly oil-rich Tarim basin of southern Xinjiang, with the entire region yielding only 3.15 million metric tons of crude oil, much less than China’s overall output of 156 million tons. The World Bank loans over US\$3 billion a year to China, investing over US\$780.5 million in fifteen projects in the Xinjiang Region alone, with some of that money allegedly going to the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) that human rights activist Harry Wu has claimed employs prison (*laogai* 劳改) labor. International companies and organizations, from the World Bank to Exxon may not wish to subject its employees and investors to social and political upheavals.

Most China-Central Asia trade is between Xinjiang and Kazakhstan (Xinjiang’s largest trading partner by far). From 1990 to 1992, Kazakhstan’s imports from China rose from just under 4 percent to 44 percent of its total. About half of China-Kazakh trade is on a barter basis. Through 1995, China was Kazakhstan’s fifth largest trade partner, behind Russia, Holland, Germany, and Switzerland. By 2000, China was only eclipsed by Russia in trade with Kazakhstan. By 2001, Kazakh exports to China reached US\$ 1 billion, and occupies 77 percent of all Central Asia-China trade. In 2002, China imported nearly 19,600 barrels per day of crude oil from Kazakhstan by rail, representing 1.4 percent of its total imports. Just as Kazakhstan seeks other outlets for its oil besides Russia, China seeks other import sources besides a few countries in the Middle East, where Oman is the source of 70 percent of China’s Middle East oil. In June 2003, Hu Jintao 胡锦涛 signaled the importance of the relationship by making Kazakhstan his third foreign trip as the

new President of China. Interestingly, although there are over 1.3 million Kazakhs in northwestern Xinjiang, there has been no separatist incidents among the Kazakhs or efforts to unite with Kazakhstan, despite the fact that in 1962 Kazakhs outnumbered the Uighur when a large population fled to the USSR during the Sino-Soviet split.

China's trade with Kyrgyzstan has also increased rapidly, though pales in comparison to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Through 1995, Kyrgyzstan was Xinjiang's third largest trading partner, after Kazakhstan and Hong Kong, but it has declined in recent years. Nevertheless, the strategic importance of the Kyrgyz-China relationship has increased due to China's concerns over the development of US and Russian airbases near Bishkek, in Manas and Kant. The SCO anti-terrorism office is headquartered in Bishkek, and the Kyrgyz ambassador to China, Muratbek Imanaliev, who speaks fluent Chinese, has worked hard to build a close relationship.

As early as 1992, China ranked as Uzbekistan's leading non-CIS trading partner. Since then, bilateral trade has increased by as much as 127 percent per year, making Uzbekistan China's second largest Central Asian trading partner. Despite the fact that Uzbekistan does not share a border with China and they were the last country invited to join the SCO, this may be one of the most promising economic relationships developing in Central Asia. The large and relatively affluent Uzbek population will eagerly purchase Chinese goods once remaining border restrictions are relaxed and better transportation is built. In addition, China's Uzbeks, though numbering only 14,000, are extremely affluent and well-educated. They have begun to play an important role in building cross-border ties.

Bilateral trade with Tajikistan increased nearly ninefold from 1992 to 1995. However, with much of Tajikistan still embroiled in the Afghan conflict, and the country suffering from a deteriorating standard of living, trade dropped by half in 1996. Though US investment has increased due to the Afghan war, its "gas-n-go" military relationship with the country may be transitory. China is clearly the only major country in the region that is poised to bring significant investment, particularly with Tajikistan's vast water and mineral resources. Trade between China and Turkmenistan has also risen rapidly. Due to its "positive neutrality" policy, Turkmenistan is not a member of the SCO, though energy trade with China will grow considerably in the near future. China is expected to eventually import Turkmen gas to satisfy the growing

energy requirements in the northwest corner of the country. The sale of natural gas accounts for 60.3 percent of the total volume of Turkmen exports. The ambitious 8,000 km Trans-Asian Turkmenistan-China-Japan gas pipeline suggests that China's ties to the country will increase dramatically in the next decade. This Turkmenistan-China-Japan natural gas pipeline, part of the envisaged "Energy Silk Route" which would connect Central Asia's rich gas fields with northeast Asian users, demonstrates the potential for cooperation among countries. But it also highlights the growing importance of international companies – in this case Mitsubishi and Exxon – in financing and influencing the course of oil and gas development in the region. With a potential price tag of US\$22.6 billion, this pipeline – as well as many smaller and less costly ones – would not be possible without foreign participation. Hence, the "new Great Game" between China and Central Asia involves many more players than the largely three-way Great Game of the nineteenth century. Yet these new international corporate forces do not supersede local ethnic ties and connections that extend back for centuries.

While the increasing trade between Central Asia and China is noteworthy, it reflects China's rapidly growing trade with the entire world: trade with Central Asia increased by 25 percent from 1992 to 1994, and by 35 percent from 1995–2000; during the same period total Chinese trade increased almost twice as fast. In fact, during 1995, only 0.28 percent of China's US\$ 280.8 billion overseas trade involved the five Central Asian republics, about the same as with Austria or Denmark.<sup>12</sup> Despite the small trade values China is clearly a giant in the region, investing nearly US\$1 billion last year, and it will continue to play a major role in Central Asia's foreign economic relations. For example, China's two-way trade with Kazakhstan is greater than Turkey's trade with all five Central Asian republics. This is so even though predominantly Muslim Central Asia is of a much higher priority for Turkey than for China.

It is clear that Uighur separatism or Muslim complaints regarding Chinese policy will have important consequences for China's economic development of the region. Tourists and foreign businessmen will certainly avoid areas with ethnic strife and terrorist activities. China will continue to use its economic leverage with its Central Asian neighbors and Russia to prevent such disruptions.

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<sup>12</sup> See Dorian/Wigdortz/Gladney 1997.

The third aspect is political. China's international relations with its bordering nations and internal regions such as Xinjiang and Tibet have become increasingly important not only for the economic reasons discussed above, but also for China's desire to participate in international organizations such as the World Trade Organization and Asia-Pacific Economic Council. Though Tibet is no longer of any real strategic or substantial economic value to China, it is politically important to China's current leadership to indicate that they will not submit to foreign pressure and withdraw its iron hand from Tibet. Uighurs have begun to work closely with Tibetans internationally to put political pressure on China in international fora. In an interview held in Istanbul on 7 April 1997 by this author with Ahmet Türköz, vice-director of the Eastern Turkestan Foundation that works for an independent Uighur homeland, he noted that since 1981, meetings had been taking place between the Dalai Lama and Uighur leaders, initiated by the deceased Uighur nationalist Isa Yusuf Alptekin. These international fora cannot force China to change its policy, any more than the annual debate in the U.S. over the renewal of China's Most-Favored Nation status can. Nevertheless, they continue to influence China's ability to cooperate internationally. As a result, China has sought to respond rapidly, and often militarily, to domestic ethnic affairs that might have international implications.

As China has gone through the process since 1997 of reintegrating Hong Kong, harboring the hope of eventually reuniting with Taiwan, residents of Hong Kong and Taiwan will be watching how China deals with other problems of national integration. During the Dalai Lama's March 1998 visit to Taiwan, he again renounced Tibet's independence, calling for China to consider Tibet under the same "two systems, one country" policy as Hong Kong, yet the People's Daily continued to call him a "separatist". Taiwan will certainly be watching how well Hong Kong is integrated into China as a "Special Administrative Region" with a true separate system of government, as opposed to Tibet and Xinjiang, which as so-called "Autonomous Regions" have very little actual autonomy from decision-makers in Beijing. China's handling of ethnic and integrationist issues in Xinjiang and Hong Kong will have a direct bearing on its possible reunification with Taiwan.

In addition, outside of the official minorities, China possesses tremendous ethnic, linguistic, and regional diversity. Intolerance toward difference in Xinjiang might be extended to limiting cultural pluralism in Guangdong 广东, where at least fifteen dialects of Cantonese are

spoken and folk religious practice is rampant. Memories are strong of the repressions of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), when all forms of diversity, political or cultural, were severely curtailed. If rising Chinese nationalism entails reducing ethnic and cultural difference, then anyone who is regarded as “other” in China will suffer, not just the Uighurs.

### **Hui Muslims and Islamic Accommodation to Chinese Society**

As a result of the history of Islamic reform movements that have swept across China, the Hui continue to subscribe to a wide spectrum of Islamic belief. The variety of religious orders within Hui Islam represent a long history of reforms and Islamic movements that resulted from interaction with the Islamic world. The late Joseph Fletcher<sup>13</sup> was the first to suggest that the nature of China’s present-day Islamic communities and orders can be traced to successive “tides” of influence and individuals who entered China during critical periods of exchange with the outside world. Like a swelling and ebbing tide, the influence of these movements grew or diminished with the interaction of China’s Muslims and the Islamic world. This influence was not based on population migrations as much as gradual and profound exchange between the two regions. While this study does not begin to address Islam’s complex history in China, an introduction to the context of Islamic reforms is necessary for an understanding of the rise of fundamentalism in China. Each of these tides can be considered successive reform movements in that they all seek to transform Islam in China, accommodating Chinese culture with Islamic requirements, in reference to textual and discursive standards in the Middle East as discovered by Muslims from China on the *hajj* or preached by peripatetic Middle Eastern representatives of these movements in China. What many of the Muslims in China did not recognize, however, was that just as Islam in China had shifted over time on the periphery, so had the so-called “center” in the Middle East. The somewhat quixotic quest of these Muslims at the distant edge of Islamic influence for the fundamentals of their faith, and the dialectic interaction between periphery and center, engendered the rise of a series of reformist tides that washed across the China Islamic hinterland. This is parallel to similar reform movements among all Muslims in Asia

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<sup>13</sup> Fletcher 1988.

that are on its periphery in relation to the Meccan heartlands. Just as Muslims in the Middle East “peripheralize” those in the wider diaspora as not “truly Muslims” (especially those not conversant in Arabic), Muslims in Asia often homogenize all Middle Eastern Muslims as Arabs and Sunni. This reflects a kind of “oriental orientalism”, a rather facetious term I employed in an earlier article<sup>14</sup>, to describe the process whereby Muslims and minorities exoticize their own communities for purposes of pride and sometimes profit.

### **The First Tide: Gedimu Traditional Chinese Islam**

The earliest Muslim communities were descended from the Arab, Persian, Central Asian, and Mongolian Muslim merchants, militia and officials who settled along China’s southeast coast and in the northwest in large and small numbers from the seventh to the fourteenth centuries. Generally residing in independent small communities clustered around a central mosque, they became known as the Gedimu 格迪目 (from the Arabic *qadim*, “old”). For these communities, it was Sunni, Hanafi Islam that became so standard that few Hui with whom I spoke in the northwest had even heard of Shi’ism, even though the Iran/Iraq war was at its height during my fieldwork and in the daily news.

These “old” Islamic communities established an early Hui pattern of zealously preserving and protecting their identity as enclaves enconced in the dominant Han society. Each village was centered upon a single mosque headed by an *ahong* who was invited to teach on a more or less temporary basis. These *ahongs* generally moved on an average of every three years from one mosque to another. A council of senior local elders and *ahongs* were responsible for the affairs of each village and the inviting of the itinerant *imam*. Late nineteenth century and early twentieth century travelers noted the maintenance of these isolated communities. “I know of no strictly farming village where there is an equal mixture of the two groups [Han and Hui];” Ekvall<sup>15</sup> observed, “in every case the village is predominantly one or the other. In some instances, the population is composed almost entirely of one group, with only a few hangers-on of the other.” He goes on to suggest that due to different cultural, ritual, and dietary preferences that sometimes led to

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<sup>14</sup> Gladney 1994a, pp. 113–114.

<sup>15</sup> Ekvall 1939, p. 19.



open conflict, the communities preferred physical separation. Another frequent northwest traveler noted:

In some districts throughout the province [Gansu] the Moslems are found in such numbers as to outnumber the Chinese in the proportion of seven to one. Again, in other districts it is possible to travel for days without coming across one Moslem family, and in such districts it would be next to impossible for a Moslem family to settle. ...To find Chinese and Moslems living harmoniously intermingled is but on the rarest occasion.<sup>16</sup>

This isolation was mitigated somewhat during the collectivization campaigns in the 1950s, when Han and Hui villages were often administered as clusters by a single commune. They have also been brought closer together through national telecommunications and transportation networks established by the state, including such umbrella organizations as the Chinese Islamic Organization, established in 1955, which seeks to coordinate religious affairs among all Muslim groups. With the recent dismantling of the commune in many areas, however, these homogeneous Hui communities are once again becoming more segregated. While these disparate communities among the Gedimu were generally linked only by trade and a sense of a common religious heritage, an attachment to the basic Islamic beliefs as handed down to them by their ancestors, it was the entry of the Sufi brotherhoods into China that eventually began to link many of these isolated communities together through extensive socio-religious networks.

### **The Second Tide: Sufi Communities and National Networks**

Sufism did not begin to make a substantial impact in China until the late seventeenth century, during the “second tide” of Islam’s entrance into China. Like Sufi centers that proliferated after the thirteenth century in other countries,<sup>17</sup> many of these Sufi movements in China developed socio-economic and religio-political institutions built around the schools established by descendants of early Sufi saintly leaders. The institutions became known in Chinese as the *menhuan* 门宦, the “leading” or “saintly” descent groups.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew 1921, p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> Trimmingham 1971, p. 10.

The important contribution that Sufism made to religious organization in China was that the leaders of mosques throughout their order owed their allegiance to their *shaykh*, the founder of the order who appointed them. These designated followers were loyal to the leader of their order and remained in the community for long periods of time, unlike the Gedimu *ahongs* who were generally itinerant, not well connected to the community, and less imbued with appointed authority. Gedimu mosque elders were loyal to their village first, and connected only by trade to other communities. While it is beyond this paper to delineate the history and distribution of these Sufi *menhuan*, Joseph Fletcher's cogent introductory discussion of their development is worth citing:

Over the course of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries a considerable number of these "saintly lineages" came into being in northwest China, most of them within the Naqshbandi "path". Typically, each saint's tomb had a shrine, or *qubba* (Chinese *gongbai* or *gongbei* 拱北), and the main shrines became centers of devotional activity. The "saintly lineages" obtained contributions from their followers and amassed substantial amounts of property. The growth in the number and importance of the *menhuan* represented an important change, because they gradually replaced the "old" (Gedimu) pattern by linking together the *menhuan* adherents all over the northwest. The widening compass of social integration that resulted made it easier for the "saintly lineages" and other leaders to harness the Muslims' political and economic potential, facilitating the rise of Muslim warlordism in that region in the twentieth century.<sup>18</sup>

Many Sufi reforms spread throughout northwest China during the early decades of the Qing dynasty (mid-seventeenth to the early eighteenth centuries). Increased travel and communication between Muslims, both east and west, during what Fletcher terms the "general orthodox revival" of the eighteenth century, had great influence on Muslims from West Africa to Indonesia, and not least of all, on China's Hui Muslims.<sup>19</sup> Exposure to these new ideas led to a reformulation of traditional Islamic concepts that rendered them more meaningful and practical for the Hui Muslims of that time. While it is socio-economic organization that was perhaps Sufism's most lasting contribution to Islam in China, the original contest between Sufis and non-Sufis was over much more prac-

<sup>18</sup> Fletcher 1988, p. 15.

<sup>19</sup> See Voll 1982, pp. 33–86.

tical turf. Sufis criticized traditional Muslims as being too materialistic, bound to their mosques, criticized the burning of incense to ancestors, and their lack of proficiency in the original texts. They condemned the non-Sufis for their use of Chinese in worship, adorning their mosques with Quranic quotations and *hadith* on colorful banners and flags. They condemned the Muslims for wearing traditional Chinese white funeral dress and sullyng Islam with many other Chinese cultural practices, calling for a purified return to the ascetic ideals of the Prophet and his Sufi followers. They also offered a more immediate experience of Islam through the rituals of remembrance and meditation, and the efficacy of the saint, instead of the daunting memorization and recitation of Quranic texts. While theirs was a reformist movement, it was less textual than experiential, revealing the power of Allah and his saints to transform one's life through miracles, healings, and other transformative acts.

Sufi orders were gradually institutionalized into such forms as the *menhuan*. Only four orders maintain significant influence among the Hui today, as Claude Pickens<sup>20</sup>, a Protestant missionary in northwest China, first discovered as the four *menhuan* of China: the Qadiriyya, Khufiyya, Jahriyya, and Kubrawiyya. While these are the four main *menhuan*, they are subdivided into a myriad of smaller branch solidarities, divided along ideological, political, geographical and historical lines. A detailed history of these divisions and alliances would reveal the tensions and new meanings created by Hui communities as they attempted to reconcile perceived disparities between the indigenous practice of Islam in China with the Islamic ideals as represented by returned *hajji* or itinerant foreign preachers who maintained, in their eyes, more "orthodox" interpretations of Islam.

It is unfortunate, but perhaps quite natural that Western scholarship has prolonged the confusion of early Chinese writers over the rise of Sufism and later Islamic orders in China. As each Islamic reformer established a new following in China, often in conflict with other older Islamic orders, these "new" arrivals replaced or converted the "old" traditional Islamic communities. Chinese officials during the Ming and the Qing naturally referred to these communities with their new teachings as *xinjiao* 新教 (lit., "new religion" or "teaching", not "new sect" as it has been erroneously translated). As each new arrival replaced

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<sup>20</sup> Pickens 1942.

the older, they became known as the “new”, or even “new new” teachings (*xinxinjiao* 新新教), as in the case of the arrival of the Ikhwan in China. Traditional Islam among the Hui generally was referred to as *laojiao* 老教, the old teaching(s), and even some orders that were new at one time, when others arrived were gradually classed as old, *laojiao*, which is the case with the Khufiyya, an early Naqshbandiyya Sufi order, which itself is now classified as an “old teaching” (see below). It was often the case that those who regarded themselves as maintaining the established traditional beliefs of Islam in China represented the reformers as “new”, and thus, suspect, whereas they saw themselves as “old”, or more true to their traditions. The reformers, on the other hand, generally thought of themselves as the more orthodox, based on their more informed, sometimes esoteric, interpretations of Islam due to their recent contact with movements in the Muslim heartlands. They thus resented the title of “new teachings”, or the even more derisive “new new teachings”, calling themselves by the more exact names of their orders, Qadiriyya, Naqshbandiyya, Wahhabi, Ikhwan, etc., but the names “new teaching” or “new sect” stuck as it was applied by their critics who supported the state. Even the name Gedimu, depicting the “older” Islamic communities in China, is a not-so-subtle jibe at the other Islamic orders as being *newer*, and thus removed from the traditional fundamentals of Islam in China.

These designations became important politically as well as theologically in that during the mid-nineteenth century northwest rebellions, some of which were led by Sufi leaders, the Chinese state proscribed all of those movements that had become known as “new teachings” in order to root out the more rebellious Hui communities. This is precisely the rationale whereby all Buddhist sectarian movements were proscribed under the general rubric of the “White Lotus” rebellion in China, although recent scholarship has revealed that only a few Buddhist movements fell under the shadow of that stem.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, Chinese and Western scholars perpetuated these designations and until recently there were no accurate descriptions of Hui Islamic orders in China.<sup>22</sup> The post-1979 opening of China to the West has allowed the appearance of Chinese publications on these groups as well as Western

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<sup>21</sup> Harrell/Perry 1982, pp. 283–305; Naquin 1976.

<sup>22</sup> See Israeli 1978, pp. 155–180.

fieldwork for the first time, giving us a better glimpse into their origins and socio-religious complexity.

## The Qadiriyya

While there is some dispute among the Sufis themselves as to which order was the earliest to enter China proper, as there had been regular contacts on an individual basis with the Sufi orders of Central Asia that had already begun to proliferate in Xinjiang in the early part of the fifteenth century, it is generally agreed that one of the earliest to be established firmly on Chinese soil was the Qadiri *tariqa* (“path”, or Islamic “order”). The founder of the Qadiriyya *menhuan* in China is Qi Jingyi 祁静一 (Hilal ad-Din, 1656–1719). Known among the Hui as Qi Daozu 祁道祖 (Grand Master Qi), he was buried in Linxia’s 临夏 “great tomb” (*da gongbei* 大拱北) shrine complex, which became the center of Qadiriyya Sufism in China.<sup>23</sup> One of the reasons that Grand Master Qi continues to be greatly revered among all Sufis in China is that the tradition suggests he received his early training under two of the most famous Central Asian Sufi teachers, Khoja Afaq and Khoja Abd Alla. Qi Jingyi supposedly met with the revered Naqshbandi leader Khoja Afaq (see below) in Xining 西宁 in 1672, where according to Qadiriyya records the master sent the sixteen year old acolyte home, saying “I am not your teacher (*yu er fei shi* 余尔非师), my ancient teaching is not to be passed on to you, your teacher has already crossed the Eastern Sea and arrived in the Eastern Land. You must therefore return home quickly, and you will become a famous teacher in the land.”<sup>24</sup> Qadiriyya followers today feel that their saint received the blessing of the great Naqshbandi Khoja Afaq, while their order was formally founded by his second teacher, Khoja Abd Alla, a twenty-ninth generation descendant of Muhammad.<sup>25</sup> Chinese Sufi records state that he entered China in 1674 and preached in Guangdong, Guangxi 广东, Yunnan, Guizhou 贵州 and Linxia, Gansu, before his eventual death in Guizhou in 1689. While Abd al-Kadir al-Jilani is the reputed founder of the Qadiri *tariqa*, it is not surprising to find that Abd Alla perhaps studied in Medina under the renowned Kurdish mystic, Ibrahim b. Hasan al-Kurani (1616–1690),

<sup>23</sup> Gladney 1987, pp. 507–508.

<sup>24</sup> Ma Tong 1983, p. 330.

<sup>25</sup> Tringham 1971, pp. 40–44.

who was initiated into both the Naqshbandi and Qadiri *tariqas*, as well as several other Sufi orders (see below).

The appeal of Qadiriyya Sufism as a renewal movement among the Hui is related to its combining ascetic mysticism with a non-institutionalized form of worship that centers around the tomb complex of deceased saints rather than the mosque.<sup>26</sup> The early Qadiriyya advocated long-term isolated meditation, poverty, and vows of celibacy. The head of the order did not marry and eschewed family life, a radical departure from other Islamic traditions in China. Qadiriyya Sufi continue to attend the Gedimu mosques in the local communities in which they live, gathering at the tombs for holidays and individual worship. Qi Jingyi was known for his emphasis upon ascetic withdrawal from society, poverty and self-cultivation, which involves meditation, fasting, prayer, and other contemplative practices. Formalized Islamic ritual as represented by the “five pillars” (fasting, pilgrimage, prayer, almsgiving, and recitation of the *shahadah*) was deemphasized by Qi Jingyi in favor of private meditation. Qadiriyya maintain: “Those who know themselves clearly will know Allah” and “The Saints help us to know ourselves first before knowing Allah”. Union with the divine is accomplished through meditation and self-cultivation, rather than formalized public ritual. “The moment of thinking about Allah”, they maintain, “is superior to worshiping him for a thousand years”. Sufi mysticism in China combines many of the similar themes of the Daoist tradition, and draws heavily on its metaphysical vocabulary.<sup>27</sup>

A Chinese inscription above the entrance to a Qadiriyya branch tomb complex in Beishan Hui 北山会 cemetery, Linxia, reads: “The Dao is Unceasing” (*ti dao wu she* 體道無舍). Through religious terminology familiar to the Hui in China, Confucian moral tenets, Daoist mystical concepts, and Buddhist folk rituals infused with new Islamic content pervade Qadiriyya Sufism.<sup>28</sup> Although the Qadiriyya *menhuan* has al-

<sup>26</sup> Forbes (1986, p. 75) regards the popularity of tombs among the Hui as “probably due to isolation from the Islamic mainstream.” On the other hand, Joseph Trippner argued that these “grave-worshipping cults” give evidence of the pervasive influence of Shi’ism among the Hui (Trippner 1961, p. 145). Alternatively, I suggest that the tombs reveal a wide variety of Hui religious meaning, serving as important charters that link different Hui communities to their foreign Muslim heritage (Gladney 1987, pp. 501–517).

<sup>27</sup> See Izutsu 1983.

<sup>28</sup> Ma Tong 1983, pp. 328–354.

ways been less influential than other Sufi orders in China due to its rejection of “worldly” political involvement, it set the stage for many Sufi orders to follow. By stressing the intimate experience of Allah through the power of his appointed *shaykh*, Sufism in China became a force for renewal and transformation exemplified by a return to the pure ascetic ideals of Islam, as well as initiating a new sociopolitical Islamic order. At once reformist and transformative, it initiated a new tide of reform that swept across China.

### The Naqshbandiyya

The Naqshbandi *tariqa* became most rooted in Chinese soil through the establishment of two *menhuan*, the Khufiyya and Jahriyya, that were to exercise tremendous influence on the history of Islam in China and the northwest. As Joseph Fletcher argued, “the history of the Naqshbandiyya is the history of Islam” from eighteenth to nineteenth century China. Fletcher goes on to explain that the reform movement emphasized “...a shar’ist orthopraxy, political activism, propagation of the religion, and a strong Sunni orientation [which] came to mark the Naqshbandiyya in a way that proved definitive in the mystical path’s subsequent history. ... Two other general characteristics of popular mysticism, namely the veneration of saints (misleadingly called ‘saint worship’ by non-Muslim writers) and the seeking of inspiration by visiting and meditating at the saints’ tombs (misleadingly referred to as ‘tomb worship’), were also prominent features of the Altishahr Naqshbandiyya.”<sup>29</sup>

Founded by Baha’ ad-Din Naqshband (d. 1389), who lived in Transoxania, the Naqshbandiyya order gradually spread east across the trade routes, and by the middle of the fifteenth century gained ascendancy over other Central Asian Sufi orders in the oasis cities of Altishahr, the area surrounding the Tarim river basin in what is now southern Xinjiang. The Naqshbandi order that gained the most prominence in the Tarim basin and played an important role in later eighteenth and nineteenth century politics in Xinjiang was the Makhdumzada, established by Makhdum-i A’zam (also known as Ahmad Kasani, 1461-1542). It was his great-grandson Khoja Afaq (d. 1694), known in the Chinese sources as Hidayat Allah, who was the saint most responsible for establishing

<sup>29</sup> Fletcher 1994, p. 11.



the Naqshbandiyya among the Hui in northwest China.<sup>30</sup> Khoja Afaq (Khwaja-yi Afaq, 1626–1694, “the Master of the Horizons”) founded the Afaqiyya in Xinjiang, and from 1671–1672 visited Gansu, where his father Muhammad Yusuf had previously visited and preached, reportedly converting a few Hui and a substantial number of the Salars to Naqshbandi Sufism. During this influential tour, Khoja Afaq visited the northwest cities of Xining, Lintao 临洮 and Hezhou 河州 (now Linxia, China’s “Little Mecca”), preaching to Hui, Salar, and Northeastern Tibetan Muslims. Two of these early Hui Gansu Muslims became his disciples and went to Central Asia and the pilgrimage cities to become further trained in the order. When they returned to China, they established the two most important Naqshbandi brotherhoods among the Hui in the northwest, the Khufiyya and the Jahriyya.

Throughout its history, the Naqshbandiyya has stressed an active participation in worldly affairs.<sup>31</sup> Their *shaykhs* worked wonders, chanted the powerful *mathnawi* texts of the Turkish mystic Jalal ad-Din Rumi (d. 1273), and advocated scriptural reforms. They emphasized both self-cultivation and formal ritual, both withdrawal from and involvement in society. Unlike the Qadiriyya, their leaders enjoyed families and the material wealth accrued from the donations of their followers. They also became committed to political involvement and social change based on the principles of Islam. Some of the Naqshbandiyya orders in China, advocated, I argue, more of a “transformationist” perspective, in which they sought to change the social order in accord with their own visions of propriety and morality. This inevitably led to conflicts with Chinese rule and local governments, causing some orders of the Naqshbandiyya, especially the Jahriyya, to be singled out for suppression and persecution. By contrast, the Khufiyya tended to seek more conformist solutions to local conflicts, stressing personal internal reform over political change. The different stance that the Naqshbandiyya orders took in China with regard to the state and Chinese culture reflects their dialectical interaction with local interpretations of identity and changing sociopolitical realities in the northwest: Under one Sufi tradition there are two movements and two interpretations of fundamental reform. A brief introduction to these two movements is necessary for our understanding of the later challenges to the move-

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<sup>30</sup> See Trippner 1961, pp. 142–171.

<sup>31</sup> Schimmel 1975, p. 367.

ments by the Muslim Brotherhood as a means of accommodating their interpretations of Islam to a changing Chinese political culture.

### The Naqshbandi Khufiyya

During his 1672 visit to Hezhou, Khoja Afaq played an important role in the life of a certain Ma Laichi 马来迟 (1673–1753), a Hezhou Hui of extraordinary talent who went on to found one of the earliest and most influential Naqshbandiyya orders in China, the Khufiyya *menhuan*. According to Sufi tradition, Ma Laichi was born to a childless couple after they received Khoja Afaq's blessing, and was later raised and trained by one of his disciples, Ma Tai Baba 马太爸爸 ("Great Father"), who later gave him his daughter in marriage and passed on to him the leadership of the mystical path that he had received from Khoja Afaq.<sup>32</sup> From 1728–1734, Ma Laichi went on the pilgrimage to Mecca, Yemen and Bukhara where he studied several Sufi orders, and became particularly influenced by Mawlana Makhdum, a man of uncertain origin who Fletcher hypothesizes may have been Indian. When he returned from his pilgrimage, Ma Laichi established the most powerful of the Khufiyya *menhuan*, the Huasi 花寺 ("flowery mosque") branch, propagating the order for thirty-two years among the Hui and Salar in Gansu and Qinghai 青海, before his death. The *menhuan* is still quite active and centered in Linxia Hui Autonomous Region, Gansu, at the tomb of Ma Laichi, which was restored in 1986.

Originating in an earlier Central Asian and Yemeni Naqshbandi Sufism, the Khufiyya order was permeated with an emphasis on a more passive participation in society, the veneration of saints, the seeking of inspiration at tombs and the silent *dhikr* ("remembrance", properly *khufiyya*, the "silent" ones<sup>33</sup>). There are now over twenty sub-branch *menhuan* throughout China, with mosques in Yunnan, Xinjiang, and Beijing. Most Khufiyya orders are concentrated in Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia 宁夏, and Xinjiang with several of the original Khufiyya practices in some outlying areas such as northern Ningxia beginning to lose their distinctiveness over time.

<sup>32</sup> Ma Tong 1983, pp. 223–247.

<sup>33</sup> Fletcher 1978, 38; Schimmel 1975, 172, 366.

## The Naqshbandi Jahriyya

The second Naqshbandi *tariqa*, the Jahriyya order, was founded in China under the dynamic leadership of Ma Mingxin 马明心 (1719–1781). One of the most fascinating detective stories in historical discovery is the tracing of Ma Mingxin's spiritual lineage to Mizjaja, a village on the outskirts of Zabid in Northern Yemen, by Joseph Fletcher.<sup>34</sup> While Chinese Sufis have known for generations that their saint Ma Mingxin studied in the Middle East, it was never clear whom he received his "New Teaching" from or where he studied. Middle Eastern Sufi accounts recorded the presence of Chinese Muslims studying in certain Sufi areas, but only Fletcher was able to put the two together. This was an important discovery, as Ma Mingxin's Sufi practice was thought to be novel, even heterodox, and the subject of many conflicts in northwest China. This controversy is mainly over Ma Mingxin's use of the *jahr* in remembrance ("vocal *dhikr*", from whence comes the name *Jahriyya*, the "vocal" ones), which he openly advocated in opposition to the Khufiyya's silent remembrance, the more standard Naqshbandi practice. After an extensive search through arcane Sufi documents in Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Chinese, and a final personal trip to Yemen, Fletcher discovered that the name of the anonymous Sufi saint under whom Chinese Muslim records indicate Ma Mingxin was a Naqshbandi Sufi was az-Zayn b. Muhammad Abd al-Baqi al-Mizjaji (1643/4–1725), whose family home was in Mizjaja, the Zabid. Chinese Sufi records only indicate that Ma Mingxin studied in Yemen in a Sufi order known as the Shazilinye, whose *shaykh* was Muhammad Bulu Seni, but did not know the full ancestry and origins of the order. Most Jahriyya only say: "The root of our order is Arabia, the branches and leaves are in China."<sup>35</sup> This discovery is extremely significant in the history of ideas, as it is known that az-Zayn had studied in Medina under the famous Kurdish mystic, Ibrahim b. Hasan al-Kurani (1616–1690), who also advocated the use of vocal formulae in the remembrance of Allah (*al-jahr bi-dh-dhikr*). Al-Kurani's students were at the forefront of Islamic reform and revolutionary movements throughout the Islamic world.

Under al-Kurani's student's direction, it is not surprising that Ma Mingxin returned to China, in 1744 after sixteen years of study in Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula, with more activist and radical reforms

<sup>34</sup> See Ford 1974, pp. 153–155 and Fletcher 1975.

<sup>35</sup> Ma Tong 1983, p. 365.

on his mind. While advocating the use of the vocal *dhikr*, he generally opposed the heavy emphasis upon the veneration of Islamic saints which had become popular in China. He also disputed the timing of the breaking of the fast at the beginning of the Ramadan feast with the Khufiyya: he maintained it was to be after the prayer, whereas the Khufiyya allowed for feasting before going to the mosque for prayer. This dispute led to bloody conflicts well into the early twentieth century. As the disputes grew worse and conflicts erupted, Qing troops, fresh from the conquest of Xinjiang in 1759, did not wish to have any more trouble among Muslims in Gansu. They arrested Ma Mingxin in 1781 and executed him as his followers attempted to free him. Three years later they crushed another uprising led by a Jahriyya Sufi, Tian Wu 田五. From this point on, the Qing sought to limit the spread of the movements, outlawing many of the so-called “New Teachings”, primarily the Jahriyya. The great Northwest Hui rebellion (1862–1876) was led by Ma Hualong 马化龙, another Jahriyya Sufi *murshid* (spiritual leader) and fifth generation descendant of Ma Mingxin. His rebellion was responsible for cutting the Qing state off from the northwest, making way for the great 1864–1877 Uighur-led rebellion in Xinjiang under Yakub Beg. In 1871 Ma Hualong was captured and executed, supposedly with his entire family. His body is entombed in Dongta 东塔 Township, Jinji 金积, just east of the Yellow River in Ningxia, while his head is reported to have been buried in Xuanhuagang 宣化岗, a Jahriyya center, north of Zhangjiachuan 张家川 in south Gansu. There is also evidence that suggests Du Wenxiu 杜文秀 (1823–1872), leader of the Panthay Hui Muslim rebellion in Yunnan (1855–1873), was also influenced by Jahriyya. Following the failure of these uprisings, the Jahriyya became much more secretive and dispersed, leading to the establishment of five main Jahriyya branch orders, all named after their ritual and historical centers: Shagou 沙沟, Beishan 北山, Xindianzi 新店子, Banqiao 板桥, and Nanchuan 南川.

### The Kubrawiyya

Of minor influence in China is the fourth main Sufi order, the Kubrawiyya.<sup>36</sup> An Arab, Muhi ad-Din, is said to have first introduced the order

<sup>36</sup> For the origins of the Kubrawiyya, see Trimingham 1971, pp. 55–58.

to China in the 1600s.<sup>37</sup> He taught in He'nan, Qinghai, Gansu, and died in the Dawantou 大湾头, Dongxiang 东乡 prefecture, Gansu province. Presently, many of the Dongxiang Muslim minority concentrated in that area are members of the Kubrawiyya *menhuan*.

## Sufi Networks and Islamic Resurgence

The importance and extensiveness of these Sufi orders for uniting disparate Hui communities across China cannot be underestimated. Gellner's suggestion that "Sufism provides a theory, terminology, and technique of leadership..."<sup>38</sup> seems applicable to understanding the rapid proliferation of various orders during the turmoil of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when China was faced with widespread domestic social unrest and the advancing encroachment of Western imperialist powers. Unlike the isolated "patchwork" Gedimu communities that had been the norm until that time, Sufi orders provided the leadership and organization that could help Hui survive politically and economically.<sup>39</sup> During the fragmented Republican period (1911–1949), extensive Sufi networks proved helpful to some Hui warlords in the northwest and disruptive to others.

At the 1985 commemoration ceremony (*ermaili* 尔麦力) of the death of the Jahriyya order's founder, Ma Mingxin, over 20,000 adherents gathered for three days at the site of his original tomb outside Lanzhou. The local municipality had intended originally to refrain from participation in the ceremony, but owing to the unexpected number of participants, the city eventually supplied sanitation facilities and food. The Provincial Islamic Society subsequently agreed to allow Ma Mingxin's tomb to be rebuilt. Two months earlier, a similar *ermaili* was held in remembrance of Ma Hualong, the Jahriyya rebellion leader. A crowd of over 10,000 followers from as far away as Urumqi, Kunming 昆明 and Harbin arrived at his grave in Lingwu 灵武 County, Dongta Township, demonstrating the extensive influence of this order and the important focus the Sufi leader's tomb provides for galvanizing collective action.

<sup>37</sup> Ma Tong suggests the Kubrawiyya may have come to China as early as 1370. See Ma Tong 1983, pp. 451–455.

<sup>38</sup> Gellner 1981, p. 103.

<sup>39</sup> See Lipman 1984.

Membership in various Islamic orders often significantly influences social interaction, especially among the Sufi orders who sometimes distinguish themselves by dress. Unlike the rounded white hat worn by most Hui men, Sufi followers often wear a six-cornered hat, sometimes black. Many Jahriyya Hui shave the sides of their beards to commemorate their founder, Ma Mingxin, whose beard is said to have been shorn by Qing soldiers before his execution in 1781. While these markers are almost universally unnoticed by the Han majority – for whom a Hui is a Hui – in the marketplace northwest Hui can easily identify members of the various orders that divide them internally. The exclusivity of Sufi orders in China illustrates the importance of the question of identity and authority for Sufi Hui. Hui can enter these orders through ritual vow or by birth, but seldom maintain allegiance to two *menhuan* at once. This is unlike Sufi orders in other parts of the world that tend to be less exclusive and allow simultaneous membership in several orders.<sup>40</sup> In China, membership in these orders is exclusive; changing to a new order is tantamount to a conversion experience for Chinese Muslims, perhaps the only one they will ever have, since most Muslims in China entered Islam by birth or marriage.

### **The Third Tide: Scripturalist Concerns and Modernist Reforms**

The third tide in Chinese Islam began at the end of the Qing dynasty, a period of accelerated exchange between China and the outside world, when many Muslims began traveling to and returning from the Middle East. In the early decades of the twentieth century, China was exposed to many new foreign ideas and in the face of Japanese and Western imperialist encroachment sought a Chinese approach to governance. Intellectual and organizational activity by Chinese Muslims during this period was also intense. Increased contact with the Middle East led Chinese Muslims to reevaluate their traditional notions of Islam. Pickens records that from 1923 to 1934 there were 834 known Hui Muslims who made the *hajj*, or pilgrimage, to Mecca.<sup>41</sup> In 1937, according to one observer, over 170 Hui pilgrims boarded a steamer in Shanghai bound for Mecca.<sup>42</sup> By 1939, at least thirty-three Hui Muslims had studied at

<sup>40</sup> Trimmingham 1971, p. 11.

<sup>41</sup> Pickens 1937, pp. 231–235.

<sup>42</sup> Anonymous 1944, p. 127.

Cairo's prestigious al-Azhar University. While these numbers are not significant when compared with pilgrims on the *hajj* from other South-east Asian Muslim areas, the influence and prestige attached to these returning Hui *hajji* was profound, particularly in isolated communities. "In this respect," Fletcher observed, "the more secluded and remote a Muslim community was from the main centers of Islamic cultural life in the Middle East, the more susceptible it was to those centers' most recent trends."<sup>43</sup>

As a result of political events and the influence of foreign Muslim ideas, numerous new Hui organizations emerged. In 1912, one year after Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshan 孫中山, 1866–1925) was inaugurated provisional president of the Chinese Republic in Nanjing 南京, the Chinese Muslim Federation was also formed in that city. This was followed by the establishment of other Hui Muslim associations: the Chinese Muslim Mutual Progress Association (Beijing, 1912), the Chinese Muslim Educational Association (Shanghai, 1925), the Chinese Muslim Association (1925), the Chinese Muslim Young Students Association (Nanjing, 1931), the Society for the Promotion of Education Among Muslims (Nanjing, 1931), and the Chinese Muslim General Association (Jinan 濟南, 1934).

The Muslim periodical press flourished as never before. Although Löwenthal reports that circulation was low, there were over one hundred known Muslim periodicals produced before the out-break of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937.<sup>44</sup> Thirty journals were published between 1911 and 1937 in Beijing alone, prompting one author to suggest that while Chinese Islam's traditional religious center was still Linxia (Hezhou), its cultural center had shifted to Beijing.<sup>45</sup> This took place when many Hui intellectuals traveled to Japan, the Middle East and the West. Caught up in the nationalist fervor of the first half of this century, they published magazines and founded organizations, questioning their identity as never before in a process that one Hui historian, Ma Shouqian 馬壽千, has recently termed "The New Awakening of the Hui at the end of nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries".<sup>46</sup> As many of these Hui *hajji* returned from their pilgrimages to the Middle East,

<sup>43</sup> Fletcher 1994, p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> Löwenthal 1940, pp. 211–250.

<sup>45</sup> Anonymous 1944, p. 27.

<sup>46</sup> Ma Shouqian 1989.



they initiated several reforms, engaging themselves once again in the contested space between Islamic ideals and Chinese culture.

### The Wahhabi Muslim Brotherhood

Influenced by Wahhabi ideals in the Arabian Peninsula, returning Hui reformers introduced the Ikhwan Muslim Brotherhood to China – a religious movement in tune, in some cases, with China’s nationalist concerns, and in others, with warlord politics. While the Muslim Brotherhood elsewhere in the Islamic world has been depicted as anti-modernist and fundamentalist, this is not true of the movement in China. “There a fundamentalist, revivalist impulse among returned pilgrims influenced by Wahhabi notions” Lipman suggests, “was transformed into a nationalist, modernist, anti-Sufi solidarity group which advocated not only Muslim unity but Chinese national strength and consciousness.”<sup>47</sup>

The beginnings of the Ikhwan movement in China can be traced to Ma Wanfu 马万福 (1849–1934), who returned from the *hajj* in 1892 to teach in the Linxia, Dongxiang area. Eventually known as the Yihei-wani, the initial reformers were primarily concerned with religious scripturalist orthodoxy – so much so that they are still known as the “venerate the scriptures faction” (*zunjing pai* 尊经派). Seeking perhaps to replace “Islamic theater” with scripture,<sup>48</sup> they proscribed the veneration of saints, their tombs and shrines, and sought to stem the growing influence of well-known individual *ahongs* and Sufi *menhuan* leaders. Advocating a purified, “non-Chinese” Islam, they criticized such cultural accretions as the wearing of white mourning dress (*daixiao* 戴孝) and the decoration of mosques with Chinese or Arabic texts. At one point, Ma Wanfu even proposed the exclusive use of Arabic and Persian instead of Chinese in all education. Following strict Wahhabi practice, Yihei-wani mosques are distinguished by their almost complete lack of adornment on the inside, with white walls and no inscriptions, as well as a preference for Arabian-style mosque architecture. This contrasts sharply with other more Chinese-style mosques in China, typical of the “old” Gedimu, whose architecture resemble Confucian temples in their sweeping roofs and symmetrical courtyards (with the Huajue

<sup>47</sup> Lipman 1986, p. 21.

<sup>48</sup> The phrase is from Eaton 1984, pp. 334–335.

化觉 Great Mosque in Xi'an 西安 as the best example). The Yiheiwan also proscribed the adornment of their mosques with Quranic texts and banners, whether in Arabic or Chinese, whereas this is the most striking marker of Sufi mosques and worship centers in the northwest, whose walls are often layered with calligraphy and unique Hui-style art.

Many Muslims supported the earliest communist call for equity, autonomy, freedom of religion and recognized nationality status, and were active in the early establishment of the People's Republic, but became disenchanted by growing critiques of religious practice during several radical periods in the PRC beginning in 1957. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), Muslims became the focus for both anti-religious and anti-ethnic nationalism critiques, leading to widespread persecutions, mosque-closings, and at least one large massacre of 1,000 Hui following a 1975 uprising in Yunnan province. Since Deng Xiaoping's 邓小平 post-1978 reforms, Muslims have sought to take advantage of liberalized economic and religious policies, while keeping a watchful eye on the ever-swinging pendulum of Chinese radical politics. There are now more mosques open in China than there were prior to 1949, and Muslims travel freely on the *hajj* to Mecca, as well as engaging in cross-border trade with co-religionists in Central Asia, the Middle East, and increasingly, Southeast Asia. It should be noted here that increasing Muslim activism in China does not necessarily entail increasing religious conservatism, or the rise of a "Wahhabi"-inspired Muslim tide of fundamentalism. Indeed, like the term *xinjiao* (New Teaching) which was a euphemism in the last century to refer to any new Islamic teaching that made its way into China, the term Wahhabi today in China, especially in Xinjiang, is often merely a general term to refer to Muslims who are more conservative, and not necessarily organized into any school or sect.

Increasing Muslim political activism on a national scale and rapid state response indicates the growing importance Beijing places upon Muslim-related issues. In 1986 Uighurs in Xinjiang marched through the streets of Urumqi protesting against a wide range of issues, including the environmental degradation of the Zungharian plain, nuclear testing in the Taklamakan, increased Han immigration to Xinjiang, and ethnic insults at Xinjiang University. Muslims throughout China protested the publication of a Chinese book, *Sexual Customs*, in May 1989, and a children's book in October 1993 that portrayed Muslims, particularly their restriction against pork (which Mao once called "China's

greatest national treasure”), in a derogatory fashion. In each case, the government quickly responded, meeting most of the Muslim’s demands, condemning the publications, arresting the authors, and closing down the printing houses.<sup>49</sup>

Islamic factional struggles continue to divide China’s Muslims internally, especially as increased travel to the Middle East prompts criticism of Muslim practice at home and exposes China’s Muslims to new, often politically radical, Islamic ideals. In February 1994, four Naqshbandi Sufi leaders were sentenced to long-term imprisonments for their support of internal factional disputes in the southern Ningxia Region, that had led to at least sixty deaths on both sides and People’s Liberation Army intervention. As noted above, throughout the 1990s there was increasing Uighur activism in Xinjiang, declining substantially in the early part of the new millennium, and the government’s Strike Hard campaign has curtailed any organized Uighur efforts.

Beijing has responded with increased military presence, particularly in Kashgar and Urumqi, as well as diplomatic efforts in the Central Asian states and Turkey to discourage foreign support for separatist movements. It is important to note that in general Hui, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and other Muslim minorities are not necessarily sympathetic to any of these separatist actions among the Uighur, and it is not yet clear how much support even among the Uighur there is for violent acts, especially the 1996 attempt to assassinate a “collaborating” *imam* in Kashgar. At the same time, cross-border trade between Xinjiang and Central Asia has grown tremendously, especially due to the reopening in 1991 of the Eurasian Railroad, linking Urumqi and Alma Ata with markets in China and Eastern Europe. Overland travel between Xinjiang and Pakistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan has also increased dramatically with the relaxation of travel restrictions based on Deng Xiaoping’s prioritization of trade over security interests in the area. The government’s policy of seeking to buy support through stimulating the local economy seems to be working at the present, as income levels in Xinjiang are often far higher than those across the border, yet increased Han migration to participate in the region’s lucrative oil and mining industries continues to exacerbate ethnic tension. Muslim areas in northern and central China, however, continue to be left behind as Chi-

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<sup>49</sup> Gladney 1994b, p. 268.

na's rapid economic growth expands unevenly, enriching the southern coastal areas far beyond the interior.

While further restricting Islamic freedoms in the border regions, at the same time the state has become more keenly aware of the importance foreign Muslim governments place on China's treatment of its Muslim minorities as a factor in China's lucrative trade and military agreements. The establishment of full diplomatic ties with Saudi Arabia in 1991 and increasing military and technical trade with Middle Eastern Muslim states enhances the economic and political salience of China's treatment of its internal Muslim minority population. The increased trans-nationalism of China's Muslims will be an important factor in their ethnic expression as well as practiced accommodation to Chinese culture and state authority.

### **Internal Conversion**

While these various Chinese Islamic associations are as confusing to the non-initiate as the numerous schools of Buddhist thought in China, what is striking about them is their exclusivity of membership. Unlike Middle Eastern or Central Asian Islamic orders, where one might belong to two or even three brotherhoods at once, the Hui belong to only one. Among the Hui, one is generally born into one's Islamic order, or converts dramatically to another. In fact, this is the only instance of conversion I encountered among my sojourn among the Hui. I never met a Han who had converted to Islam in China without having been married to a Hui or adopted into a Hui family, though I heard of a few isolated instances. Fletcher records the conversion of twenty-eight Tibetan tribes as well as their "Living Buddha" by Ma Laichi in Xunhua 循化, Qinghai in the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>50</sup> After the 1784 Ma Mingxin uprising, the Qing government forbade non-Muslims from converting to Islam, and this may have had some influence on the few Han conversions recorded in history. This goes against the common assumption that Islam in China was spread through proselytization and conversion. Islamic preachers in China, including Ma Laichi, Ma Mingxin, Qi Jingyi, and Ma Qixi 马启西, spent most of their time trying to convert other Muslims. Islam in China for the most part has grown biologically through birth and intermarriage.

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<sup>50</sup> See also Trippner 1961, pp. 154-155.

## Hui Islamic Orders and Chinese Culture

The tensions and conflicts that led to the rise and divisions of the Sufi *menhuan* in northwest China, and subsequent non-Sufi reforms, are impossible to enumerate in their complexity. They give evidence, however, of the ongoing struggles that continue to make Islam meaningful to Hui Muslims. These tensions between Islamic ideals and social realities are often left unresolved. Their very dynamism derives from the questions they raise and the doubts they engender among people struggling with traditional meanings in the midst of changing social contexts. The questions of purity and legitimacy become paramount when the Hui are faced with radical internal socioeconomic and political change, and exposed to different interpretations of Islam from the outside Muslim world. These conflicts and reforms reflect an ongoing debate in China over Islamic orthodoxy, revealing an important disjunction between “scripturalist” and “mystical” interpretations.

In a similar fashion, the study of Southeast Asian Islam has often centered on the contradiction and compromise between the native culture of the indigenous Muslims and the *shari'a* of orthodox Islam, the mystical and scriptural, the real and the ideal.<sup>51</sup> The supposed accommodation of orthodox Islamic tenets to local cultural practices has led scholars to dismiss or explain such compromise as syncretism, assimilation and “sinification”, as has been described among the Hui. An alternative approach, and one perhaps more in tune with the interests of Hui themselves, sees this incongruence as the basis for on-going dialectical tensions that have often led to reform movements and conflicts within Muslim communities.<sup>52</sup> Following Max Weber,<sup>53</sup> one can see the wide variety of Islamic expression as reflecting processes of local world construction and programs for social conduct whereby a major religious tradition becomes meaningful to an indigenous society.

In the competition for scarce resources, these conflicts are also prompted by and expressed in economic concerns, such as we saw above in the defeat of the Xidaotang 西道堂 by the Khufiyya Ma Anliang 马安良 (1855–1919) – clearly a case of coveting his Muslim brother’s wealth. Fletcher notes that one of the criticisms of the Khufiyya was that their recitation of the *Ming sha le* 明沙勒 took less time than

<sup>51</sup> This distinction was most fully articulated by William Roff (Roff 1985, pp. 8–10).

<sup>52</sup> See Eickelman 1976, pp. 10–13.

<sup>53</sup> Weber 1978.

the normal Quranic suras by non-Sufi clergy, and therefore their imams were cheaper to hire at ritual ceremonies. He suggests that this assisted their rise in popularity and provoked criticism by the Gedimu religious leaders.<sup>54</sup> The Yiheiwani criticized both the Gedimus and Sufis for only performing rituals in believer's homes for profit, and advocated the practice, "If you recite, do not eat; if you eat, do not recite" (*nian jing bu chi, chi by nian jing* 念经不吃、吃不吃念经). The Chinese state has generally found economic reasons for criticizing certain Islamic orders among the Hui. During the Land Reform campaigns of the 1950s, which appropriate mosque and *waqf* (Islamic endowment) holdings, they met with great resistance from the Sufi *menhuan*, which had accumulated a great deal due to their hierarchical centralized leadership. In a 1958 document criticizing Ma Zhenwu 马振武, the Jahriyya Sufi *shaykh*, the following accusations are quite revealing:

According to these representatives, Ma Chen-wu instituted many "A-mai-lis," or festival days to commemorate the dead ancestors to which the A-hungs must be invited to chant the scriptures and be treated with big feasts, thereby squeezing money out of the living for the dead. For example, he has kept a record of the days of birth and death of all the family members of this followers and has seen to it that religious services be held on such days. These include "Grandmother's Day," "Wife's Day," "Aunt's Day," and others, sixty-five of such "A-mai-lis" in a year. On the average, one of such "A-mai-lis" is held every six or seven days, among which are seven occasions of big festival.... All the A-hungs of the Islamic mosques have been appointed by Ma Chen-wu. Through the appointment of A-hungs he has squeezed a big sum of money.... Ma has regularly, in the name of repairing the "kung-peis" [i.e., tombs], squeezed the Hui people for money.<sup>55</sup>

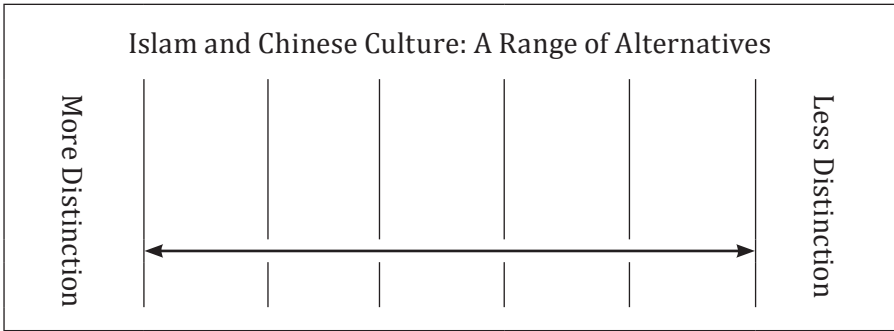
The tensions arising from the conflict of Chinese cultural practices and Islamic ideals have led to the rise and powerful appeal of Islamic movements among Hui Muslims. I explored one way of looking at this tension between cultural practice and Islamic ideals in an earlier work (Figure 1).<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Fletcher 1994, p. 21.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in MacInnis 1972, pp. 171–172.

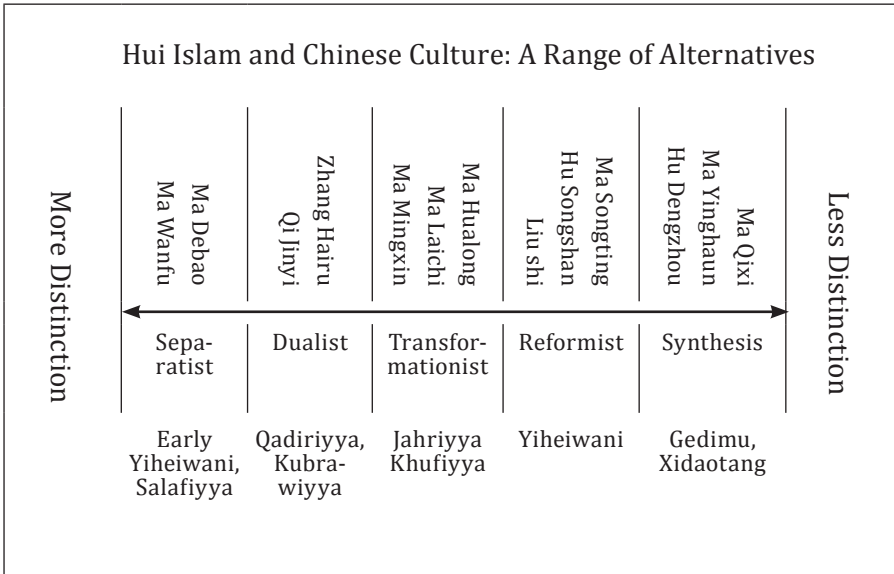
<sup>56</sup> Gladney 1996, p. 75. This interpretive scheme is influenced by H. Richard Niebuhr's (Niebuhr 1951) analysis of Christian social ethics.

Figure 1



In China there were many attempts to reconcile Chinese culture with Islam, leading to a range of alternatives (see Figure 2). At one extreme there are those who reject any integration of Islam with Chinese culture, such as Ma Wanfu’s return to an Arabicized “pure” Islam. Conversely, at the other extreme, there are those leaders of the Gedimu, such as Hu Dengzhou 胡登州, who accepted more of an integration with traditional Chinese society. Likewise, Ma Qixi’s Xidaotang stressed the complete compatibility of Chinese and Islamic culture, the importance of Chinese Islamic Confucian texts, the harmony of the two systems, and the reading of the Quran in Chinese.

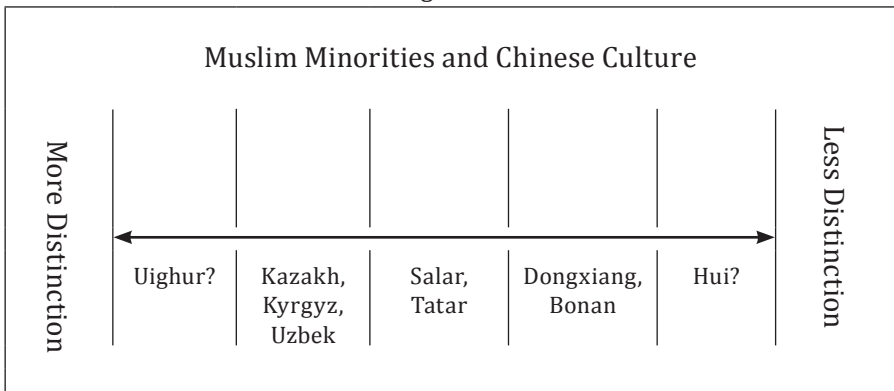
Figure 2





In between, one finds various attempts at changing Chinese society to “fit” a Muslim world, through transformationist or militant Islam, as illustrated by the largely Naqshbandiyya-led nineteenth-century Hui uprisings. The Jahriyya sought to implement an alternative vision of the world in their society, and this posed a threat to the Qing, as well as other Hui Muslims, earning them the label of “heterodox” (*xiejiao* 邪教) and persecution by the Chinese state. By contrast, other Hui reformers have attempted throughout history to make Islam “fit” Chinese society, such as Liu Zhi’s 刘智 monumental effort to demonstrate the Confucian morality of Islam. The Qadiriyya alternative represents resolution of this tension through ascetic withdrawal from the world. Qi Jingyi advocated an inner mystical journey where the dualism of Islam and the Chinese world is absolved through grasping the oneness of Allah found inside every believer. These various approaches in Chinese Islam represent sociohistorical attempts to deal with the relationship of relating the world religion of Islam with the local Chinese realm.

Figure 3



Another way to examine this range of alternatives is to generalize about the Muslim nationalities themselves (Figure 3). In this scheme, the Uighur can be seen to be much more resistant to accepting integration into Chinese society than other Muslims groups, in that they are the only Muslim minority in China expressing strong desires for a separate state (Uighuristan) – although it is not at all clear that all Uighur desire independence. At the other extreme, it could be argued that of all the Muslim minorities the Hui are the most integrated into Chinese society and culture. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage in that they often have greater access to power and resources within Chinese

society, but at the same time risk either the loss of their identity or the rejection of other Muslim groups in China as being too assimilated into Chinese society to the detriment of Islam. In between there are a range of Muslim nationalities who are closer to the Uighur in terms of resisting Chinese culture and maintaining a distinct language and identity (Uzbeks, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Tajiks) and those who are much closer to the Hui in terms of accommodation to Chinese culture (Dongxiang, Bonan). While much of this is due to historical interaction and locale, it can be a heuristic way of examining the challenges faced by each Muslim minority in their daily expression of identity and Islam in Chinese society. Here it must be clearly noted, however, that there are many exceptions to this overly generalized pattern, e.g., Uighur (such as Party officials and secularists) who are quite integrated into Chinese society and Hui (such as religious imams and rebellious youths) who live their lives in strident resistance to Chinese culture.

### **The Fourth Tide: Ethnic Nationalism in an Age of Globalization**

China is not immune from the new tide of ethnic nationalism and “primordial politics” sweeping Europe, Africa and Asia in the post-Cold War period. Much of this is clearly due to a response to globalization in terms of localization: increasing nationalism arising from the organization of the world into nation-states. No longer content to sit on the sidelines, the nations within these states are playing a greater role in the public sphere, which Jürgen Habermas suggests is the defining characteristic of civil society in the modern nation-state.<sup>57</sup> In most of these nationalist movements, religion, culture, and racialization play a privileged role in defining the boundaries of the nation. In China, and perhaps much of Muslim Asia, Islam will continue to play an important role in defining the nation, especially in countries where nationality is defined by a mix of religion and ethnicity (i.e., China, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines). A fourth tide of Muslim activism in China cannot but be nationalistic, but a nationalism that may often transcend the boundaries of the contemporary nation-state via mass communications, increased travel, and the internet.

The three previous “tides” of Islam in China, according to Fletcher, were precipitated by China’s opening to the outside world. A new tide

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<sup>57</sup> Habermas 1989.

is now washing across China's terrain. No matter what conservative leaders in the government might wish, China's Muslim politics have reached a new stage of openness. If China wants to participate in the international political sphere of the nation-states, this is unavoidable. With the opening to the West in recent years, travel to and from the Islamic heartlands has dramatically increased in China. In 1984, over 1,400 Muslims left China to go on the *hajj*. This number increased to over 2,000 in 1987, representing a return to pre-1949 levels. Several Hui students are presently enrolled in Islamic and Arabic studies at the al-Azhar University in Egypt. In September 1987, I visited the home of a Hui elder in Xi'an who had just returned from the *hajj*. He was escorted home from the airport in a procession of over a hundred taxis, all owned and operated privately by Hui. His trip was financed by local Hui, who turned over 10,000 yuan (ten years wages for an average northwest Hui farmer) to the Chinese Islamic Society in Beijing. The Islamic Society arranged his travel to Pakistan, where his visa was arranged at the Saudi Embassy (at the time of his trip China had no formal diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia), and supplied him with \$80 US for use on the trip, since the local currency was nonconvertible. Upon his return he traveled throughout the northwest, preaching and lecturing about his pilgrimage experiences and the need to reform Islam along Middle Eastern lines. I met him again in November 1998 and he had since returned three times on the *hajj* and engaged in frequent business-related travel to the Middle East. His trips to the Middle East were often sponsored by local and national government organizations.

Encouraged by the Chinese state, relations between Muslims in China and the Middle East are becoming stronger and more frequent, partly from a desire to establish trading partners for arms, commodities, and currency exchanges, and partly by China's traditional view of itself as a leader of the Third World. Delegations of foreign Muslims regularly travel to prominent Islamic sites in China, in a kind of state-sponsored religious tourism, and donations are encouraged. While the state hopes that private Islamic investment will assist economic development, the vast majority of grants by visiting foreign Muslims have been donated to the rebuilding of Islamic mosques, schools, and hospitals. As Hui in China are further exposed to Islamic internationalism, and as they return from studies and pilgrimages abroad, traditional Hui identities will once again be reshaped and called into question, giving rise to a fourth tide of Islam in China. Global Islam is thus localized into Hui Is-

lam, finding its expression as a range of accommodations between Chinese-ness and Muslim-ness as defined in each local community.

These accommodations of China's Muslims are not unlike those made on a daily basis among other Muslim minorities in Asia. The only difference may be the increasingly post-modern contraction of time and space: accommodations that took over a millennia in China are now being required of Muslim diasporic communities in a matter of hours or days. For Hui in China, Pakistani and Bangladeshi workers in Tokyo and Seoul, and the other wider diaspora, Muslims may be becoming increasingly "unfamiliar" strangers. This does not bode well for the future integration of Muslims into the Chinese leviathan.

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