Coming to Terms with the Nation
The Remaking of Hui Identity in Republican China

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Abstract

This study examines various aspects of the life of Chinese Muslims during China’s Republican period (1911-1949) – their participation in Republican politics, their narrations of selfhood, and their education and religious reforms. While recognizing the important roles of the state (and its elites) in shaping minority identities, this study seeks to de-center the “state-centric” narratives by probing into the complicated processes of resistance, negotiation, and co-optation between China’s nationalist elites and its non-Han minorities in the making of the modern Chinese nation. Meanwhile, I hope to illustrate both Muslim and non-Muslim efforts of reconstructing modern national and religious subjects in China through dissemination, legitimation and transaction of post-Enlightenment vocabularies from the European world.

Following a brief introduction of the method and purpose of this study in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 shows how early 20th century Han Chinese elites, confronted with catastrophic territorial failure, sought to simultaneously integrate the late-Qing “multiethnic” frontiers into the Chinese nation-state and “reinvent” the non-Han peoples through a variety of discursive, historical, and ethnographic devices. In Chapter 3, I seek to present the shifting views on the “translatability” of the Qur’an among the leading Sino-Muslim intellectuals, and the intended sociopolitical impact of Qur’anic translation from the point of view of its early Chinese translators. In Chapter 4, I focus on the discursive strategies on the part of Muslim intellectuals in their endeavor to transform the Muslim population in China from the imperial subjects to modern citizens of the Chinese nation-state. In Chapter 5, I seek to contextualize and analyze the conflicting political discourses over of the Sino-Muslim identity prior to its consolidation and objectification in the PRC. Finally, in Chapter 6, I hope to show how progressive Sino-Muslim intellectuals, by advancing Muslim Education Reforms, sought to simultaneously inherit and jettison their tradition.
Chapter 1

Introduction

The small Mohammedan
how deceitful is he!
to buy only four ounces of pork
he is weighing for a good half-day
now he complains it is little and the he complains again it is little
then folding in his arms a pig's head he runs home.

- late 19th century Pekinese nursery rhyme (tongyao 童謠)

Themes

Muslim population in China, once “foreign sojourners” (fanke) of Arab and Central Asian descents, has never shed their “strangeness” in the eyes of the Han Chinese over their some 1300 years of living within the Sinitic community. Nevertheless, the Sino-Muslims, who continuously straddled social and cultural borders, experienced various patterns of coexistence with the Han “majority” as the political power, out of their own political concerns, adopted different schemes of seeing its population – divide and rule in Qing, unification in Republican China, regimentation in People’s

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1 “小回回儿
怎么那么奸
四两猪肉约半天
左嫌小右嫌少
抱着猪头往家跑”.

Republic.

This study seeks to investigate the changes and continuities within the Sino-Muslim communities in the first half of the 20th century – a crucial period during which the cultural and ethnic boundaries of the Chinese nation was (re)negotiated and reconfigured. I hope to show that Sino-Muslim population, because of their cultural in-betweenness and social marginality, had to “come to terms” with the nationalist projects of the Republican China in ways very different from their Han neighbors. By presenting the Sino-Muslim intellectuals’ various, often conflicting, conceptions and articulations of the notions of modernity, religion, ethnicity and nationhood during China’s transition from an empire to a modern nation-state, I seek to illustrate – mainly from the perspectives of the male, urban elites of China’s Muslim minority – the complex processes through which the subject is raced, nationed, and religioned in the modern era.

While historian Eric Hobsbawn famously proclaimed that it was the states and their elites created the nation and not the reverse,\(^2\) other scholars, such as Prasenjit Duara, insist approaching national history as “a series of multiple, often conflicting narratives produced simultaneously at national, local, and transnational levels.”\(^3\)

This study was animated by the latter kind of sensibility. While recognizing the state’s important role in shaping minority identities in the time of nationalism, I seek

\(^2\) Hobsbawn 1990, p. 44

\(^3\) Duara 1996, back cover.
to de-center the “state-centric” narratives by attending to the complicated processes of resistance, negotiation, and co-optation between the nationalist elites and the ethnic/religious minorities in the processes of making modern Chinese nation. In particular, I hope to show that, as also argued in Mao Yufeng’s recent study, by presenting alternative narratives of selfhood and visions for the Chinese nation, Sino-Muslim elites have demonstrated their own agency in China’s nation building project. Meanwhile, in light of Dru Gladney, Jonathan Lipman and other scholars’ examination of the “relational” construction of majority and minority identity in China, I also probe into the links between the assertion of a national identity of Hui and the making of Han majority in China’s period of transition from the empire to the nation-state.

Methodology

In a seminal book, Lydia Liu highlighted the revealing capacity of discourse analysis in historical inquiries. By focusing on the transmissions of the notions of modernity through triangulated translations between China, Japan and the West, Liu argues that we may expand the horizon of history as a discipline by “treating language, discourse, and text (including historical writing itself) as genuine historical events, not the least of which is power of discursive acts to produce the terms of

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4 Mao 2011.
5 Lipman 1997, p. XXXV
legitimation in shaping the historical real.”

Due to the nature of my primary sources and the type of questions raised in this study, I also pay special attention to language-related issues in the 20th century Chinese history – linguistic collisions, cross-linguistic borrowing, conditions of translation and other discursive practices, to reveal the dimension of discursive struggles in the modern processes of nation building and identity formation. In particular, I hope to illustrate both the Muslim and non-Muslim’s efforts of reconstructing modern national and religious subjects in China through dissemination, legitimation and transaction of new concepts from the post-Enlightenment European world. Meanwhile, I hope to show that while categories and categorization often serve as one of the most useful tools by which the political authorities exert their discursive power, due to the novelty and general “untriedness” of modern vocabularies in the early 20th century China, they also opened up fields of conflicting representations.

Sources

This study is indebted to a large number of existing scholarly literatures on the subjects of the history of (Chinese) nationalism, the making of majority/minority identities, the relationship between language and the construction of reality, and the Muslims in China in past and present. In particular, my research draws inspirations

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6 Liu, p. 41
from James Leibold’s study on the role of “frontier peoples” in the fashioning of modern Chinese identity; Prasenjit Duara’s insistence on extricating the repressed voices from the linear, evolutionary history of the modern nation-states; Lydia Liu’s examination of the processes by which “new words, meanings, discourses, and mode of representation arise, circulate, and acquire legitimacy within the host language,” and finally, Jonathan Lipman’s scholarship on many aspects of modern and pre-modern Sino-Muslim society in China.  

In terms of primary sources, I based my study primarily on the Muslim publications in China between 1907 and 1949 – in particular, the Yuehua (月华) magazine, which was published every ten days from 1929 to 1948. Meanwhile, I also organized much of the arguments around published writings, speeches, diaries, biographies and autobiographies of prominent Muslim and non-Muslim leaders of the Republican (1911-1949) period. Many of the Republican-era periodicals, not least the Sino-Muslim ones, are now Full-text available online in National Library of China’s (zhongguo guojia tushuguan 中国国家图书馆) digital archives.  

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8 In this thesis I follow Jonathan Lipman’s usage of Sino-Muslims, instead of various other names such as huihui, huiin or huizu to refer to Chinese-speaking Muslims. Please see chapter 5 for a discussion on the choice of this term.  

Chapter 2 of this study shows how early 20th century Han Chinese elites, confronted with catastrophic territorial failure, sought to simultaneously integrate the late-Qing “multiethnic” frontiers into the Chinese nation-state and “reinvent” the non-Han peoples through a variety of discursive, historical, and ethnographic devices. In Chapter 3, I seek to present the changing views on the “translatability” of the Qur’an among the leading Sino-Muslim intellectuals, and the intended sociopolitical impact of early Chinese translations of the Qur’an. In Chapter 4, I focus mainly on the discursive strategies on the part of Muslim intellectuals in their endeavor of transforming the Muslim population in China from subjects from China’s imperial past to modern citizens of the Chinese nation-state. In Chapter 5, I seek to contextualize and analyze the conflicting political discourses over of the Sino-Muslim identity prior to its consolidation and objectification in the PRC. Finally, in Chapter 6, I hope to show how progressive Sino-Muslim intellectuals, by advancing Muslim Education Reforms, sought to simultaneously inherit and jettison their tradition.
Chapter 2

“Stretching the Skin of the Chinese Nation” - the reconfiguration of China’s late Qing ethnic frontiers

One of the pivotal events in the early modern world history was the formation of the modern nation-states. As the tide of nationalism swept into most parts of the world, previously loosely drawn imperial frontiers were reconfigured, in various ways, into finite boundaries in the wake of nationalistic movement of the 19th and early 20th Century. China was not immune to this sea change in the world’s political geographies, as the turn-of-the-century Chinese history was clearly and inextricably marked by the imprint of the struggles to form a nation-state out of the “dynastic cycles” that had putatively dominated “China” for the two foregoing millennia. Out of this tectonic process, the geopolitical landscape of the Sinic community which we now call China was, as Pamela Crossley and James Leibold perceptively observe, radically transformed from an entity with elastic and imprecise borders in which authority radiated outward from the center, into something in which “state sovereignty was fully, flatly, and evenly operative over each square centimeter of a legally demarcated territory.”

Unavoidably, even before we look further into this momentous yet many-threaded transformation, we are already grappling with our loosely defined vocabularies such as “nation”, “state”, “nationalism” or “ethnicity”, as well as mercurial group

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1 Leibold, p.10
identities insecurely subjected to various ethonyms (e.g. Han, Hanren, Hanzu, Huimin, Manren...) and toponyms (e.g. zhongguo, China, Tibet...). Some of these referents have a modern origin, while others may date back to an earlier time, yet all of them beg for a clear definition. Although Friedrich Nietzsche famously claimed that “nothing that has a history can be defined”, it would be advantageous for our discussion to establish a working definition for each term in order to have them at least as heuristic devices, while recognizing the ambiguities and historicity of this tangle of terminologies.

If the historian William Rowe’s expedient definitions of the term “nation-state” deserve some credit, the concept “State”, as used in the hyphenated term “nation-state”, denotes “not to a place but to a deliberately created organization that claims ultimate control over a particular territory”, while “nation” refers to a group of people which can be only loosely defined depending on different circumstances. Indeed, a nation becomes a nation when members of it assign a high degree of personal loyalty to the national group, relative to self, family, locality, class, or any other entity that might compete for that loyalty. Another definition of the nation that is crucial to the concern of this essay comes from Benedict Anderson, who famously argued that nations were all "imagined communities" because "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their

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2 Rowe, p. 253
communion”. Nation-state, in this sense, is both a “territory-political” organization, which involves an aspiration for self-government, and a large, politicized “ethnic” group, defined - despite many inevitable fissures – by a common “culture” or an alleged common descent.

In early modern Europe, the “nation-state” came into being predominantly when a sovereign political organization is grafted onto an imagined community of the nation - that is to say, the nation is first a cultural community, then it seeks to become a political community. In the case of turn-of-the-century China, however, the toponym “zhongguo” (instead of the simulacrum “China” used in the foreign territory) refers to a (vaguely circumscribed) political and cultural entity stretching back at least two millennia. While zhongguo signifies either a civilization or an empire, it was not tantamount to a “nation” as understood in its modern usage - a “people” imbued with an abiding sense of group consciousness. When the tide of nationalism

3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Leibold argues in his book Reconfiguring Chinese Nationalism that the different exonyms and autonyms such as Hanren, Huaren , Zhonghua, Zhongguoren, reflect the “mercurial ecological boundary” between largely sedentary inhabitants and normadic communities. According to Leibold, the western discourse of social Darwinism (with its related concepts of race and nation) caused the membrane around the Sinic community to become less permeable until it was eventually imagined as a patrilineal group, or what Zhang Binglin first refered to as Hanzu (Han-lineage race). Thereafter, these ethnonyms of the Sinic community gradually became closely intertwined with a distinct toponym - "zhongguo". (Leibold, p. 9)

6 Liang Qichao, in one of his seminal treatises on the renewal of the people and the nation, elaborated on the notion that a “people” is of a "nation" permeated with the Western sense of
progressively consumed many late Qing subjects, compounded with imminent foreign intrusion and the questions of the former ethnic frontiers, many Han Chinese intellectuals found that there was no such a pre-existing and self-conscious “Chinese nation”\(^7\). In this case, it was nationalism that begot nations, and not the other way round.\(^8\) The task of the revolutionary-minded late Qing intellectuals and political-military parties was therefore a two-folded one: subverting an existing Qing state \textit{while} making the former Qing subjects within the territory of “China” into a unified, modern nation.

\section*{Building the Chinese Nation: a nation awakened or imagined?}

How do we come to understand the many-threaded process of the genesis of the modern Chinese nation? There are, of course, a myriad of viable accounts for why and \textit{how} it has happened – the visceral, almost knee-jerk reactions to the menace of imperialist aggressions by the educated Chinese elites; the influx of Western social and political thoughts translated from Japanese; the development of vernacular nationalism – namely the view that the world is consisted of many contending peoples struggling to survive. Meanwhile, in the same essay he famously proclaimed that the history of China had never been written. As opposed to the history of the imperial houses, a teleological \textit{History} of the Chinese nation \textit{(zhonghua minzu)} must be advanced for the nation to survive culturally.

\(^7\) Leibold also proposes that due to Qing’s meticulously objectification of China as a province of the multi-racial empire, the referent “zhongguo” (China) as the state was also missing. The official name of the Qing dynasty - \textit{Da Qing Guo} directly replaced \textit{Da Ming Guo} (the Great Ming state). The referent of China, or Chinese empire, have never existed . \hspace{1em} (Leibold, pp. 9-11)

\(^8\) Unger, p. 7
print journalism; and the transnational influences from other non-Western elites rather than from the Euro-American nationalist thinkers. In order to describe this fateful moment in Chinese history, the hackneyed image of “national building” – implying an orderly and self-conscious process during which the cosmopolitan intellectuals act as architects and constitutions as blueprints – would not be entirely sufficient to capture all the contestations and contingencies in the momentous empire-to-nation process China has undergone. According to Jonathan Lipman, more than one metaphors shall be applied in order to portray the undertaking of making New China – in addition to the ones who plan and build - others are “hunting”, “translating”, “copying”, “plotting”, “fighting”, and, above all, “inventing” the nation through various projects and techniques.  

The appropriation of history has long been used as a powerful device in cementing ideological constructions. To the Chinese nationalist thinkers, despite the sometimes fierce disagreement among them, the essentiality of unanimously putting forward a teleological narrative that depicts the struggle of a singular, united and old Chinese nation descended from a time immemorial went unquestioned. Only a handful of oddballs would, for whatever reasons, advocate on “rescuing” the historical narrative from the dominant and sometimes hegemonic discourse of national progress that is still officially sanctioned in China. To the dissenters of the nationalist project, one must come up with a history – or a narrative strategy – that would

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9 Lipman 2002, p. 114
accommodate “the chaos, the contingencies and the false starts”\textsuperscript{10} in the overdetermined process of the articulation of the nation-space. For example, Homi Bhabha argues that national history narrated by the educated elites tends to be half-made because “it is in the process of being made”; and the image of cultural authority may be ambivalent since it is “caught in the act of composing its powerful image.”\textsuperscript{11} Meanwhile, there are those who seek to negotiate a balance between the primordialistic narrative of the nation and nationalism and the radically constructivist view that modern nation is nothing but an imaginary, contemporary historians like Prasenjit Duara proposed to view the history of Chinese nationalism as “a series of multiple, often conflicting narratives produced simultaneously at national, local, and transnational levels.”\textsuperscript{12}

If the afore-mentioned analogy between nation and narration does draw some critical light onto our understanding of the genesis of modern nation-state, the significance of the presence of an “Other” – a radical alterity - in the formation of a “national identity” should also not be ignored. In philosopher-psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva’s theorization about the reification of a “relational subjectivity” on the individual level, she directs our attention to the critical place that the “Other” occupies in the formulation of the "self". Kristeva sees “othering” as a way of defining and securing one’s own positive identity through the objectification and

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., p. 115
\textsuperscript{11} Bhabha, p. 3
\textsuperscript{12} Duara, p. 276
distancing of a negated alterity. In a manner that is intriguingly analogous to the continuous process of the formation of our individual subjectivity, the constitution of a unitary national identity was also made possible through the utilization of the racial, geographic, ethnic, economic or ideological markers of social differentiation that shape the meaning of "us" and "them". In the case of modern Chinese history, a coherent "Us" – the New China – was similarly defined in relation to (and as an equal to) the excluded imperialist “Thems”.

However, historians and anthropologies of China have started to realize that this what Duara calls a “provisional relationship” does not present a full picture of the processes that contribute to the formation of the modern Chinese nation. The national “self” – as Duara put it – often contain several smaller “others”. The anthropological literature is filled with evidences which suggest that the modern ethnic and cultural identity of the Chinese nation was also defined out of dialogues, negotiations and transactions between the (Han) Chinese and their domestic rather than external Others. One of the most fascinating yet little explored episodes in this process would be the work of the Han Chinese elites. Working either as independent scholars or rendering direct service to the state, the nationalist intellectuals were successful in discursively reconstructing – or “re-territorializing”,

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13 McAfee 2000.
14 Duara, p. 55
15 Ibid., p. 56
16 Lipman 2002, p. 115
to use a Deleuzean term - the frontiers and their inhabitants in order to create a unified, sovereign yet imaginary geo-body through academic works, travel writings, publications, frontier educations, along with many other disciplinary practices and technologies of modern state-building.\textsuperscript{17}

“Stretching the skin of the Chinese nation”: Bringing the Northwest into the National Imagination.

In Chinese history, the term \textit{bianjiang}\textsuperscript{18} (frontier) meant many things to the Han majority. Depending on the occasion, the frontier and its inhabitants could either pose as a reference point, a devastating threat, a barbaric conqueror, or an exotic or inferior “other” to the sedentary Chinese community and world order. As Nicola Di Cosmo and Don J. Wyatt nicely summarize, for hundreds of years the physical and ethnical frontiers has occupied both symbolic and real places in Chinese life and culture,

\textit{Between political debate and ritual enactment, between artistic performance and literary convention, between imaginary geographies and scientific surveys, between ethnic typologies and visual representations, frontiers and their}

\textsuperscript{17} Chen, pp. 13-15
\textsuperscript{18} During mainland China’s Republican years (1911-1949), the term \textit{bianjiang} was used by Han Chinese intellectuals to refer to all of the four former Qing domains that were outside the \textit{zhongguo benbu}, a designation ceased to be used after the Republican era. For example, the name “Manchuria” (\textit{manzhou}) was replaced by “the northeast” (\textit{dongbei}) or “the northeastern three provinces” (dongsansheng). The new names evoke a feeling of this region being one part of a larger Chinese geobody, rather than a separate entity. (Leibold, intro.)
habitants appear to be a central (not a marginal) aspect of the self-image of Chinese culture through the ages.\textsuperscript{19}

Although a few origin myths of the “Chinese nation” always came in handy for the articulation of the nation-space, the baseline for the construction of a new Chinese nation-state was – as Lipman argues - “not some culturally homogeneous mythic past but rather the solid, familiar, comprehensible Qing empire” - carved out in the seventeenth century with Manchu, Mongol, Chinese and Muslim subjects and a many-hatted Manchu emperor at its center.\textsuperscript{20} After all, what makes a more persuasive symbol than the fixed boundaries on the map that is seen every day to make people believe they all belong to the same community? Following the collapse of the Qing rule, the new Republican government has indeed claimed sovereignty over all of the former Qing territories. Sun Yat-sen, who was later hailed as the “father of the Republic”, expediently abandoned the anti-Manchu/anti-barbarian (ch. quchu dalu 驱除鞑虏) ideology he frequently evoked during his career as a revolutionary. Instead, he became the main promulgator a policy of “wuzu gonghe” (Five Races under One Union) in order to bring all the peoples who live in the frontiers into one big family - the Republic of China.

There surely have been momentous changes in the political reality in the late Qing frontiers when “zhongguo” was in the middle of a transmutation from empire to nation-state. However, to say the upshot of this transformation is that the state

\textsuperscript{19} Di Cosmo, Nicola. and Wyatt, Don J., p. 14

\textsuperscript{20} Lipman 2002, p. 115
sovereignty starts to operate “fully, flatly, and evenly” in every inch of the land of the modern nation-state would to be an exaggeration even in today’s China, when the power at the political center is much stronger. In fact, when the Republican government was founded, the Guomindang (Sun Yat-sen’s military-party) leaders still had to confront local leaders and warlords as well as foreign imperialist powers at the frontiers. Counter-intuitively, it was exactly during the period marked by great political chaos and weakness of the political center that the bianjiang began to be integrated into the “Chinese nation”.  

How do we understand this paradoxical transition? Mere diplomatic and military actions and official ethnic policy of the Guomindang government would not be sufficed to reconfigure the once unfamiliar, inchoate imperial frontiers into the fixed, emotion-laden borders of the modern nation-state. However, it was the educated Han and non-Han elites , who were preoccupied with the imperialist threats and the upcoming “demise of the Chinese nation” (miezhong) - actively engaged in the work of – to use Benedict Anderson’s well-known metaphor – “stretching the tight skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the former empire.” On the one hand, through what Chen Zhihong calls “empirically rigorous and disciplinary specific research”22, exuberant travel writings, mass publications, modern educations, the Han Chinese intellectuals were busily engaged in the work of “saturating, controlling and

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21 Ibid., p. 116
22 Chen, p. 15
institutionalizing” the frontier space before it was carved up by the imperial powers. On the other hand, in order to be included in the prevailing discourse of the modern Chinese nation, the “awakened” leaders of the marginalized groups (e.g. the Sinophone Muslims) also sought to imbue a sense of nationalism among their followers by virtues of political associations, reformed educational system and communication media.

While this chapter attempts to document the narrativization of the non-Han peoples by the Han elites in the beginning of the 20th century, the nationalist and the modernist movement and education reforms within the Chinese Muslim communities will be the main focus of the later chapters.

**The “frontier question” and the question of ethnic categorization**

The fact these nationalist elites impose a vision on the vast, unmarked territories of bianjiang was much more important than whether what they observed there actually reflect social and political reality at the time. Similar to what Homi Bhabha called “the performativity of the language in the narrative of the nation”, the “borderization” of China’s frontiers was also a performative discourse that seeks to

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“legitimate a new definition of the frontiers whereby the region, a reality thus named, becomes the site of the struggle to define reality, rather than simply the reality itself.”

After the fall of the Qing Empire, the former imperial subjects were suddenly facing difficult questions while they were trying to come to terms with the collapse of the old imperial order. This moment of “ethnic awakening” was not exclusive to Han people at the beginning of the century, as other ethnic groups felt the same exigent need to redefine their identity in the great political chaos. The vectors of their “awakening”, however, were not all pointing in the same directions. For example, the Mongol nationalists declared independence in 1911 under the leadership of Bogd Khaan. Subsequently, Mongolian People’s Republic was founded in 1924 with the aid from the Soviet Union. The Turkish-speaking Muslims living in the former-Qing’s Central Asian borderland – who until recently acquired the name Uyghur – were also successful in establishing short-lived East Turkestan republics in the 30s and 40s. In contrast, the Chinese-speaking Hui Muslims largely remained a centripetal force to the political center’s effort of “unifying the nation”. With “aiguo aijiao” (love the country is equivalent as love the religion) as the most popular slogan among the Hui community at the time, many Hui leaders actively participated in the modernist movement of strengthening China and defending it from imperialist

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24 Liu, p.29
At the core of the nationalist’s struggle for winning over the loyalty or identification (rentong gan) of the ethnically non-Han people at the frontiers toward the political center in the 1920s and 1930s was the debate over how to categorize them. When it comes to the “ethnic classification”, or the question of what entails a Chinese “national identity”, there was a great deal of confusions over the meanings of widely used ethnic labels like “zu”, “zhong”, “minzu”. Although the “Five Races under One Union” policy was upheld by the Republican officials well into the 1940s, the revitalization and circulation of the term Zhonghua minzu (Chinese Nation) signals a more assimilationalist turn of the Republican government’s ethnic policy when the officials and Han elites started to feel that the “Five Races under One Union” policy – based on the racialist discourse from the West – was divisive to the Republican legacy. Originally coined by Liang Qichao, Zhonghua minzu initially referred only to the Han Chinese. It was then expanded to include all the five major races and was constructed with a sense of distinct ambiguity about whether it is singular or plural. Even Sun Yat-sen himself, having regretted the currency of “Five Races under One Union” at a later time, sought to further expanded the concept of “zhonghua minzu” through acculturation of the non-Han races. He remarked in 1924,

Some people say, after the overthrow of the Qing, we will have no further need of nationalism. Those words are certainly wrong... At the present we speak of

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25 Matsumoto, 2005
unifying the ‘five nationalities’ (Han, Manchu, Mongol, Hui, and Tibetan), yet surely our country has far more than five nationalities? My stand is that we should unite all the peoples of China into one Chinese nation (Zhonghua minzu)...and, furthermore, develop that nation into an advanced, civilized nation; only then will nationalism be finished.²⁶

As French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has shown, the struggle over the categorization of population was immediately also a struggles over “the monopoly of the power to make people see and believe, to get them to know and recognize, to impose the legitimate definition of the divisions of the social world and, thereby, to make and unmake groups.” It is little surprise that the often subjective ethnic identity and the objective ethnic identification are intricately and inseparably connected. When an ethnonym is imposed on a whole group, it starts to “establish meaning and a consensus about meaning, and in particular about the identity and unity of the group.”²⁷ In order to understand the complicated ties between identity and identification, perhaps we should ask a question that is even more radical: “does one possess a self, an identity, which stands prior to the words we use to describe it?”²⁸

Among the Chinese intellectuals, there has been a plethora of heated discussions and vexed debates concerning the “frontier question” and the questions of ethnic categorization in the Republic. After the “Manchurian Incident” in 1931 during which

²⁶ 孫中山. 1920年11月在上海國民黨本部會議. 孫中山全集第1卷, ‘中華書局’: 394
²⁷ Bourdieu, p. 221
²⁸ Mullaney, p. 14
Japan began its occupation of northeast China, the imminent danger that China may fall into a colony or colonies often subsumed and even reoriented the supposedly “objective” and “scientific” criteria of academic research. The prescriptive and sometimes even “Procrustean” narratives anchored by many nationalist thinkers were often posed against the descriptive and analytic approach valued by other – despite the fact both of them intended to do (and believed they are doing) authentic, normative scholarship.

Gu Jiegang, as an iconoclastic intellectual who actively engaged with the frontier issues; a renowned antiquarian historian who was mostly remembered for his work on “doubting the antiquity”; and a sensitive soul responding to his time; was at once an emblematic case and an anomaly in this intellectual tide– both politically and on the thematic level.29 Not only does the very ambiguity of Gu’s work reveal “the limits of our scholarly categories for conceptualizing modern Chinese history”, but – according to a historian’s take on the complicated intellectual orientation of Gu Jiegang’s thought - in order to understand Gu’s choice on his scholarship, we shall also “examine how he addressed the needs of the time and how he located himself in the discourse of history.”30

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29 James Leibold has nicely illustrated that Gu Jiegang’s conception of the Chinese race ran contrary not only to the official narrative of Guomindang, but also to the narrative of much of the New Cultural generation – of which he was often thought as a member. (Leibold 2006, pp. 193-199)

30 Hon, pp. 315-316
Gu Jiegang and his vision of the frontiers and the Chinese nation

As one of China’s most prolific antiquarian scholars and philologists, Gu Jiegang (1893-1980) earned his reputation in both high culture (e.g., classical studies) and popular culture (e.g., folklore) and was known for his involvement with scholarly publications on frontier and ethnography. A Suzhou native who spent most of his life studying and teaching in Peking (Beijing), Gu Jiegang was living in a China that was plagued by foreign invasions and political disorder. When Gu began his career as an historian in the 1920s, China had already accepted the “Twenty-One Demands” which normalized Japanese acquisition of the Shandong province, and Peking was still the battleground for various warlord factions. Since the “Manchuria crisis” (known in China as the Nine-Eighteen incident) of 1931, Japan had effectively taken over the entirety of China’s northeastern provinces. Consequently, one dominant theme of the scholarship in the 20s and 30s was that whether the “Chinese” territory would disintegrate into fragments and whether China, both as a nation and a race (zhong), could survive the twentieth century as a whole. Like many of his peers at the time, Gu imagined the imminent loss of all of China’s vast frontier regions and wrote sometimes in terrible haste to put forward counter-argument to the perceived inimical Japanese scholarship on Chinese geography. Similarly, Gu shared a concern with other modern Chinese scholars in writing a history from the point of view of Chinese nation rather than for the ruling dynasties – an epistemological break advocated by Liang Qichao in his famous article "new history" (xin shixue), which is
published in 1902. Even though Gu's primary focus was the ancient history, we are still able to trace a vision of a new China that implied in those studies.

However, Gu Jiegang would be a much less intriguing figure if he was not at the same time an anomaly both in politics and with regard to the academic environment in which he lived. Deeply influenced by his teacher Hu Shih’s scientific, evidenced-based research methods, Gu refuses to accept the teleological account of China's national history. Moreover, He rejected the Guomindang government’s official ideology that the Chinese nation descended purely from antiquity because he was convicted with the belief that the dynamic of change in China lay in that nation's cultural and ethnic diversity. Gu’s refusal to give the Han people a privileged position in the historical narrative was exemplary of the political and intellectual interests of his group of scholars at the time, who sought to neutralize the harmful effects of the Han Chauvinism advocated by the earlier revolutionaries. His scholarship on the late Qing frontiers and non-Han peoples who live there, although as “Procrustean” as that of his nationalist peers, was also marked by a distinct desire to foreground the two-fold dynamism in China - the diachronic dynamism in time (e.g., dynastic and epochal differences) and synchronic dynamism in space (e.g., local and regional differences). 31

To the increasing number of Western scholars who take interests in Gu Jiegang’s life

31 Hon, p.315
and work, it is precisely this contradiction in Gu’s scholarship that helps to uncover the predicament that Chinese nationalist intellectuals often faced within the broader context of the contesting narratives of national unity and identity during the formative Republican era. Hon Tze-Ki’s study opines that “the ‘antitraditional’ Gu seems to be proud of the culture of his nation, and the ‘scientific’ Gu seems to think that China will remain China even after undergoing a ‘scientific revolution.’”32

German scholar Ursula Richter, who wrote lengthy theses on Gu Jiegang’s life and scholarship, also called Gu a "traditional and yet modern scholar who was true to tradition also in that he 'obeyed yet resisted"33. In a sense, Gu Jiegang’s paradox was reminiscent of the late Joseph Levenson’s description of “patriotic schizophrenia" that gnaws many May Fourth intellectuals who were at once “intellectually alienated from” yet “emotionally attached to” China’s Confucian past. In the Alienated Academy, Yeh Wen-Hsin argued that this “peculiarly twentieth-century sense of estrangement” felt by many Chinese intellectuals who were trained in but also resisted classical Chinese scholarship at the turn-of-the-century China, was symptomatic of Max Weber’s concept of "disenchantment" (German: Entzauberung) or "demystification" - the cultural rationalization and devaluation of mysticism apparent in modern society.34

Given the complexity in Gu Jiegang’s life and thought, we shall understand the

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32 Hon, p.315
33 Richter, p. 288
34 Yeh, p. 5
development of Gu’s vision with regard to China’s unity and frontiers as such. I propose that the Gu’s work on China’s geographic frontiers can be critically investigated in accordance with the following three concurrent and mutually relevant themes: the competing historical narratives of the “Chinese” frontiers between Chinese and Japanese scholarship; the inseparability between the ethnic discourse and China’s “re-territorialization”; and, finally, the search for political agency among the intellectuals in wartime China.

After the breakout of Sino-Japanese war in 1937, Gu Jiegang took a year-long excursion to the Northwest regions (xibei). While there, Gu noticed that not only the foreign Christian missionaries have already been there for decades, but it also seemed to him that they have established schools and hospitals in places where the Chinese state had no effective control for years. Since modern intellectuals’ reconceptualization of Chinese territory was developed in reference to the Qing imperial realm, Gu felt deep anxiety over the dividedness of northwestern society and the effectiveness of Western influence there.

However, to him what aggravated the situation the most was the fact that many Chinese scholars, ignorant of their own tradition of geographical knowledge, generally followed Japanese guideposts. Mistakenly convinced that the word

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35 Gu 1938, pp. 139-40
36 Lipman 2001, p. 122
zhongguo benbu – or “China proper” was coined by the Japanese to imply that China’s ethnic “frontiers” was not originally part of the Chinese community, Gu Jiegang admonished that the widespread usage of the term has rectified the penetration of the Japanese into these lands.

Look at our eastern neighbor. Intending to invade us, they created the term benbu (“China Proper”) for our eighteen provinces. This implied that our frontier regions did not originally belong to us. Like a group of fools we accepted their poison. Our geographical textbooks all began to use this term. Isn’t this shameful?

Gu had little doubt about the devastating effect a single term can wreak into the racial discourse and the political reality in China. He hastened to point out that, the reason that the term “China proper” was popular was due to the introduction of Japanese geography into China and the comparatively less developed scholarships in geography and ethnoology in China.

...because the vicious term “China proper” has been spread around, the Chinese people were again misled to believe that the inhabitants of the “China proper” was the main part, while the other four relatively more populous minzu occupy China’s frontiers from the northeast all the way to the southwest.....This is the origin of the concept “Five Major Races”.

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37 I suspect that a completely equivalence cannot be established without qualification between the Chinese word “zhongguo benbu” and the English term “China proper”, and not even between the Chinese word “中国本部” and the term “中国本土” in Japanese. However, for expediency’s sake and for the purpose of our discussion, I shall translate them as such.

38 Gu Jiegang 1984

39 Gu Jiegang, “zhonghua minzu shi yige”
Echoing the scholarship of his prominent historian friend Fu Sinian (1896-1950) who, following the tradition of Rankean school of historical analysis, wrote (with inevitable haste) a history of *Dongbei* (Northeast China) in an effort to reject the Japanese claims of Manchuria, Gu proclaimed that the Chinese intellectuals should develop their own rigorous study of China’s geography.

...we must divide the domain of China in accordance with real basis of the state and natural areas. We shall not lose our judgment and carelessly follow the terms others created in order to mislead us. If we do that, the frontier land of our country would disappear from our own concept even before it is subject to the invasion of our enemy.\(^{40}\)

However, to Gu Jiegang, the hegemonic discourse of Japanese scholarship was manifested not only in geography but in the ethnic narratives as well.

The first consequence of this evil seed was the Japanese occupation of our three Northeast provinces, where they established a puppet ‘Manchukuo’ in the name of ‘national self-determination’. Following this, they want to create yet other puppet states – ‘Dayuankuo’ (Great Mongol State) and ‘Huihuikuo’ (Chinese Muslim State). Ever since the Manchuria incident, they have not been taking a break. They even plan to cause troubles in our Southwest under the pretext of Shanzu. If we are still not awakening today, if we continue to following the step of the early Republican revolutionaries into the imperialist traps, and continue to talk about this and that minzu in our country, then the collapse of the Republic of China is imminent.\(^{41}\)

We can clearly see here that Gu understood the exigency of defending China’s frontiers was inseparably linked with a question of defining what constitutes a

\(^{40}\) *Ibid.\,*

\(^{41}\) *Ibid.\,*
“Chinese” identity. In a variety of his writings, Gu Jiegang suggested the abolition of not only the term “zhonghua benbu” but also the Republican government’s official slogan of “wuda minzu” (Five Major Ethnicities). He regretted the pervasiveness of racist discourse in China since the revolution, for he believed that this arbitrary ethnic categorization created inevitable divisions within China.

There has been an additional reason – the revolutionaries who revolted against the Manchu court at the end of the Qing dynasty were propagandizing ‘racial revolutions’ and belief in ‘minzu zhuyi’ (nationalism), further confounding the meaning between the term ‘race’ and ‘minzu’ [in Chinese]. Therefore, after the success of the Xinhai Revolution, the Republican government came up with the slogan of “Five Races Under One Union”, and then set the five-color flag of red, yellow, blue, white and black to be the national flag. The five-color flag cannot be more salient…. and the public memory of the flag in the past decades was indelible – which caused the crises on our national frontiers today.42

Meanwhile, Gu disqualified the historical accuracy of the talk that the Chinese originated from a single race, for “as the boundaries of China changed in time, the composition of ‘the Chinese’ changed as well”43. He prefers subjective categorization of minzu – which is based on a common consciousness - over the objectified labeling based on common blood (zhongzu). Proclaiming that “there has long been a single, unified zhonghua minzu (Chinese nation)”44, Gu advocated to use the cultural marker instead of racial ones to unify the Chinese people into a single national body.

Since we are all Chinese, we have many common interests. If we develop a good method of unifying the nation, we shall have no difficulty in staying together.

42 Ibid.,
43 Ibid.,
44 Ibid.,
The government does not need to lie, telling us that we all have descended from the same ancestors. Even if the government is successful in unifying the country with lies, this unity will be flimsy. Once the people become intelligent, can this trick still deceive them?45

In a study that is probably most indicative of Gu’s own confusion over the taxonomy of Chinese people, he suggests China is comprised of three cultural groups – “the Han cultural group (which includes Manchu culture), the Tibetan cultural group (including Mongolian culture), and the Muslim cultural group (including both Han and Hui culture).”46 Base on this new conceptual framework, Gu favored cultural exchange over racial purity and actively advocated intermarriage between different peoples. Not being able to avoid the blood-based Social Darwinist discourse of his time, Gu argued from an early time – and had adhered to his belief - that the “virility” of the frontier had been – and can still – playing a central role in invigorating the Zhonghua minzu as a nation.47

In the period of the Warring States (403-255 B.C.), when there was an influx of many new racial elements, China was unusually vigorous and powerful, but in the Han dynasty the arbitrary power of the monarchy, and the exclusiveness of Confucian teaching, brought Chinese culture to the verge of extinction... Had it not been for the infusion of new blood from the wuhu, or Five Barbarian Tribes of the Jin dynasty (265-419 A.D.), from the Khitan (eleventh century), from the Jurchen (twelfth century), and the Mongols (thirteenth century), I fear that the Han race could not have survived.48

47 Lipman, “Travelers”
48 Gu Jiegang 1926. "Gushi bian di yi ce zixu" (An autobiographical note to volume one of Gushi bian), Vol. 1, p. 89. Tr. HUMMEL, ARTHUR
However, aside from Gu Jiegan’s antiquarian scholarship, he was perhaps most remembered for his involvement with frontier researches and frontier activities through the Yu Gong (tributary to the Yu) society, of which he was the founder. Actively seeking political agency through their scholarship and social activism, the members of Yu Gong Society were not satisfied by merely writing the “history of Chinese people” in their effort to raise the national awareness. Instead, they sought to “go to the people” and “go to the frontiers”, and saturate the frontier people with the knowledge and national sentiment from the neidi (Inner China). Just as the folklore studies were used to substantiate the nationalist movement in 19th Germany, Gu’s life-long engagement with folklore studies and his enthusiasm in promoting frontier education was an embodiment of the nationalist elites’ perception of the necessity in bridging the high culture and the low culture, as well as between the neidi and the frontiers.

Gu’s attentiveness to the need for frontier education (esp. in Han Chinese languages) derived from his own journey into the xibei (Northwest). In his travel journal he recorded his deep anxiety over the ethnic tension between Hui and Han, Hui and Tibetans, and the devoutness of the Hui Muslims toward their Shaykh (religious leader).49 Facing the social reality in the frontiers that most nationalist thinkers would probably refuse to acknowledge, Gu opines about “using veterinarian, motion

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pictures, music records, pictures (tuhua) and theatre to attract those people...making them familiar to the modern culture, and then they will know the importance of modern education.\textsuperscript{50} It is Gu’s firm belief that an “imagined community” can be made possible primarily through the standardization of (frontier) education and the transmission of print culture to the less populated regions. Though tired and worried at the end of his exile-like journey, Gu ended his observations on a positive note,

\textit{If inner and frontier China have the same education, it will create the same consciousness. If there is the same consciousness, one can understand each other’s emotion. If that becomes possible, China would be unified into one.}\textsuperscript{51}

Conclusion:

As Benedetto Croce beautifully reminded us, "all history is contemporary history". The incipient interest that many Han Chinese scholars developed in the history and livelihood of the – at the time still primitive and barbaric to most – non-Han population was closely connected to their engagement with the contemporary events. The dislocation of the symbolic place that the non-Han people occupied in Chinese identity, as well as the paradigmatic shift in thinking about Chinese history in relation to the Others, occurred in conjunction with the cultural rationalization and devaluation of mysticism that was brought in by the onslaught of (Western)

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.,

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.,
modernity. Meanwhile, the urban, male Han intellectuals in China, preoccupied with the burning desire to simultaneously imagine and unify the nation (a modern form of myth-making), engaged in the “borderization” project whereby the intellectuals sought to integrate the late imperial frontiers into the New China through whatever discursive, historical, and ethnographic tools available.

However, just as Nicole Elizabeth Barnes pointedly argued in her examination of the intellectuals who wrote about China’s Northwestern borderlands, the ambiguity in the work and politics of Gu Jiegang uncovers a greater irony in his life. With a positivist training in historical analysis and a lifelong conviction that one should never bend his or her scholarship to serve one’s political goals, Gu nevertheless devoted a large part of his own life’s work to the political fate of his nation.  

This is a double-agony that Gu Jiegang shared with Fu Sinian, Luo Jialun, and many other serious Republican historians who had to, in various degrees, distort historical evidences in order to make their work serviceable to the intellectual resistance against the Japanese imperialism, and also to the making of a unified imaginary of a Chinese nation. Even to this day, many great scholars in China (People’s Republic of) have to make similar compromises.

52 Barnes, p. 36
Chapter 3

Translate and Transform - Translation of the Qur’an in Early Twentieth Century China

When we think of words, we think historically: that words were first spoken and then later they became composed of letters. In contrast, the Kabbalah (which means reception, tradition) believes that the letters come first, that they were the instruments of God, not the words signified by the letters. It is as if one were to think of writing, contrary to experience, as older than the speaking of the language. Nothing, then, can be accidental in the Scriptures; everything must be predetermined, including, for example, the number of letters in each verse.

- Jorge Louis Borges, Seven Nights

Translations, of course, not only transmit, they transform.

- Eugene Chen Eoyang

1. The (in)imitability of the Qur’an

Among all the major religions in the traditional world, the Islamic religion presents itself to be a “religion of the book” par excellence. The Qur’an, believed to be verbally revealed to Prophet Muhammad from the Allah through angel Jibril, is the sacred book of the Islamic religion. In the meantime, it is alleged that the Qur’an was precisely memorized, recited and exactly recorded by Muhammad’s companions (Sahaba) each time from the prophet’s recitations of the words of Allah. Strict adherence to this view of the Qur’an has found its expressions in many consequential social and cultural constructions in the traditional Islamic societies. Among them, two were of most importance for us to consider in this chapter.

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1 Borges, Jorge Louis. Seven Nights, p. 97
2 Eoyang, Eugene Chen. The transparent eye: reflections on translation, Chinese literature, and comparative poetics, University of Hawaii Press, 1993, p. 54
Firstly, since the Qur’an is believed to be God’s last revelation to this world, the Qur’anic passages, though subject to various interpretations following the death of Muhammad, are generally regarded by Muslims as the ultimate guidance for their daily life. As the term “Islam” (literally means “to submit”) suggests, to a faith follower of the Islamic religion, the verses from the Qur’an should be deeply personal, as the believers are supposed to construe their law, their morality, and even their meaning of life in accordance with the texts from the Qur’an. In a preface to the renowned 17th century Sino-Muslim scholar Ma Zhu’s book *Qingzhen Zhinan* (清真指南), the Qur’an is succinctly portrayed as the only path to salvation: "Scripture is the path. It is like path in the mountain, bridge over the river, boat in the sea. Those lost who want to go to the heavenly realm, must follow the path."

Secondly, because the Qur’an is understood as a verbatim documentation of the Word of Allah, the perception of the Book among its followers is fundamentally different from that of a classic book in either the Western or the Chinese literary tradition (the Canon or *jingdian* 经典). Just as the literal meaning of Qur’an is “to recite”, the passages from Qur’an were subject only to literal recitation (by the “people of the Book”). Any modification, curtailing, or adaptation of the Qur’an would be sacrilegious. The great Argentine writer Borges evocatively captures this view in his writings about the Sacred Scriptures – “Nothing, then, can be accidental in the Scriptures; everything must be predetermined, including, for example, the

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3“经者径也，譬如山之路，河之梁，海之舟。迷者欲觅天境，必资是径。”马注：《清真指南》. Chapter1.
number of letters in each verse.\textsuperscript{4}

If we – the secular cosmopolitans living in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century - are even capable of comprehending these essential differentiations between a “sacred book” and a classical book described by Borges, it would not be difficult for us to understand the deep-rooted reluctance among the Muslims to translate the Qur’an into other languages. Borges arrested this sentiment in his mystifying, literary expression,

\begin{quote}
[i]n a sacred book, not only the words but the letters with which the words are written are sacred... For the ulema, the doctors of Moslem law, the Koran is not a book like the others. It is a book—this is incredible, but this is how it is—that is older than the Arabic language. For the orthodox Moslems the Koran is an attribute of God, like His rage, His pity, or His justice. The Koran itself speaks of a mysterious book, the mother of the book, the celestial archetype of the Koran. It is in heaven and is worshiped by the angels.\textsuperscript{5}
\end{quote}

Nevertheless, if we must also seek a sociological (i.e. duller) explanation for this curious belief, we may consider Fazlur Rahman’s suggestion - that it is perhaps in pre-Islamic Arabs’ pride in the expressive quality of the Arabic language that this ideal-type took form.\textsuperscript{6} In fact, the expressivity of the language was putatively used by the early converts to validate the greatness of their God – “the early followers of Islam declared that no power except God can produce even one chapter (al-sura) of

\textsuperscript{4}Borges, Jorge Louis.  \textit{Seven Nights}, p. 97
\textsuperscript{5}Ibid., pp. 97-98
the Qur'an and challenges its contractors to produce anything like it." This sentiment can be traced in the Qur'an itself, "Say (O Muhammad!): 'If all the humans and the jinn ("spirits", ch. 精灵) were to collectively attempt to bring the like of this Qur'an, they will be unable to' (the Qur'an: 17:88)."

When the 19th and 20th century Sino-Muslim scholars debated over the translatability of the Qur'an, it is precisely the uncreated nature and the level of articulacy of the Book that they mostly focused on – the Qur'anic verses are believed to be of such a degree of elegance and sophistication that is unattainable by any mortals. Even Xie Songtao, a Sino-Muslim scholar and sympathizer of the Qur'anic translators, echoed this sentiment in an article in 1941,

Translation, in its essence, is about carrying the selfsame truth into another language. The Qur'an does not only have profound meanings, it was also written in a form of elegant rhymes. In terms of conveying the truth, it is possible to achieve it in another language; however, in terms of the elegance of the Qur'anic prose, it is impossible to preserve it through translation. If it has to be done, the translator must devote his utmost on it. If the original prose implies admonition or promise, the translation should also imply admonition or promise. The nobility and elegance of the Qur'an need also be reflected in the translation. These two points are tremendously difficult to accomplish. Because Qur'an is the prose of Allah, the sacred prose from super-human realm, instead of the words from mortals. Therefore, it is absolutely unimaginable to have a faithful translation of the Qur'an. The reason that many grand ʕālimūn maintain that the Qur'an is not translatable, is not what the superficial people often termed as the conflict between old and new thoughts. [But]they formalized their opinion from their extraordinary insight.

7 Ibid., p.24  
8 Ibid.  
9 Xie, Songtao 谢松涛. 我对于翻译《古兰》的管见. 中国伊斯兰教史参考资料选编（下）. p.96
The conviction in the vainness of any project that tries to carry the Qur’an’s unique style and preponderant message simultaneously into another language has perhaps a germ of truth in it. Upon examining the various translations of the Qur'an in European languages since the 18th century, Fazlur Rahman concludes that the translators of the Qur’an often have to choose between a truthfulness to the precise wording of the Book (therefore sacrificing its rhythmic beauty) and an affinity to the Book’s expressive quality (therefore destroying the its “natural” structure).¹⁰ In fact, as translators of any sacred scriptures would tend to agree by now, the earlier pursuit of a complete identical verbalization of the Words of God into another language is proved impossible - as Eugene Nida, a linguist who developed the translation theory regarding the distinction between Formal Equivalence (F-E) and Dynamic Equivalence (D-E), memorably proclaimed: "there are no such things as identical equivalents".¹¹ We may even venture to suggest that the broadly-accepted concept of the "inimitability (Arabic: ُإِعْجَاز) of the Qur’an” – namely, the unique, miraculous quality of the Islamic Scripture that renders any of its emulators completely hopeless and powerless – may in fact derive its validity in part from this unattainable linguistic gap.

However, as we shall see later in the agonies of the Qur’an’s Chinese translators, such as Ahong Wang Jingzhai, the theological implications of the translating the

¹¹ Nida 1964, p. 157
Qur’an tend to even transcend the issues of maintaining the equivalence in both style and content. In addition to extolling the unequaled expressivity of the Qur’anic Arabic, the Sacred Book itself proclaims that it cannot be reproduced in Arabic or any other languages because “its message and its world-view constitute a cohesive unity (4:82; 11:1) and that there is absolutely no contradiction within it.”\textsuperscript{12} Therefore, in addition to a theological prohibition to the translation of the Qur’an as asserted by the Qur’an itself, there has also been a conceptual one – a translator of the Qur’an must know all the nuances and historical background of each sura to understand the Book as a comprehensive whole.\textsuperscript{13}

By the end of the 19th century, the multiple juggernaut forces of the modern era have already fundamentally altered traditional values, social relations, environment, and individual subjectivities in most parts of the world. Among the agents of modernization were two concomitant tides famously proposed by Max Weber – the disenchantment (the discontinuation of understanding the reality through mystery and “magical thinking”) and rationalization (fittingly defined in an article as “the process where an increasing number of social actions become based on considerations of teleological efficiency or calculation rather than on motivations derived from morality, emotion, custom, or tradition”). Bearing the imprint of these two phenomenal conceptual changes in the contemporary world, some modernist


\textsuperscript{13} *Ibid.*,
Islamic intellectuals from the Islamic heartland began to contemplate on the delineation between religious belief and the social reality.

In the meantime, despite being plagued by prevalent illiteracy, social marginalization, and, in certain social milieu, sanguinary wars\textsuperscript{14} at the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the Chinese Muslim communities nevertheless experienced multiple processes of modernization – though to enormously varied degrees - in the sphere of education, in the changing conceptions of time and space, and even in individual’s subjective relation to the religion. Meanwhile, however inviolate the tie between the Word of Allah and its verbalization in Arabic the traditional Muslim scholars were willing to believe, by the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the Arabic language has essentially become, to use Raphael Israeli’s characterization, a “dead language”\textsuperscript{15} among many of the Chinese-speaking Muslims who lived in isolated and “patchwork” communities among the Han majority.\textsuperscript{16}

In the earlier days, the pedagogy of reciting Qur’anic texts exclusively in Arabic or Persian in the madrasahs was a measure that the uprooted Muslims adopted to defend their religious and group identity in face of the dangers of acculturation from


\textsuperscript{15} Israeli, Raphael.2002. \textit{Islam in China}. p. 169

the neighboring non-Muslim communities. However, due to the gradual
sinicization over the centuries, the onetime Muslim immigrants have largely
abandoned their native tongue and become Sinophone, even though their
reluctance to study Chinese classics remained. In the meantime, the Islamic
scholarship within the émigré societies has been steadily devitalized as the result of
their severed connections with the Islamic heartland. What has left in the
traditional madrasahs (jingtang) was the archaic method of teaching Arabic (and
Persian) by means of oral recitations without much emphasis on the comprehension
of the text’s original meanings. The sacred scriptures, even in the religious schools
(jingtang), were taught through a corrupted system of transliterating Arabic into
Chinese. For example, the Shahada (Ch. 清真言) "la ilaha illa Allah" (لا إله إلا الله)
("There is no god but God") was rendered phonetically into Chinese version as
"la-yi-la-ho yin-lang-la-ho".18

Since most of the Sinophone Muslims from even the more literate east coastal cities
have never achieved the required level of proficiency in Arabic to understand the
Qur’an, the knowledge of Arabic and the access to Qur’anic texts have become the
prerogative of the members of the learned Muslim communities such as the ahongs
and hailifans (religious students).19 To the scholars and educator of the modernist

17 See chap. 6 for more discussion on the perception of decadence of traditional Islamic education in
the turn-of-the-century-China.
18 Aubin, p. 248
19 Hailifan is a term for (usually advanced) religious student used mostly in the Muslim communities
in the eastern coastal cities. The equivalent in northwestern China and Yunnan is man-la(满拉) or
zongjing gesu (“sticking to the scripture and abandoning the vulgar teaching”) movement, many of those local Islamic leaders are ossified and morally degenerated, meanwhile, their methods in Islamic education were seen as obsolete, deeply embarrassing, and must be reformed.

Meanwhile, as discussed in chapter 2, the nationalist ambition of creating a single, unified zhonghua minzu (Chinese Nation) among the Han elites sparked interests in systematic studies of the Chinese Muslims. Concurrently, the Christian and later Japanese propaganda targeted at Muslims greatly upset many leaders of Islamic communities. The Christian missionaries have been active in China since the late Qing. As many reports on the situation of Islam in China have been published on the missionary bulletins, some of the missionaries have studied in depth about the Sino-Muslim communities and devised a set of strategies that targeted specifically the Muslims (a type of work known in the Sino-Muslim communities as huixuan). To carry out the propaganda works targeted at illiterate Muslim, they continued to use traditional religious vocabularies such as zhu (“the God”) or zhengjiao (“the orthodox”) in their proselytizing efforts, but explaining them in the Christian text in hope that those Muslim Chinese who were unable to distinguished the Islamic teachings from the Christian ones would simply follow the dogmas they preached.

Though this type of targeted propaganda work eventually produced minimal effects

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20 This proselytizing strategy is known to be used over centuries by Manichaean, Zoroastrian, Christian, Buddhist and Islamic missionaries in the Chinese society.
among the Muslims, the sudden influxes of interests in the Sino-Muslims from multiple parties resulted in a sense of urgency felt by many modernist Muslim intellectuals for a reawakening of Islamic identity. They proposed to achieve this goal by means of spreading the religious scriptures as well as reforming Islamic education.

Additionally, the renewed connections between the Sino-Muslim communities and the Arabic countries (in particular, Egypt) also played a principal role in the various aspects of Islamic reforms in China. According to Raphael Israeli, the Hanafi madhhab that traditional Chinese Islamic teaching (laojiao or gedimu) is part, is “less restricted on the matter of Qur’an’s translation than the other legal schools.”

In the mean time, many Sino-Muslims scholars, who were intellectually stimulated during their visits in the Middle Eastern countries, continued to look for guidance from contemporary Islamic journals published in the Arab world. In fact, many of these magazines were instrumental in spearheading Islamic modernist movement throughout the world. For example, as Matsumoto Masumi pointed out, the articles from the Nur al-Islam (“light of Islam”) – a bulletin published by al-Azhar University – were often closely followed. When an article is related to the problems that Muslims in China were facing, it would be translated and published on yuehua. Because of


22 赵振武：《校经室随笔》．《中国伊斯兰教史参考资料选编》（1911—1949）

the articles on Nur al-Islam are written by the al-Azhar professors, they carried an
often unquestioned authority in China. The opinion from Nur al-Islam on the
translatability of the Qur’an into a language other than Arabic was certainly
considered, at least by the esteemed yuehua editors, as definitive, as evidenced by
the fact that yuehua has hastened to publish a translated article penned by Nur
al-Islam’s editor-in-chief Muhammad Hazar Hoseini in favor of the translation of the
Qur’an.

Therefore, we have seen an unprecedented intensification of disputes among the
Islamic theologians regarding the translatability of Qur’an as well as the interpretative orientation of the translation in the beginning of Twentieth Century China. The burgeoning, progressive interpretation of the Islamic theology in consequence of the advent of modernization, the efforts of bringing the
Sino-Muslims into the single, unified Chinese nation by both Muslim and non-Muslim elites (described in Chap. 2), the spread of literacy at the beginning of the 20th century among east coastal Sino-Muslim communities, as well as the Christian missionary propaganda targeted at the Sino-Muslim communities all contributed to the reversal of traditional restrictions on the Qur’anic translation. The hope was that the enhanced accessibility of the Qur’an would spearhead a Islamic “revival” movement - to many, translating Qur’an into Chinese, therefore, is pertinent to the

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24 Matsumoto 2006, p. 130
very survival of Islam in China. Meanwhile, we have observed that the increased literacy among the Muslims in the coastal cities and the advancing printing technologies made the idea of basing Qur’anic teachings on Chinese more feasible than ever (in contrast, the introduction of qianzi yinshua “lead letterpress printing” in Arabic letters, though much desired, did not occur until later).  

Though not in total disregard of the dogmatic restrictions on rendering the Qur’an into another language, the Muslim and non-Muslim scholars in favor of the translation of the Qur’an were alert to the enormous impact that a Chinese-language Qur’an would register – in the social and cultural atmosphere both within and outside the Chinese Muslim communities, and in the inner as well as external life of a Muslim person. Wang Jingzhai ahong’s baihua (modern vernacular Chinese) translation of Qur’an (1946) was optimistically advised to print out 100,000 copies on high-quality papers and with “solemn and elegant” designs. The cost of the publication? Of course the “six million families” of Mu’mins in China would be happy to fund it! 

It is perhaps of no surprise that many ahongs who were staunch advocates of the

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26編輯部，〈時評：紀念九一九回文活字節〉，《月華》，卷 6 期 25.26.27 (1934 年 9 月)，頁 11-15。
27 Zhao, Zhenwu 赵振武： 论译印《古兰经》上王静斋阿衡书。《中国伊斯兰教史参考资料选编》（1911—1949） (下) pp. 163-164
modernist zunjing geshu (遵经革俗 “sticking to the scripture and abandoning the vulgar teaching”) movement were also early participants of the Qur’an’s translation. Xie Songtao offered a summary of the arguments put forward by these modern Islamic reformers:

That being said, there are also scholars who suggest that the Qur’an can be translated. According to their argument, the translated text is, of course, not comparable to the original scripture. But if we expect the people who do not know how to read Arabic to study the Qur’an, translation is the only way out. Among the Chinese Muslims there are many who do not know Arabic but have a deep understanding of the Islamic teaching. They gain their knowledge from the Han kitab. The exegeses and commentaries of the Qur’an made by the ancient sages like Ma Dexin and Liu Zhi and by contemporary scholars, though not comparable to the Qur’an in its original Arabic, remained to be authoritative works among the Chinese Muslims… The fact that Buddhism has not only existed in China to this day, and also penetrate into all levels of the society, can be attributed to the successful translations of the Buddhist scriptures by the scholars.  

Furthermore, Xie recounted the functionalist thought that one must make a distinction between the style and content when it comes to the Qur’an’s translation:

With regard to the transmission of the Qur’anic messages, both the original and translated texts should be of the singular truth expressed in different languages. Though there are many unsalvable flaws in the Chinese Qur’an, the project of translation would extend to the people who are unable to read

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28 Xie, Songtao.谢松涛:我对于翻译《古兰》的管见. 中国伊斯兰教史料参考资料选编（下）. p.96

29 Interestingly, in an article that deals the commensurability of Chinese and Islamic religious terms, Sato Minoru points out that Liu Zhi, who lived in the early Qing period, expressed similar ideas of style-content distinction in his Tianfang Xingli (天方性理). Liu Zhi claims that “letters in East and West are, although their shapes and sounds are different, the same in meaning and context....regardless of the differences in letters, there is no way that meanings would not match.” (SATO, Minoru. “Is Allah the Shangdi, the Supreme God?”)
Subsequent to the publication of the first non-Muslim translation of the Qur’an (1927) in China, the need of copies of scholarly translated and annotated Qur’an in Chinese was almost unanimously agreed in the articles published on influential Sino-Muslim journals and newspaper such as Yuehua. Thereafter, the principal issue that the Islamic communities seemed to be facing was now the interpretative orientation of the translation – namely, how to make the *Heavenly Scripture* intelligible in Chinese and relevant to the contemporary politics without distorting its original meanings. The style of the language in which the Qur’an shall be rendered becomes a principal question that apprehends the Muslim scholars and translators. As we can see in the latter half of this chapter, due to the absence of a unified *ulema*, different leading Muslim intellectuals respond to this question in similar yet differentiated ways.

2. Early Translators of the Qur’an in China

Since in the traditional Muslim societies the translation of Qur’an has been theologically prohibited, the earlier writings on Islamic thoughts only make oblique references to the *Heavenly Scripture* or the Hadith (ch. *shengxun* 圣). The entirety of Wang Daiyu (王岱□) and Ma Zhu (□注)’s works contain only a few translated

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30 Xie. Songtao 谢松涛:我对于翻译《古兰》的管见. 中国伊斯兰教史参考资料选编（下）. p.96
sentences from the Qur’an.\textsuperscript{31} Even among Liu Zhi (刘智)'s (1664-1730) extensive writings and exegeses, we can only find three short chapters (al-surat) of direct translation from the Qur’an.\textsuperscript{32} Though those great Islamic scholars’ works in Chinese languages - often collectively known as Han \textit{kitab} (ch. 汉克塔普) – are largely focused on revealing the commensurability between, or, on a deeper level, the fundamental unity among, Islam and the Chinese religions (Confucianism, Taoism, etc), none of them contemplate the idea of convertibility of the Heavenly Scripture (ch. \textit{tianjing} 天经) into Chinese. Liu Zhi, perhaps one who held the most liberal ground with respect to the Chinese translation of scripture and the transliteration of Arabic terms among the pre-19\textsuperscript{th} century Muslim scholars\textsuperscript{33,34}, expressed the dilemmas of rendering Qur’anic passages into a language that can be understood by his readers,

\textit{The divine word from the Heavenly Scripture has its natural grace in and of itself. It needs no further decorations. The passages I took the liberty to translate here perhaps will not fit with the original. I did my best just so that the meaning of those texts can be explained.}\textsuperscript{35}

Though we have seen an abundance of the pre-20th century exegeses and commentaries on the excerpts of Qur’an, none of them should be counted as

\begin{footnotes}
\item[32] \textit{Ibid.},
\item[33] \textit{Ibid.},
\item[34] See SATO, Minoru. “Is Allah the Shangdi, the Supreme God?” (Conference paper) URL: http://kuir.jm.kansai-u.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/10112/3383/1/3-2_SATO.pdf. Last Access: 12/26/11
\item[35] “天经圣谕，皆本然文妙，无庸藻饰，兹用汉译，或难符合，勉力为之，致意云尔。”
\end{footnotes}
translations of the Qur'an in a strict sense. Just as many Islamic legal traditions
(madhhab) believed that a translation is in and of itself an interpretation, those
“translators” have perhaps never intended their works to be direct translations of
the Qur’an – they were presented as commentary or digestion to both the author
and the reader. An exception to this genre of exegeses was a booklet of the
translated excerpts (of about 18 surat) from the Qur’an called the haitie (赫帖 or 孩
點). Given its relevance to the everyday issues in the religious life of the Muslims, the
haitie was widely popular in pre-20th century Sino-Muslim communities across China
and was available in a few dozen translations.36

Aside from the dogmatic restrictions, in order to be considered as an adequate
translator of the Qur’an into Chinese, one must be an esteemed scholar in all aspects
of the Islamic religion. At the beginning of this chapter we have considered the lofty
standards set up for Qur’an’s translators from a theoretical point of view, here we
shall see the Sino-Muslim intellectuals grappling with this issue on similar terms. On
the one hand, it is believed that whoever is daring enough to translate the Heavenly
Scripture must first familiarize oneself with the religion’s (jiaozong) history, the
religion’s legal system, as well as the religion’s theories.37 On the other hand, one
must also possess a solid Chinese (guoxue 国学) background in order to render the
sacred texts into solemn yet elegant Chinese. The fact that several (at least four)
completed Chinese translations of the Qur’an in the early 1910s and 1920s have

37 Henning, p. 121
never even gone to print is partly explained by their failure to meet the high
standard set either by the translator himself or the scholars (and publishers) within
his personal networks. This level of rigorousness is captured in Wang Jingzhai’s
preface to his translated the Qur’an:

_The translation of Qur’an is a colossal undertaking, which is impossible to achieve
by the intelligence of a single man. In the Qur’an there are a great deal of special
terms that are related with astronomy, geography, botany, physiology, history,
military, jurisdiction, etc. One must consult with the scholars of the particular
fields. Meanwhile, one needs the reference from the English and French
translations (of the Qur’an)... After you receive help from all sides, you have to
ponder upon each words. The translator himself must have superb judgment. The
manuscripts must also be read innumerable times. After all the procedures above, it
can be sent to print. In addition, you still need selfless people to offer financial
support....otherwise, even if you have a good transcript, your undertaking would
come to no avail. This is an example of how difficult it is to translate the Qur’an._

Despite the extensive collaborations required among the scholars to produce a
translation of the Qur’an, the Chinese versions of the Heavenly Scripture are often
known as a single scholar’s work. The first person who attempted to accomplish a
systematic, scholarly translation (in a loose sense) of the Qur’an into Chinese was
perhaps the Yunnan-born theologian (ch. jingshi 经师) Yusuf Ma Dexin (1794-1874).
Ma Dexin (Fuchu), who is among the earliest Sino-Muslim scholars that performed
_hajj_ and lived extended years in the Middle Eastern countries (an experience directly
associated with his motivation and qualification in translating the Qur’an, as we will
see in the case of Wang Jingzhai and Ma Jian later), have also written a detailed

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38 Wang, Jingzhai 王静斋 《白话注解古兰天经》，译者述, 1942
account about his pilgrimage.39

Leaving his native Yunnan in 1841, Ma Dexin went by land with caravan traders from Sibsongbanna in southernmost Yunnan to Konbaung Burma, and then sailed from Yangon, via India, Bengal, Sri Lanka, and the Red Sea to Jeddah, from where he travelled for three days on the back of camels and horses to Mecca.40 Over his seven-year long meandering in the Middle Eastern countries, he visited Islamic scholars in places like Medina, Cairo, Istanbul, Alexandria and Jerusalem41, and “read scriptures that have never appeared in China; heard teachings that were never known in our country.”42 Besides, he greatly advanced his study of astronomy, geography and other scientific disciplines. Just because he was informed by an astronomer in Istanbul that the length of night and day always equals each other in Singapore, he lingered in that city for a year on his way back to China in order to verify this theory with his own observations.43

39 Ma, Dexin 马德新：《朝觐途记》，宁夏人民出版社, 1988

40 Aside from this popular (yet remarkably circuitous) route for the Yunnan Muslims in the early 19th century to make hajj, Ma Dexin also mentioned in details another route to Mecca, which he himself did not travel. The Muslims who took the northern route to Mecca (“天方北路”) normally leave Jiayuguan, and travel through Kumul (Hami), Turfan (Tulufan), Aksu, Kashgar, Karasahr (ch. 硨耆), Khanate of Kokand (ch. 浩罕), Samarkand, Bukhara, Tehran, Bagdad, Aleppo, Damascus, Jerusalem, Cairo, Jaffa (ch. 鴆法), and eventually to Mecca. (马德新：《朝觐途记》)

41 Ma, Dexin 马德新：《朝觐途记》，宁夏人民出版社, 1988

42 “目睹中华末见之经，耳闻吾国未传之道”

43 Luo She. [法] 罗舍,《云南回民革命见闻秘记》, 1952
Subsequent to his return to China, Ma Dexin penned a series of studies that aimed at making connections between Islam and other major Chinese belief systems (Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, folk religions) on the highest level\(^{44}\), advancing an enterprise that probably most closely resembles that of Ma Zhu, another Yunnan native. Though writing his scholarly works mostly in Arabic and Persian, Ma Dexin began to work on the first full-text Chinese translation of the Qur’an shortly after his return, with help from his disciples Ma Anli and Ma Kaike. \(^{45}\) The first five volumes of his Commentaries on the True Revealed Scripture (ch. baoming zhenjing zhijie 宝命真经直解) was posthumously published by Zhongguo Huijiao Xiehui (中国回教学会, “Chinese Muslim Scholars Association”) in December 1927, the same year in which the first full-text Chinese Qur’an rendered by a non-Muslim was printed in Beijing. If the preface of the published texts is to be trusted, Ma Dexin has finished 20 volumes of True Revealed Scripture but only the first five survived.\(^{46}\)

Though the full-text modern translations of the Qur’an appeared in Europe as early as mid-17\(^{th}\) century\(^{47}\), the Chinese Qur’an did not materialized until the 1930s,

\(^{44}\) Ma Dexin. 马德新,《祝天大赞》.光绪二十二年刻本. In Wang Jianping 王建平: 试论马德新著作中的“天”及伊斯兰教和儒家关系上海师范大学学报（哲学社会科学版）, 2004.06


\(^{46}\) Ma, Dexin 马德新,《宝命经直解》,中国回教学会, 1927 年 12 月

\(^{47}\) Andre du Ryer, a Frenchman who lived in Istanbul and Egypt for some time, made a direct translation of Qur’an from Arabic, published in Paris in 1647. Many other european translations were based on this version. The first English translation of Qur’an rendered into English was on the basis of
both due to the deep-rooted reluctance to translate the Qur’an into other languages and the atrophy of Qur’anic teachings among the Chinese Muslims. Moreover, given the divergence of religious interpretation and the intricacy of politics within the learned Chinese Muslim community, it was probably of little surprise that the printed full-text Chinese language translations of the Qur’an were first done by the non-Muslims. Li Tiezheng (李铁铮), a little-known Han scholar from Beijing, first rendered the text into literary Chinese (wenyan) in 1927. Not knowing Arabic himself, Tiezheng’s translation was based on the existing Japanese rendition of the Qur’an, which itself was translated by a Japanese Buddhist Sakamoto Ken-ichi from John Meadow Rodwell’s English translation in 1861. Three years later, Ji Juemi (姬觉弥), a versatile Han scholar, educator, cosmopolitan and business manager of Shanghai-based Jewish tycoon Silas Aaron Hardoon, collaborated with other Muslim and non-Muslim scholars to publish a more meticulous and elegant translation of the Qur’an in 1931 - Hanyi gulanjing (汉译古兰经 “The Chinese Qur’an”).

The Sino-Muslim communities in general responded to the non-Muslim translation of the Qur’an with a taciturn welcome. Nevertheless, many Muslim intellectuals are satisfied with neither of the translations on the ground of the translators’ deficient

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49 Sakamoto, Kenichi. 坂本健一, コーラン経: 回々教, 世界聖典全集刊行会, 1920
knowledge of Arabic language, history of Islam and their lack of consultation with the existing Qur’anic commentaries in Arabic – which amounts to “a few hundred types”.\textsuperscript{51} It is assumed that many huimin’s first reaction to the appearance of non-Muslims translation of the Qur’an was almost certainly – “there has got to be a certified Chinese translation done by the Sino-Muslim ourselves!” In fact, the deeply embarrassing situation that the Han Chinese would outdo the Muslim in the translation of the Qur’an has already been forewarned.\textsuperscript{52} In an article published in Zhongguo huijiao xuehui yuekan (中国回教学会月刊 “Chinese Muslim Scholars Association Monthly”) in 1927, Zhao Zhenwu expressed the urgency of rendering the Qur’an into Chinese by a Muslim,

\textit{Recently there have been deafening talks about translating of Qur’an into Chinese, although we have not seen any published text yet. Now even the non-Muslims express plenty of interests on this matter. Mr. Chen Yuan who is a Christian – published ‘Qur’an: a short introduction’ in an extra issue of the Beijing-based Morning News in 1925. The materials he relied on were apparently neither Arabic scriptures nor scholarship written by Muslims. The Qur’an he referred to was the Japanese version, which was translated from European languages. Therefore, the translation was bound to be dotted with mistakes. Nevertheless, it is easy to notice that the non-Muslims are increasingly paying attention to the canons of our religion. If we Muslims delay working on this any further, I am afraid that our Holy Qur’an would be translated by the non-Muslims. Wouldn’t it be a shame?}\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{51} Fu, Tongxian. 傅传仙：《中国回教史》，1937

\textsuperscript{52} This embarrassment is perhaps still shared within the Hui communities to this day. According to my limited exchanges with modern day Muslim intellectuals in China, many of them expressed uneasiness toward the statement that the Qur’an was firstly rendered into Chinese by a non-Muslim. They pointed out that there have been several full-text translations made by the Muslims before Li Tiezheng’s.

\textsuperscript{53} Zhao, Zhenwu. Jiaojing shi suibi.《中国回教学会月刊》第 1 卷第 2—7 号、9—12 号（1926 年）
Indeed, we see the emergence of the translations of Qur’an by the Chinese Muslims shortly thereafter. While Ji Juemi’s *Hanyi gulanjing* was published in 1931, a number of Muslim scholars were also working on their own translations of the Qur’an. The most notable publications in 1930s and 1940s are Wang Jingzhai’s *Gulanjing Yijie* (古兰经译解 “A Translation of the Qur’an with Commentaries”) (Beijing: 1932, Gansu: 1942, Shanghai: 1946), Liu Jinbiao’s *Kelanjing Hanyifuzhuan* (Beijing: 1943), and Yang Zhongming’s *Gulanjing Dayi* (古兰经大义) (Beijing: 1947). Meanwhile, among all the versions of Qur’an ever published in Chinese, Muslim scholar Ma Jian’s translation project in the 1940s (published in full-text in 1981) and Wang Jingzhai’s translation in 1946 remained to be the most influential.

3. **Wang Jingzhai and his *gulanjingyijie***

Yaqub Wang Jingzhai (Wenqing) (1879-1949) was born and raised in a family of traditional Islamic teachings (*laojiao*) in Tianjin. He began studying Arabic with his father *ahong* Wang Lanting at the age of eight in preparation for his future career as an *ahong*. Despite his early reluctance of learning Chinese – a sentiment shared by many religious students of his time - he later became sufficiently literate in Chinese classical texts in addition to gaining proficiency in Persian and Arabic. Feeling alienated by the traditional *jingtang* (“scriptural hall”) education, he left his native Tianjin at an age of seventeen and travelled around to study under a variety of

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prominent ahongs. In his early years as a hailifan (海里凡, “religious students”), two Islamic teachers made particularly lasting impacts on him - Yu Mianzhai (于勉斋), a Muslim scholar known for being well-versed in Chinese classics (guoxue), and Hai Sifu (海思福) (1821-1918), a forefront figure in the modernist “scriptural fundamentalist” (zunjing gesu 尊经革俗) movement in northern China.55

Profusely well-read in Arabic and Persian texts and intellectually identified with the “scriptural fundamentalist” (ch. zunjing gesu 尊经革俗) movement, Wang Jingzhai found himself at odds with the hackneyed traditional jingtang-style education and the “decadent” ahongs whose teaching was often laden with errors. Meanwhile, his intellectual cosmopolitanism drew him toward novel ideas – the writings from May Fourth intellectuals, the sanminzhuyi (三民主义, “Three Principles of the People”) promulgated by Sun Yat-sen, and even the scholarships on China’s Eastern Turkestan frontiers (Xinjiang). Besides, he showed an unusual interest toward English, but later relinquished studying it due to objections from his followers. His modernist awakening - or what Francoise Aubin calls a “psychological evolution”56 - was in part influenced by a patriotic journalist from Beijing, Ding Baochen. As the editor-in-chief of Zhenzong Aiguobao (正宗爱国报 “The Authentic Newspaper for the patriots”), Ding was an ardent defender of baihua (modern vernacular Chinese) and later died for Communist cause.57

55 Wang, Jingzhai 王静斋：五十年求学自述, <中国伊斯兰教史参考资料选编> (1911—1949) 下册
56 Aubin, p. 253
57 Ibid.,
Acutely aware of the inadequacy of the existent Islamic knowledge among the Chinese *ahongs*, the idea of seeking new teachings and scriptures in the Islamic heartland began to take form in him. In Wang Jingzhai’s memoir, he mentioned that he had long yearned for “going across the oceans to observe the reality of our religion in the western countries” so he can “work for the Islam religion and spread Islamic education around, therefore making contribution to both the Hui religion and China”.\(^58\)

Fortunately, Wang Jingzhai was sponsored, however meagerly, by Hui entrepreneurs and his fellow Muslim intellectuals to embark on his trip to the “western world” in 1922.\(^59\) Following a route that most contemporary Sino-Muslims from the eastern coastal cities travelled to make *hajj* (something he did not dare to hope to achieve at the time of departure), he took the steamboat from Shanghai to Hong Kong, then sailed to India via Singapore. Thereafter, he rode on a train across the Indian subcontinent to Mumbai, and lived in extreme poverty in Mumbai until he finally accumulated enough fare to take a boat trip to al-Suways in Egypt.\(^60\) Only a few days after his arrival in Cairo, he enrolled at the prominent al-Azhar University and studied there for half a year. This is a period during which al-Azhar emerged as a

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\(^58\) Wang, Jingzhai 王静斋，《五十年求学自述，《中国伊斯兰教史参考资料选编》（1911—1949）下册
\(^59\) Ibid.,
\(^60\) Ibid.,
modern institution with a centralized administration and a leadership in the nationwide Islamic educational network. Meanwhile, the teachers and students at al-Azhar were strongly influenced by the political thoughts formulated by Islamic Modernist scholars such as Jamal-al-Din al-Afghani and Rashid Rida. The identification with the Islamic State (الدولة الإسلامية, al-dawla al-islamiyya), the pursuit of Islamic revival through reinterpreting Islamic tradition in light of Western ideas and practices, as well as the anti-imperial (mostly anti-British) sentiment in response to the European colonial powers’ domination of most of the Muslim lands were among the principal ideas of this Islamic Modernist (or reformist) movement that prevailed in the Arab world at the time.\footnote{Aubin, p. 259} Wang later recalled that during the period of his study at al-Azhar he “fundamentally resolved many questions” regarding Islamic theology which “have remained unanswered for over a thousand years among the Chinese Muslim communities”.\footnote{Wang, Jingzhai 王静斋: 五十年求学自述, <中国伊斯兰教史参考资料选编> (1911—1949) 下册}

En route to the Middle Eastern countries, Wang Jingzhai made his hajj in 1923, visited the newly independent Republic of Turkey under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and collected more than 600 volumes of Islamic scholarship.\footnote{Ibid.} Similar to the pilgrimage experience of one of his contemporaries, ahong Hu Songshan (1880–1956) from the Ikhwan menhuan in northern Gansu, Wang revealed his humiliating experience
abroad that while travelling in the contemporary world his national identity (a Chinese) oftentimes spoke louder than his religious identity (a Muslim).\textsuperscript{64}\textsuperscript{65} This revelation pushed him further toward the cause of making a strong Chinese state and that of integrating the Hui Muslims into the Chinese nation.

Following Wang’s return to China, he became increasingly involved in the education reform among the Sino-Muslims as well as in advocating the furthering of exchanges between China’s Muslim communities and the rest of the Islamic world. He established a modern-style Chinese-Arabic school (\textit{zhong-a xueiao}, 中阿学校) in his native Tianjin, and took money from his own pocket to sustain his nonprofit newspaper \textit{yiguang} (伊光), which was dedicated to spread news from the Arab world among the Chinese Muslims. Besides, he served as a consultant to the Nationalist government in the wartime\textsuperscript{66} and as imam in more than ten mosques over the years. Wang Jingzhai was later remembered as one of the "Four Great Ahongs" of the Republican period. A busy man, Wang has increasingly devoted his later life to the compilation of a Chinese-Arabic dictionary and translations of religious texts into Chinese\textsuperscript{67}, an undertaking he no doubt valued the most.

A year after his return from his hajj (1925), Wang Jingzhai was persuaded to

\textsuperscript{64}\textit{Ibid.},

\textsuperscript{65} About Hu Songshan \textit{ahongs} “patriotic-turn”, see Jonathan Lipman, \textit{Familiar Strangers}, p. 209

\textsuperscript{66} Aubin, p. 259

\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 258-259
translate the Qur’an into Chinese. Although there were several Muslim and non-Muslim scholars working on the Chinese rendering of Qur’an at the same time, Wang Jingzhai undertook the challenge mostly on his own. In his memoir, Wang recalls that this situation was largely due to the lack of cooperation and mutual trust that prevailed among the learned Sino-Muslim intellectuals. However, we may have enough reason to speculate that it was also partly due to his strong personality, which made him a difficult person to cooperate with. 68

The three surviving versions of Wang Jingzhai’s gulanjingyijie (古兰经译解, “A Translation of the Qur’an with Commentaries”) were published in 1932, 1942 and 1946 respectively.69 They were later known as jiaben (甲本), yiben (乙本) and binben (丙本) in accordance with the Chinese Celestial stem (tiangan) system. The earliest edition of the three (jiaben) was published by the Beijing-based China’s Hui Religion Advancement Society (Zhongguo huijiao jujinhui 中国回教俱进会) in 1932. In this edition, not only the Arabic scriptures (jing) were translated literally into literary Chinese (wenyan), but the extensive commentaries (yijie) were also written in wenyan. Five years after (1937), while living a prolonged peripatetic life following the outburst of the second Sino-Japanese war, Wang Jingzhai decided to start another (his third) translation of the Qur’an. Though he reportedly finished the full-text translation in July 1938, the transcripts were destroyed during a Japanese

68 Wang Jingzhai, Wo zhi yi jing xiao shi (我之译经小史), 《中国伊斯兰教史参考资料选编》（1911—1949） 下册
69 Ibid.,
airstrike in 1940. In the spring of 1941, responding to a request from the Gansu warlord Ma Hongkui (马鸿逵), son of Ma Fuxiang (马福祥), Wang immediately moved to Gansu to work on another translation of the Qur’an.\textsuperscript{70} It was not until 1942, or 10 years after the first edition, that the second \textit{(yiben) gulanjingyijie} be printed in lithographic ink in Gansu.\textsuperscript{71,72} In this edition, the Qur’anic texts were rendered into \textit{yuti (语体)} or \textit{jingtang yu (经堂语, ”scripture hall language”)}\textsuperscript{73} with notes and commentaries written in modern vernacular Chinese (\textit{baihua}). The language that the Qur’anic texts were translated into – both the style and tones of it – was not an accident. According to a close friend of Wang, the Qur’an was consciously rendered into a fashion that is distinct from the hitherto antiquated literary Chinese (\textit{wenyan}), the modern vernacular Chinese (\textit{baihua}), or that of the existing Chinese translations of the Christian Bible and Buddhism scriptures.\textsuperscript{74} Meanwhile, under the sponsorship of Ma Hongkui (Shaoyun), some Qur’anic texts were annotated to reveal their compatibility with \textit{sanminzhuyi} (Three Principles of the People), the founding doctrine of the Republic of China.\textsuperscript{75}

In terms of the style of the prose in target language, due to great emphasis placed on

\textsuperscript{70} Wang, Jingzhai 王静斋《白话注解古兰天经》，译者述，1942
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.,
\textsuperscript{72} The first print of this edition, however, has only numbered 60 copies, reportedly due to an unhappy accident between Wang Jingzhai and Ma Hongkui.
\textsuperscript{73} Jingtang yu, or ”scripture hall language”, is a language developed in the \textit{jingtang jiaoyu (”scripture hall education”).} See Lipman, Jonathan. \textit{Familiar Strangers}. p. 73
\textsuperscript{74} Zhao, Zhenwu 赵振武: 《校经室随笔》．《中国伊斯兰教史参考资料选编》（1911—1949）（下）
\textsuperscript{75} Wang Jingzhai 王静斋《白话注解古兰天经》, 译者述, 1942
the sacred nature of the Qur’an, the scrupulous imitation of the syntactic structure of the Qur’anic Arabic resulted in a translation that was often attacked by its contemporary readers as obscure, tight and stiff (though to other Chinese readers, such as myself, the translation is remarkably terse and graceful). 76

Despite the initial reluctance to render the Holy Qur’an into the modern vernacular Chinese (baihua), a language that was mainstreamed into literary circles by the May Fourth generation after 191977 but sometimes still considered too “vulgar” (ch. lisu 俚俗) by the learned Muslim scholars,78 Wang Jingzhai’s third published translation (bingben) of the Qur’an was a baihua version published in 1946 in Shanghai. The 1946 edition has eventually become the most popular translation of the three and was reprinted many times afterwards. Even to this day, Wang Jingzhai’s 1946 edition of gulanjingyijing is still considered by many as the best existing translation of the Qur’an as many Muslims in China still recite its texts in their religious studies.

Wang explains his motivation for producing a baihua version of the Holy Qur’an in an article on  yiguang (伊光),

_Before I finished translating the second (jiangtang yu and baihua) version of the Heavenly Scripture (Qur’an), a good deal of people told me that they were having difficulty understanding my last translation - some of the prose are not easy to understand, the commentaries are sporadic and not always_

76 Ibid.,

77 Aubin, pp. 253

78 Zhao, Zhenwu 赵振武: 《校经室随笔》. 《中国伊斯兰教史参考资料选编》（1911—1949）（下）
comprehensive. (It was also suggested that) there is a need for a modern vernacular Chinese version with extended footnotes. So it will be more accessible to the average people.79

In addition to the concerns of popularizing Islamic canon, the baihua translation of the Qur’an was meant for another key function. “Meanwhile,” Wang hastened to add, “we are currently in the heat of the anti-Japanese war. (Therefore) the lines in the Qur’an about waging jihad (“struggles”) need to be rendered into baihua, so the words from the Holy Scripture can be a source of motivations for our fellow Muslims to fight against the Japanese invader. ...this is the most urgent task for now.”

And so he acted. By the time his second translation went to print, Wang had already started his third gulanjingyijie - “[N]ot only was this version more flavorful than the first edition and more lucid than the second edition. I have also furnished a rather comprehensive commentary... any texts that related to Jihad, I put extra care in annotating them and added my own interpretation.”80 In addition, with Shi Zizhou (时子周), a co-religionist who is also from Tianjin, Wang Jingzhai founded a “Friendly Association of the Hui People of China for the Resistance to Japan and the Salvation of the Country” (Zhongguo huimin kangri jiuguo xiehui 中国回民抗日救国协会). According to Francoise Aubin, it perhaps marks the first time that the term “Hui People” (huimin 回民) replacing “Hui Religion” (huijiao 回教) to appear in the

79 Wang, Jingzhai 王静斋:《我之译经小史》. 《中国伊斯兰教史参考资料选编》(1911—1949) (下)
80 Ibid.,
title of a political group.\textsuperscript{81}

\textit{Tradutore, traditore}\textsuperscript{82} – the translingual world of Yan Fu and Wang Jingzhai

For the generation of translators like Yan Fu (严复), Lin Shu (林纾) and iconoclastic scholars such as Liang Qichao (梁启超), language innovation \textit{qua} translation was adapted as a chief strategy to establish a platform from which to critique the “feudal” past.\textsuperscript{83} In contrast, Wang Jingzhai, Ma Jian, and other Sino-Muslim translators of the Qur’an in the first half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century emerged as a different category of translators - their task was, in short, to imitate the inimitable, and to awaken those Muslims who lived in a stupor.

In Yan Fu’s sinification of Huxley and Spencer, the translator’s main intention was not to translate the western scholarships (\textit{xixue 西学}) word-by-word, but to produce a digested, paraphrastic translation of the original work. As Benjamin Schwartz put it, from the very beginning Yan Fu meant to “grasp the essential meaning of whole sentences or passages containing whole thoughts and then to communicate their meaning in the idiomatic Chinese.”\textsuperscript{84} In contrast, Wang Jingzhai and Ma Jian not only were expected to produce a learned, verbatim translation of

\textsuperscript{81} Aubin, p. 246
\textsuperscript{82} “the translator is the betrayer.”
\textsuperscript{83} Eoyang, Eugene Chen. \textit{The transparent eye: reflections on translation, Chinese literature, and comparative poetics}, University of Hawaii Press, 1993, p. 54
\textsuperscript{84} Schwartz, p. 95
the Qur’an, their translations must also have an ability to transform. In fact, the Chinese Muslims’ translations of the Qur’an have intended tripartite functions: to spread Qur’an’s message to the believers in a language they could understand while preserving its canonical status as a sacred scripture, and to continue the task of the Han *Kitab*, which meant to, as Raphael Israeli put it, “convince the Chinese learned elite that Islam, couched in Chinese religious terms, was not so different, after all, from the Chinese classics.”

Despite their different approaches to translation, Yan Fu and Wang Jingzhai perhaps shared a similar intellectual agony when attempting to bridge two divergent cosmological, cultural, intellectual and literary traditions through the instrument of translation. The difficulty of coining new terms to accommodate the involved and unheard-of concepts from Western science, and the difficulty of imitating, however vainly, the styles of a manuscript that is considered eternal or uncreated, a gift sent down from God, is comparable. Both of the projects amount to a Sisyphusian task for they unavoidably entail the interpretive act of establishing inexact, if not arbitrary, equivalences between the two languages. In Saussurean semiology, a term (sign) does not encompass an intrinsic and unalterable meaning in and of itself in any language, as its meanings are always begot within the context of relationship among symbols. In other words, although words and expressions in a language do make reference to the existing aspects of social life, “they define and interrelate them in

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85 Israeli, p. 186  
an ‘arbitrary’ manner... The arbitrary status of a sign means that its meaning is
derived not from its social referent – the signified – but from its relation to other
symbols, or signifiers within a discursive code.”

Yan Fu himself is not unaware of the distortion of meanings in his application of
ancient Chinese terms to render Western concepts. Schwartz movingly excavated
this intellectual pain by citing directly from Yan Fu, who sometimes “pondered for a
month over one term.” As for Wang Jingzhai, a devout, austere man in whose
study the only book was the Qur’an, we can only surmise that his pain was deeper.

As a scholar who endured poverty, social and intellectual alienation, starvation and
poor health for many years of his life, he repeatedly and patiently explains that the
sole purpose of his translation of the Islamic Canon into Chinese is to “spread the
教学 of Allah and inspire religious awakening among the believers.” In
response to the controversies and ad hominem attacks that his work was bound to

 provoke, he simply stated that his deed could only be judged by God:

“The ownership of the draft translation shall belong to me as the translator.
However, I will claim absolutely no profit from it if the transcript is printed and on
sale – because translating religious scriptures is an act of infaq (善功). If I benefit from doing an infaq, it will be contradictory to its meaning.

– 27. In Moaddel, p. 17
88 Schwartz, p. 95
89 ibid.,
90 Aubin, p. 259
91 Wang Jingzhai 王静斋《白话注解古兰天经》 译者述
Moreover, translating Islamic scriptures (ch. jing) is substantially different from translating other books. If one makes mistakes in the translations of normal books, such as dictionary, it would only cause inconvenience to the reader. However, the Heavenly Scripture (Qur’an) is a gift sent down from the God. If there is mistake in the translation, I hope Allah would forsake the translator’s wrongs on the ground that his only intention is to spread the teaching of Him, not to seek benefits for his own. If I translate religious texts for my own profit, I fear that I will not be forgiven by Allah.\(^92\)

4. Struggle in the Production of Meaning

[T]he written word is so intimately connected with the spoken word it represents that it manages to usurp the principal role. As much or even more importance is given to this representation of the vocal sign as to the vocal sign itself. It is rather as if people believed that in order to find out what a person look like it is better to study his photograph than his face.

- Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*\(^93\)

Though far from remaining static, the Chinese conceptualizations of the cosmos, the morality and the distinction of “us” and “them” in traditional life have been brusquely shattered with the introduction of neologisms from the voluminous translations of Western books at the end of 19th and beginning of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, within one generation, many terms and conceptions of foreign origin that were introduced into the Chinese language have already become naturalized to the degree that they were no longer seen as foreign.\(^94\) As Stefan

\(^92\) *Ibid.*,


Henning points out, by the time the Qur’an was translated into Chinese, former neologisms like religion (zongjiao), ethnicity (minzu), or nation (guojia) were no longer acutely felt by the readers as of non-Chinese origin.\footnote{Henning, p. 123}

Meanwhile, though often being unnoticed in the history books, other categories of neologisms had gained increasing familiarity in the life of the peoples who occupied the cultural frontiers of China - in this case, among the “fifty million”\footnote{The number fifty-million is, of course, a grossly exaggerated one. But it was widely cited in the newspaper, speeches, even academic writings as the population of the Chinese-speaking Muslims in Republican period to emphasize the importance of the Hui as a minzu.} Chinese Muslims who not only had to come to terms with the Han majority in the era of heightened nationalist thinking but also to confront with the full variety of political, religious, and cultural movements that emanated from the center of the Islamic world - Islamic modernism, pan-Islamism, as well as anti-imperialism.

A case in point would be the evolution in the self-designation of the Sino-Muslims in the 20th century. The popular usage of the term has meandered from huihui (回回) to the coexistence of huimin (回民 “hui people”), mumin (穆民, from Arabic term مؤمن, “believer”), musilin (穆斯林, Muslim), and eventually to huiizu (回族, “hui ethnicity”). Meanwhile, we have seen the abolition of many fully sinicized Chinese terms – words such as zhengjiao "正教", tianfang "天方" and huihui "回回" from the Sino-Muslims’ daily lexicons. They began to fade out of use from the newspapers and magazines as the newly transliterated, delocalized terms such as yisilan (伊斯兰),...
*alabo* ("阿拉伯") and *musilin* (穆斯林) emerged. The shifting terminologies are both an embodiment of, and a contributor to, the rapid changes in Chinese Muslims’ self-identity and their conceptual adaptations to a changing world. 97

Because the Qur’an is generally regarded as the verbatim words from Allah and His last revelation, its significance in the daily life of the Muslims can hardly be overstated. Despite, or rather, because of this singular importance of the sacred book in the Muslim lives, there has been a considerable amount of disagreement within the orthodoxy and orthopractical interpretations of the Qur’an. A brief examination of the divergence in renderings of specific terms and concepts from the Qur’anic Arabic into Chinese would have a lot to tell about the translators’ diverse, sometimes conflicting, understanding of religiosity, nationhood and ethnicity. The translation of the Chinese Qur’an thus became a political field in which Islamic scholars with various political allegiances and religious interpretations were vying to codify their own social and religious views by establishing equivalences between

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97 In my opinion, the coinage of new Islamic terms - and in a few occasion, revalorization of old ones - that stress on the Hui connections with the Islamic "heartland" can be seen as a consequence of the renewed connections with the Islamic world and a response to the Christian missionary propaganda works. The *Muslim* identity of the *huimin* must be rearticulated through the translation of those new terms. These neologisms were used in the title of several Islamic associations later in the Republican period in order to stress the Chinese Muslim’s connection with the global *umma*, and distinguish themselves from the traditional designations such as *Huijiao* (Hui teaching) or *qingzhenjiao* (Pure and True teaching).
Arabic and Chinese terms.  

For example, in Wang Jingzhai’s modern vernacular Chinese (baihua) gulanjing yijie ("translation of the Qur’an with a commentary") published in 1946, the term Ummah (Ar. أُمَّة) was variably and contextually rendered into mass (qunzhong 群众), “a group of people” (yihuo ren 一伙人, yiqunren 一群人), “people of the same kind” (tonglei 同类) as well as “the way” (dao 道) – indicating a variety of influences on his choice of lexicon. Notably, the term minzu (民族) already appeared in this translation,

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98 Ivo Spira’s Master Thesis Chinese Translations of the Qur’an : A Close Reading of Selected Passage presents a meticulous textual analysis of Wang Jingzhai and Ma Jian’s Qur’anic translations. The aim of the work is mainly to explicate on the linguistic and rhetorical features (and to less extent the exegetical strategies) in the two most popular Chinese translations of the Qur’an. The author comes to the conclusion that though he has not discovered any systematic distortion of the original Qur’anic text in Wang and Ma’s work, “deviations were found on all levels: semantic, syntactic, rhetorical, pragmatic and exegetical.” Besides, Spira shows that the language in the Chinese translations of Qur’an contains a high degree of hybridity. Although the Qur’an’s translators consciously kept distance from the exegetical practices of Christian and Buddhist texts in Chinese, the target texts indicate a conspicuous amount of loan words and concepts from the Buddhist and Christian texts. (Spira, Ivo. Chinese Translations of the Qur’an, : A Close Reading of Selected Passages. MA thesis, Oslo University, Spring 2005. URL: http://folk.uio.no/ivos/files/MA_Thesis_IvoSpira.pdf. Last accessed: 11/01/2011)

99 However, due to the limit of the chapter and the scope of this study, here I only seek to briefly consider a few dissimilar exegetic strategies in Wang and Ma’s translations – the ones that were related to the Sino-Muslim’s struggle of coming to terms with the Chinese nation.

100 Here the term minzu (民族) has not yet been fastened with its contemporary meaning. The term was codified in the PRC in the 50s as a result of the minzu shibie “minzu classification/identification” project inspired by the Stalinistic nationality policies. The meaning of the term here is close to that in Sun Yat-sen’s wuzu gonghe (五族共和, “Five Races under One Nation). See chapter 2 and chapter 3 for more discussions on the concepts of minzu and wuzu gonghe. For a detailed account of the
though only twice, indicting the translator’s familiarity with the term.\textsuperscript{101} In contrast, in another widely popular \textit{baihua} translation of the Qur’an penned by Ma Jian\textsuperscript{102} – a patriotic, highly respected Islamic scholar and diplomat who studied at \textit{al-Azhar} and \textit{Dar al-‘Ulum} in the 1930s – the term \textit{umma} was rendered by large portions into “ethnic group” (民族) in accordance with the state-sponsored \textit{minzu shibie} (“nationality classification”) project in the People Republic.\textsuperscript{103}

\textbf{Conclusion}

\textit{Translations are different from the original to the degree that they have a life of their own.}

- Walter Benjamin

\textsuperscript{minzu shibie project, see Thomas Mullaney, 2011. \textit{Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic identification in Modern China.}}

\textsuperscript{Sha Zongping 沙宗平: 王静斋、马坚《古兰经》译本中乌玛含义初步比较（初稿）URL: http://shazongping.blsh.com/post/15000/616000 (last accessed, 10/11/2011)}

\textsuperscript{Ma Jian’s prolonged project of translating the Qur’\textasciiacute{a}n into Chinese took 42 years. He initiated the project soon after his return to China in 1939. The first eight (?) chapters were published in 1952, while the full-text translation was finally finished and printed by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 1981, three years after his death. This version has thereafter become the most popular Chinese-language Qur’\textasciiacute{a}n among the sinophone Muslims. For a detailed account of Ma Jian’s life and work, see Ma Haiyun, “Patriotic and Pious Muslim Intellectuals in Modern China: The Case of Ma Jian”.

\textsuperscript{Jonathan Lipman, \textit{Familiar Strangers}, introduction.}
As paralleled in a great deal of other non-Arabic speaking Muslim communities of the modern era, the translation of the Qur’an in China involved the process of overcoming the long-held theological and psychological prohibitions on the rendering of the sacred book into a foreign language. Although the pious Sino-Muslim translators of the Qur’an in the early 20th century primarily sought to render the style and content of the Sacred Scripture faithfully into another language, their Chinese translations will inevitably “have a life of their own,” due to the wide range of exegetical choices that the translator had to make.

In both their intentions and methodologies, the early 20th century Sino-Muslim translators of the Qur’an distinguished themselves from the non-Muslim translators or the pre-20th century Sino-Muslim translators. The principal goal of their undertaking is to make Islamic texts intelligible in the native language of their fellow Sino-Muslims, whereby to reverse the perceived decline in the group identity and religious identity among the Muslim communities in China. In the mean time, the recently available Chinese translations of the Qur’an have in no doubt contributed to the identity formations among the Chinese-speaking Muslims in the new era. The (mostly nationalist and patriotic) interpretive orientation in Wang Jingzhai and Ma Jian’s Qur’anic exegeses, as Ma Haiyun aptly put it, marks the beginning of a state-encouraged *ijtihad* (independent judgment in juridical matters) in China.104 In

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104 Ma, Haiyun. “Patriotic and Pious Muslim Intellectuals in Modern China: The Case of Ma Jian”,
return, their patriotic activities and their willingness to interpret the Qur’an along
the nationalist lines were recognized by the Chinese state. Subsequently, the
Sino-Muslim intellectuals such as Wang Jingzhai and Ma Jian were canonized by the
state – as the so-called “aiguo ahong” (爱国阿訇“patriotic Muslim scholars”) - for
their guojia yishi (国家意识“national consciousness”). Once they became the role
models for all the Hui Muslims in the New China, their influence would arise beyond
the control of their own.

As the result of the publications of the manifold, decentralized versions of Chinese
translations- annotations the Qur’an within a brief period of time, the Islamic
modernist movement in the form of translation (and ijtihad) significantly
reinvigorated the Sino-Muslims’ group identity and transformed their personal
relation with the religion and scripture. In the mean time, the Islamic modernist
movement manifested in the realm of print journalism and education reforms would
make even more crucial contribution to the transformation of the Sino-Muslims’
status from “subjects” from China’s imperial past to the modern “citizens” of the
Chinese nation-state. We will discuss this decisive moment in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Coming to Terms with the Nation – from “zheng jiao bu zheng guo” to “aiguo aijiao”

“What therefore is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, anthropomorphisms: in short a sum of human relations which became poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned, and after long usage seem to a nation fixed, canonic and binding; truth are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusion.”

- Friedrich Nietzsche

Muslim population in China, over their some 1300 years of living within the Sinitic community, has become culturally Chinese but has kept their Islamic religion. In the late-imperial China, the Sino-Muslim communities, not least the literati class among them who were educated in the eclectic “Han kitab” tradition, came to understand themselves as being both Chinese and Muslim. In their daily life, however, many Chinese-speaking Muslims continued to exist as alienated “other” in the eyes of their neighboring Han. In a seminal work, Jonathan Lipman has shown the patterns of
Sino-Muslim’s lengthy existence within the Han-majority society as cultural and social “familiar strangers” – the Muslim emigrants in China needed, as Lipman put it, “in the face of ordinary acculturative pressures faced by any strangers – to learn the language, eat the food, wear the clothes, become normal and familiar – they complied and resisted as their mixed culture demanded.”  

Much of the twentieth-century western scholarship on Islam in China has been premised on the assumption that Islamic religion is by its nature not compatible with the Chinese social order. Islam can only exist in China, according to this epistemic underpinning, in a state of permanent conflict with the dominant culture and the neighboring Han population. This view has also led to the belief that the Muslims who managed to identify with the Chinese civilization must have compromised the integrity of their own religion and been assimilated into the Confucian society. It was not until the early 1970s, with the emergence of scholarships that emphasize the “hyphenateness” of being a Muslim in China, that the notion of the fundamental incompatibility of Muslim and Chinese identity began to be challenged. Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, for instance, in a groundbreaking study of the transmission of Islamic scholarship within Muslim literati (ch. huiru) networks, describes the relationship

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1 Lipman 1997. p. 227
3 Lipman, Familiar Strangers; Benite, Dao of Muhammad; Sachiko, Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light; Aubin, “The 2006 Joseph Fletcher Memorial Lecture: Reflections on the Fletcher Legacy”
between the juxtaposed “Chineseness” and Muslim identity as a simultaneous one, which denotes a dual identity that is not “accommodating”, “conciliatory”, or “syncretic”.4

The general historical process of modernization in 20th century China, however, has unsettled the previous group identity of the Sino-Muslims that centered mostly on religious faith and cultural affinity. The onslaught of a Western discourse of modernity, along with the rise of nationalism in both China and the Islamic world, also necessitated the creation of modern religious and national subjectivities, as well as a rearticulated relationship between the two. The Republican period (1911-1949) witnessed the origin of two concurrent processes that started to transform the group identity of the late-Qing Muslim subjects: first, the formation of a dual identity toward the religion and the burgeoning Chinese nation-state; and second, the appearance of a trans-regional community of Sino-Muslims all over China, as the result of the social and discursive construction by the Muslim elites.5

Scholars of Islam have been using the metaphor of ebbs and flows to describe the shaping and reshaping of the group identity of the Sino-Muslim communities over time. Joseph Fletcher, for instance, observed three major “tides” in the history Islam


5 The trans-regional community in no way put an end to longstanding internal divisions among the Muslims. The conflicts among various Sufi teachings, for example, persisted even to this day. (Zhao 2010)
in China - the formulation of traditional Gedimu\(^6\) communities, the arrival of Sufi influences from the late-seventeenth century onward, and the Scriptural-Modernist movement in the early 20\(^{th}\) century. Building upon Fletcher’s famous periodization, Dru Gladney proposed a fourth phase – namely, the “ethnic nationalism” that took shape in the age of nation-states.\(^7\) Though Gladney’s study locates the ethnic nationalism mostly in the post-1949 era of People’s Republic, while assigning the Islamic Modernism to the early half of 20\(^{th}\) century, the boundaries between the three latest tides – the “Scriptural fundamentalist”\(^8\) (ch. \textit{zunjing pai} 尊经派) movement, the Islamic Modernist\(^9\) and the nationalist (patriotic) movement – were in fact less distinguishable, as leaders of all three groups drawing their inspirations and ideas from the same network of Muslim intellectuals. Meanwhile, all these three movements intermingled in shaping the Sino-Muslim identity in the latter half of the Republican period.

Terminology often provides the clearest indication of the changing outlooks of group

\(^6\) The Gedimu (laojiao) is a Hanafi, non-Sufi branch of the Sunni tradition. It is the oldest school of Islam in China, and the most populous.

\(^7\) Gladney, p. 62

\(^8\) Most famously spearheaded by the \textit{Ikhwan}, or the Chinese Muslim Brotherhood, movement in China, the “Scriptural fundamentalist” originally advocated stricter adherence to the scriptures and purification of Islamic life in China. It would later – within one generation after its founder Ma Wanfu - transform itself into a patriotic movement that cooperates with the \textit{Guomindang} in promoting modern secular education and nationalism. (Lipman, "Hyphenated Chinese", pp. 105-106)

\(^9\) The Islamic modernists, both in the Arab world and in the “periphery world of Islam”, attempted to provide an intellectual basis for integrating Islam and modern (Western) ideas in many realms of activity.
identities. The shifting attitude among the Sino-Muslims toward the nascent Chinese nation-state at the beginning of 20th century were reflected in two widely known slogans: “fighting for the religion not the country” (zhengjiao bu zhengguo 争教不争国) and “love of country is equivalent to the love of religion” (aiguo aijiao 爱国爱教). Both of the phrases, almost becoming symbolisms themselves because of their enormous popularity, played their own part in the identity formation of the Muslims in China.

Zhengjiao bu zhengguo - “fighting for the religion not the country”

An 1908 article published on xinghui pian (醒回篇, “A Leaf to Awaken the Hui”) offers one of the earliest commentaries in print regarding the place of the Hui (Muslims) in the turn-of-the-century China.

A great variety of peoples have long intermingled within the land we call China (shenzhou), the only exception being the long-held separation between the Manchu and the Han Chinese. The people who are named Hui have lived among them without causing any trouble. One of the mottos passed along among the Hui from their elders is ‘zhenjiao bu zhengguo’ (“fighting for the religion not the country.”) In fact, it is also the guiding principle of the Muslim missionary activities in China.10

Can the slogan "fighting for the religion not the country” offers some passage into the minds of the Chinese-speaking Muslims in late-Qing and Early-Republican China?

Based on the numerous Republican-period articles openly attacking this notion, we may venture at least two deductions.

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First, to many Sino-Muslims in the pre-20th century China, the identification with the Islam religion outweighed the territory-based attachment – that is, the allegiance to the state, whether it be the Ming, the Qing, or the nascent Republic of China.

Traditionally, the Chinese-speaking Muslim communities were embedded - patchwork-like - in societies of non-Muslim majority. Nevertheless, in their daily parlance, many Sino-Muslims still regarded the land of their ancestors as their “homeland”, as they somehow continued to see themselves as estranged travelers in their adopted country. This land-based allegiance reflects both a need, as anthropologists have shown, for discursive boundaries that differentiate the Sino-Muslims and their neighboring Han, and a strong tie – an emotional instead of socio-economical one - between the Chinese Muslim communities with the Arab world.

Though this view has rarely appeared in the print culture of the early 20th century China, scores of progressive Sino-Muslim intellectuals have recounted it in their writing in order to rebut it. For instance, Ma Lisheng lamented that the popularity of the phrase “fighting for the religion not the country” blinded people of the “symbiotic” relationship between the country and the peoples who live in it,

*Many people of our religion are embracing the notion 'fighting for the religion not the country'. They believe that since we are followers of the Hui religion that originated from the Western Religion (xiyu), we should commit ourselves only to the preservation of our religion. What does China - a land of nonbelievers - has to do with us? …The country is established by the people, and the people are*
sustained by the country. There is a symbiosis between the two. Therefore, the prosperity of the country is associated with the glory of the people, while the decay of the country spells the humiliation of the people.  

Second, the slogan “fighting for the religion not the country” reflects both a paramount allegiance to religion and a general apathy among the Sino-Muslim communities for political or social engagement on a supra-local level. At a time when many non-Han peoples of the frontier regions endeavored for their independence from the Republican government, the sense of disenchantment among the Sino-Muslims toward the idea of self-rule was notable. Though this absence of ethnical nationalism of the Sino-Muslims at the beginning of the Republican period was often praised in the official historiography of the PRC period as the “patriotic tradition” of Hui minzu, Derk Bodde, a contemporary observer from the United States, noted in his 1945 article that “the Muslims have been sharply cut off from the main stream of Chinese culture” and that they were “indifferent” to the state affairs. Despite a tendency to identify the Han as the vector of modernity, Bodde’s observation quite accurately illustrated the degree of segregation of the Sino-Muslim communities from broader socio-political processes dominated by the Han.

In the early 20th century, the Sino-Muslims in the Muslim-majority Northwest China -

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11 Ma Lisheng 马立身. 1930. 爱国与爱教. 月华, 第 2 卷第 3 期.

whose history since the mid-Qing was paradoxically marked by polemics, rebellions, warlordism, sanguinary inter-and intra-ethnic conflicts, and intermittent bursts of violence - shared this profound sense of political apathy. The ideology of political disengagement was crystallized, at least in part, as a result of the brutal crackdowns of the Muslim "revolts" in the 18th and 19th century by the Qing government. \(^{13}\) "Fighting for the religion not the country", as a slogan and a speech-act, was repeated among the Hui communities to alleviate the suspicions and discriminations held against them by the imperial rulers. Even long after the mid-Qing Muslim rebellions, a verse by the 19th century Jahriyya leader (Ch. jiaozhu, Pers. Shaykh) Ma Hualong was still circulated among the xibei (northwestern China) Muslims to show not only that their anti-Qing rebellions in the 19th century were not motivated by an imperial ambition, but also their bitterness for being labeled invariably as a violent and inferior people \(^{14}\) - "everyone says the huihui are rebellious in their nature, [but] have you seen any Muslim emperor in all the past dynasties?" \(^{15}\)

During the late-Qing and the early Republican period, many religious leaders

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\(^{13}\) For more discussions on the treatment of Sino-Muslims under the Qing (1644-1911) period, see Lipman, Jonathan N. "'A Fierce and Brutal People': On Islam and Muslims in Qing Law". (Lipman, Jonathan N. "'A Fierce and Brutal People': On Islam and Muslims in Qing Law" in Crossley, Pamela Kyle. et. al. (eds.) 2006. Empire at the margins: culture, ethnicity, and frontier in early modern China. University of California Press, pp. 83-110

\(^{14}\) Lipman, p. 215

\(^{15}\) “皆道回回爱造反，历代立帝岂回皇?”
preached the belief that “the state affairs are being taken care of by the other folks - ‘one shall not be involved in politics if one is not in the (right) place’ (buzai qiwei, bumou qizheng)”\textsuperscript{16} Meanwhile, along with the depoliticization of the Sino-Muslim communities was a disposition toward detaching oneself from worldly affairs and investing in religious piety and spiritual salvation.\textsuperscript{17} This sentiment of otherworldliness must be so widespread in the everyday parlances and teachings among the Sino-Muslim communities that it had to be repeatedly repudiated on Republican-era Muslim publications and public speeches given by the modernist Muslim intellectuals, so that a version of socially engaged Islam could be advanced.

To Xue Wenbo (薛文波), a progressive scholar and devoted Hui nationalist, the popularity of the slogan “fighting for the religion not the country” was clearly a worrying sign. He sees the religious piousness (zongjiao yisi) as a main obstacle to the development of their “national consciousness” (guojia yisi). In tandem with a large number of his coreligionists, Xue perceived the lack of political self-consciousness as a direct cause of the Sino-Muslim’s current plight. \textsuperscript{18} Hence,

\textsuperscript{16} Xin Wu 馨吾. 回教徒与政治. 月华, 第 2 卷第 12 期.

\textsuperscript{17} Sino-Muslim scholars continued the tradition of using catchy lines to preach a world-withdrawn version of Islam well into the Republican period. For example - “the mundane world is the prison for the Muslims” (ch. Chenshi shi mumin de laoyu 尘世是穆民的牢狱), and “a faithful Muslim shall not be attached to the mundane world” (Ch. Mumin bu tanlian chenshi 穆民不贪恋尘世).

\textsuperscript{18} For example, Xue once wrote, “the people of our religion have an old saying that goes, ‘fighting for the religion not the country.’ If they were provoked for racial or religious causes, they would throw everything behind and fight until their last breath... [However,] they lack the concept for the country
he proposed that the two most urgent problems facing Muslim communities in China - first, developing a consciousness of the Chinese nation; and second, breaking out of the demarcated, isolated existence of the local Sino-Muslim communities.¹⁹ This two-pronged objective was at the core of much of the Sino-Muslim movement in the first half of the 20th century.

*Aiguo Aijiao – “love for the country is equivalent to the love for the religion”*

Historians have proposed various explanations for the origins of modern nationalism. Ernest Gellner, for example, believed that in pre-industrial society an individual’s identity was formed structurally in the segmentary communities. While in the modern society, with literacy and mobility enabled (required) by the industrialization, one’s identity is culturally determined. As the state promoted education to create atomized and interchangeable working forces, the primary identification with the local community is transferred to the nation-state. According to Gellner, nationalism came into being as a proposed solution to the inevitable tension between state and nation. “Nationalism”, as he suggested, “is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent.”²⁰

*and have no grand plan for the future.” ¹⁸ (薛文波．“回教两个重大的问题” 月华，第 2 卷第 9 期．)*

¹⁹ Xue, Wenbo 薛文波．“回教两个重大的问题” 月华，第 2 卷第 9 期．
²⁰ Gellner 1983,
Benedict Anderson, another leading historian of nationalism, claimed that the crystallization of the concept (imaginary) of the sovereign nation to be one of the most consequential events of the modern era. Meanwhile, he believes that it was on the eroded legitimacy of an all-encompassing political-social unity permeated with traditional religious authority that the modern concept of the national sovereignty sprouted,

\[T\]he concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. Coming to maturity at a stage of human history when even the most devout adherents of any universal religion were inescapably confronted with the living pluralism of such religions, and the allomorphism [direct relationship] between each faith’s ontological claims and territorial stretch, nations dream of being free, and, if under God, directly so. The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state.  

The early stage of formation of modern Hui identity in the era of nationalism was intimately associated with both of the two trends. While pre-modern group identity of the Sino-Muslim based primarily on the local community and the allegiance to a common God (instead of “religious faith” or “religion”), an important Sufi philosophy “unity of being” (Ar. \textit{Wahdat al-wugud} ؛وحدة الوجود) – which holds that “all existence and phenomena in this world are outflows from the only ultimate and supreme existence, Allah” – served as a theological justification that allows Sino-Muslims to coexists with other subjects in imperial China.  

\[\text{22}\] Matsumoto, p. 119
Manchu dynasty, national identity has increasingly become an important marker in people’s conceptualization of their selfhood and group belonging. In spite of their long-standing cultural “hypernatedness” and social alienation, Sino-Muslims, as many other peoples lived at the cultural frontiers of the empire, came to subsume their “multivalence” of group identity under the hegemonic discourses of nationalism and social Darwinism. The previous allegiance to the mandate of heaven has to be substituted by a newfound loyalty to the nation-state.

As the Sino-Muslim communities were at the receiving end of the Islamic ideas and practices from the Arab heartland, the key message from the Islamic modernist movement - the demarcation between religious belief and social reality and the conviction that religion should be adaptive to the changing times – had enormous currency among the Muslim intellectuals in China. In their effort to reform Islam and Muslim communities according to the modern trend, many Sino-Muslim intellectuals came to the conclusion that the Chinese-speaking Muslims should maintain and even reinforce a dual identity of being an integral part of the Chinese nation and a member of *Mu’min* (穆民, lit. “followers of Prophet Muhammad”).

**Sino-Muslim leaders - how did they come to believe what they believe?**

In the first half of the 20th century, a number of Sino-Muslim leaders functioned as the suture point where the two seemingly separate fields of allegiance could be
joined together in an organic fashion.

Though the Western concepts of nationalism and social progress prevailed as the dominant discourse, none of the prominent Sino-Muslim figures of 20th century necessarily became “patriotic Muslim leaders” – a role that they are often reduced to in official historiography of both PRC and Taiwan. If we compare the life stories of the leading Muslim figures of the Republican period- Wang Haoran (王浩然), Wang Jingzhai (王静斋), Hu Songshan (虎嵩山), Ha Decheng (哈德成), Da Pusheng (达浦生), Ma Jian (马坚), Ma Qixi (马启西), Ma Fuxiang (马福祥), and Ma Yuanzhang (马元章), each followed a distinctively personal intellectual trajectory. Though most of the Muslim leaders were later praised for their “national consciousness” (guojiayishi), their decisions to bring their Muslim community closer to the national unity were motivated by a variety of factors - early education, emotional and moral dispositions, social contingencies, political calculations, and their life experience. Just as all complex intellectuals of the modern time, most of the early 20th century Sino-Muslim leaders embodied a painful hybridity. As they sought to come to terms with the modern Chinese nation on their own terms, the influence of pan-Islamism, scriptural fundamentalism, and wahhabism, continued to have effect on their intellectual orientation.

Wang Jingzhai
As one of the most respected Sino-Muslim leaders of all time, Ahong Wang Jingzhai’s meandering life was marked by a combination of religious piety, intellectual cosmopolitanism, and nationalist zeal. The editors of the famous Yugong journal, for instance, hailed Wang’s life in seeking knowledge as an “epitome of the evolution of the Islamic intellectual circle.”

Born into a clergy family in the East coastal city of Tianjin, Wang received a traditional jingtang education that rejects Chinese learning in most of his early years – according to him, “whenever I heard about studying Chinese classics (guowen), I would run away in a hurry.” Soon he found himself at odd with the hackneyed traditional jingtang-style education.

Nevertheless, Wang has been tiptoeing between the “scriptural fundamentalist” and the “Islamic modernist” schools of thought for much of his youth. It was not until his exposure to modern newspapers and the works of modern political thinkers at the age of 30 that brought him closer to the nationalist movement. As Wang himself recalls, reading the Tianjin-based Zhuyuan Vernacular News (竹园白话报) in 1908 gave him a “first taste” of modern newspaper. Thereafter, he subscribed to Ding Baocheng (丁宝臣)’s “Authentic Patriot’s News” (ch. zhengzong aiguo bao 正宗爱国报), which was famous for its motto “protecting your country is equivalent to protecting your religion; loving your country is the same as loving yourself.”

In 1910, Wang Jingzhai would read Liang Qichao’s famous treatises on national survival (published in 1899) for the first time. Apparently motivated by Liang’s call for institutional and

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23 Unnamed. Yugong 禹贡 《回教专号》 1937
24 Wang Jingzhai 王静斋：《五十年求学自述》，《中国伊斯兰教史参考资料选编》 (1911—1949) 下册
25 “保国即是保教，爱国即是爱身”
ideological changes, Wang joined Guomindang (then Tongmenghui) in the same year to “partake in the national affairs.”

Though identified with the “scriptural fundamentalist” (ch. zunjing gesu 尊经革俗) movement for most of his life, Wang Jingzhai’s meandering life and intellectual cosmopolitanism constantly drew him toward novel ideas – the writings from May Fourth intellectuals, the sanminzhuyi (三民主义, “Three Principles of the People”) formulated by Sun Yat-sen, the liberal nationalism embodied by the newly-independent Republic of Turkey. He studied at an al-Azhar at a time when the school was intellectually disposed toward the Islamic modernism (al-Nahdah) promulgated by scholars such as Jamal-al-Din al-Afghani and Rashid Rida. Meanwhile, Wang developed an acute consciousness of his national identity out of his humiliating experience abroad that while travelling in the contemporary world his national identity oftentimes spoke louder than his religious identity. This revelation pushed him further toward the cause of making a strong Chinese state and that of integrating the Hui Muslims into the Chinese nation.

The Sino-Muslim leaders in the east coastal cities, despite the relatively small size of

26 Wang Jingzhai 王静斋:五十年求学自述
27 Ibid.,
28 For instance, when participating in haji in Mecca, he was not allowed to hang up a Chinese flag like his fellow Muslims did because of his Chinese nationality. (王静斋:五十年求学自述)
their communities, had a disproportional influence in disseminating their modernist and nationalist interpretation to the rest of China through progressive newspaper, journals, public speeches, Muslim cultural associations, as well as reformed school curriculums. Nevertheless, their nationalist activism had limited influences in the Muslim-majority Northwest China, where the society was still marked by prevailing destitution and illiteracy. In the Northwestern provinces such as Gansu and Ningxia, several individuals acted as the lynchpins between the two seemingly disparate cultural spheres - Hu songshan (虎嵩山) of Yihewani (伊赫瓦尼), Ma Qixi (马启西) of xidaotang (西道堂), even Ma Yuanzhang (马元章), the elusive jahriyya leader, sought to bring the Gansu Muslim communities politically closer the Republican politics.29

Ma Qixi’s xidaotang, for example, sought to cultivate solidarity with Chinese cultural sphere through an exclusive emphasis on a unique education that integrated secular Chinese texts, Islamic teaching in Arabic and Persian, as well as the Han kitab (ch. yiru shihui 以儒释回) tradition.30 The second-generation Yihewani leader Hu Songshan, out of political concerns of his patrons31 and his personal disposition32,

30 Lipman 1997, p. 198
31 The Yihewani movement proliferated in Qinghai and Gansu during the Republican period under the patronage of xibei warlords Ma Qi, Ma Fuxiang and later Ma Hongkui.
decided to steer the movement away from its early puritanical wahhabi orientation under Ma Wanfu (1849 - 1934), and began to promote a form of dual-language (Arabic and Chinese) education that centered on themes of anti-sectarianism, and Chinese nationalism.33

How did they articulate what they believe?

1. Discursive integration

One of the key events that symbolize the empire-to-nation transition in 20th century China took place in the realm of language. By invoking the image of a larger, more menacing “Other”, the Chinese elite sought to discursively integrate the previously antagonistic races in the land of the former Qing Empire into a single “national self”. As Jonathan Lipman observes, the rise of nationalism has contributed to “a radical shift from language of exclusion and separation to one of incorporation and integration”.34 In the mean time, the Sino-Muslims – the onetime “subaltern” subjects of the Qing state - also embraced their own forms of linguistic innovations in their discursive integration into the national imagery.

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32 For example, Jonathan Lipman tells the story that when Hu Songshan went on hajj, he did not find pan-Muslim comfort in the universalizing rituals of the hajj, on the contrary, he felt discriminated against by other Muslims because he was Chinese. (Lipman, “remapping China”, p. 107)

33 Lipman, p. 208, Tapping, p. 61

34 Lipman, “travelers”, p. 118
Out of many discursive strategies of integration adopted by Muslim intellectuals to rationalize patriotism, the strategy of “unity-as-slogan” was the first (and perhaps the most essential) step to articulate the new relationship between religion and nation-state, and to inculcate the former Muslim subjects of the imperial dynasties with national symbols. The atmosphere of crisis, Social Darwinist thinking, and talks of an imminent racial war, espoused a range of nationalistic slogans – such as “love your country and love your race” (Aiguo aizhong 爱国爱种), “love your country like you love your home” (Aiguo aijia 爱国爱家), “love your country is equivalent to love your religion” (aiguo aijiao 爱国爱教), “love the country and love the minzu” (aiguo ai minzu 爱国爱民族) – that mushroomed following the fall of the Qing state in 1911. All sought to make connections between one’s national identity and one’s religious/ethnic identity, from different angles. Among them the phrase "aiguo aijiao"(爱国爱教”love of country is equivalent to the love of religion") stands out as the most lucid and memorable. In both Republican China and PRC, the phrase was so popular that it became a symbolism itself. The eclipse of the motto zhengjiao bu zhengguo ( “fighting for the religion not the country”) by “aiguo aijiao” over the Republican period marks the shifting nature of the Sino-Muslim communities self-identity.

2. **Becoming citizen (guomin)**
Liang Qichao, a brilliant scholar, nationalist and journalist, was often thought to be the first Chinese intellectual to popularize the term “citizen” (ch. guomin; ja. kokumin) in China in his 1899 article on the general tendency of guomin struggles and the future of China. Strongly influenced by the writings of Johann Caspar Bluntschli (1808 - 1881), a minor Swiss-German legal scholar, Liang Qichao came to understand the modern state - comprised by the entirety of its people (guomin)- as an organism with a consciousness of its own identity (and destiny):

Guomin is, firstly, a personality, that is one person embodied in the organic state who is capable of expressing its will and defining its rights; and secondly, a corporation, a legal entity in the state. The state is a totally unified and permanent community which when quickened by the active spirit of its people becomes complete. Thus, there is guomin if there is a state, and there will be no guomin if there is no state; the two are but different names for the same thing.\(^35\)

To Liang Qichao, whose ideas had a profound influence on leading Muslim intellectuals such as Wang Jingzhai, the struggles of the contemporary world was centered on the competitions among the "unified and nationally organized" peoples (guomin), instead of on the conflicts among the states.\(^36\) The nationalist project, therefore, must be a two-pronged endeavor of both state-making and nation-building, for the concepts of state (guo) and citizens (guomin) were understood as complementary and mutually reinforcing. Therefore, as James Leibold aptly observes, concurrent to the project of “stretching the tight skin of the

\(^{35}\) Liang Qichao, “Zhengzhixue dajia Bolunzhili zhi xueshuo” (An introduction to the political theory of Bluntschli), Yinbingshi wenji, XIII, p.72 Found in Qian and Fitzgerald (edd.), p. 55

\(^{36}\) Shen and Chien, p. 51. in Qian and Fitzgerald (edd.),
nation over the gigantic body” of the territory of the former Qing empire, the numerous imperial subjects living inside these physical boundaries must be “re-imagined” and inculcated with symbols of nation-state.\(^{37}\) This latter process of national building, however, opened up a potential political field, in which different visions of “Chinese nation” were contested, negotiated and repressed.

The symbolisms and epistemic underpinning of Liang Qichao’s explication of the relationship between the individual and the whole permeated into the works of leading Sino-Muslim writers of more than one generation. As early as 1908, in an article published on Xinhui pian (醒回篇), Bao Tingliang already regarded the atomized individuals (ch. geren 个人) instead of religious or local sects as the fundamental units – in his metaphor, the “molecules” (fenzi 分子\(^{38}\)) – in forming the organism of country (guojia).

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\text{A country is like a human being. While a human being is formed by a large number of molecules (fenzi); a country is formed by a large number of units (fenzi). The molecules from an individual - whether they form part of muscles, bones, skins, heart, esophagus, trachea, vessels or nervous system - are all integral part of a body. The units of our country, no matter their occupation be officials, soldier, merchants, scholar, worker, or peasant; and no matter their race be Han, Hui, Mongols, Tibetan – they are all fundamentally constituting units of the country.}\quad^{3940}
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\(^{37}\) Leibold, Chapter 1

\(^{38}\) Here the ambiguity of Chinese term fenzi (分子) is deliberate. In different contexts, it can mean either a “unit” or a “molecule”.

\(^{39}\)保廷梁,“劝同人负兴教育之责任说”《醒回篇》

\(^{40}\)“国家如个人也。组织个人以多数之分子，夫而后成其为人；组织国家亦以多数之分子，夫而后名之为国。组织个人之分子，无论其为筋肉，为皮骨，为心脏，为食管，为气管，为血管系，为神经统系，其所以为组织人身之分子则一。国家之分子，亦无论其职业之为吏、为军、
Meanwhile, the early Muslim activists repeatedly invoked the shared memory of the humiliating defeats of the Chinese state in order to tame the virulent discourse of racial purification in the turn-of-the-century China. For instance, in the same issue of *xinghui pian*, an article emphasized the shared fate of all races in China with the fate of the state in hope to put the racial struggles to an end:

*The racial differences are merely internal demarcations. To the outsiders, they mean nothing at all. For instance, following our defeats in the First Sino-Japanese War and the Boxer War, the foreigners who enter our country would not listen to us talking ‘this one is Manchu; this one is Han, this one is Hui and this one is Mongol,’” they would simply kill all of us indiscriminately. Therefore, the country is like a ship, all the crew of the ship – no matter whether they are yellow or white – cannot escape the fate of if the ship was wrecked and sank!*41

The victims of foreign occupation and colonialism in the contemporary world were also mentioned to illustrate the grim conditions of the “losers” in the competition among the nations. In an article published on *qingzhen zhoukan* (Pure and Truth Weekly) in 1921, the author lamented the bitter fate of the "weak" nations who lost their land. According to its author, the Muslims in China may suffer the similar condition of the Jews or the indigenous religions of India if they remain apathetic to the state affairs.

The Jewish people have lost two out of the three key factors in sustaining a country – people, land, and sovereignty. As the consequence, they were forced to live in perpetual exiles and could find no place to settle. India was colonized by the Great Britain. The religions of India are facing imminent demise as the result.42

3. Translation and *ijtihad*43

*The dictionary is based on the hypothesis – obviously an unproven one – that language are made up of equivalent synonyms.*

- Jorge Luis Borges

In the context of nineteenth-century social thought, the Islamic modernists from the Arab world, realizing the obsoleteness of the traditional Muslim orthodoxy, began to reexamine the enterprise of Islamic jurisprudence in light of rationalist principles of the Enlightenment.44 Given the fact that the reformers had to, at the same time, defend the modern values and their rights to do so, one important issue that the Islamic modernist movement raised up was an individual’s right of bypassing the

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42清真周刊，1921年第一卷第四期

43 *Ijtihad* (Arabic: إِجْتِهَاد) refers to the making of decision in Islamic law (sharia) independent of any school (*madhhab*) of jurisprudence (*fiqh*). This concept is developed in opposition to *taqlid*, or copying or obeying without question.

44 Moaddel, p.5
madhhabs (traditional legal schools) and reaching directly to the scriptures. As the door of ijtihad (interpretations of religious scripture independent from any legal tradition) was formally pushed open in the Islamic heartland, many Muslim intellectuals in China also pondered alternative methods to the existing Qur’anic exegesis according to the traditional jingtang (“scriptural hall”) tradition. Specifically, they began to seek legitimacy for various types of social and political projects through the independent (re)interpretations of the Qur’an and Hadith.

According to Matsumoto Masumi, though early generation of Sino-Muslim reformers such as Wang Haoran had already started interpreting the loyalty to the state within the traditional framework of the Sufi metaphysics - unity of being (Ar. Wahdat al-wugud) in the first decade of the 20th century. However, they failed to “discover a concrete basis for patriotism” in the Qur’an and the Hadith. It was not until Wang Jingzhai, one of the most respected Chinese translators of Qur’an, who made an unambiguous association between patriotism and the words of God. In a way similar to the Islamic modernist from the Arab heartland, Wang Jingzhai channeled

\[\text{Ibid.,}\]

\[\text{According to Matsumoto, as one of the two essential Sufi philosophical concepts, Wahdat al-wugud asserts that “all existence and phenomena in this world are outflows of Allah, (and) have their virtuous deeds allocated to them by Allah.” In accordance with its fundamental concept, Islam upholds the basic unity of mankind as one community and spirituality.}\]

\[\text{Matsumoto 2006, p. 123}\]
dominant European and Japanese political thoughts of nationalism and citizenship through a careful combination translation and exegesis. In a seminal article titled “Be faithful to Islam and love your country” which was published in Yuehua in 1930, Wang recalled that the inception of his intellectual inquiry into the relationship between religious faith and nationalism and how he found his answer in the verses of Qur’an.

In the past, my friend Sun Yiguang once asked me, ‘are there any unambiguous texts from the Qur’an that explicate on the love for one’s country?’ I only stared at him and could not find anything to say… My conundrum was not resolved until when I lived as a guest in Egypt. One day, I discussed with Professor Tandawy (?) about this question. He immediately recited part of a sura (2:246) from the Qur’an, which says: ‘And why should we not fight in the cause of Allah when we have been driven out from our homes and from our children?’ The Qur’an says that we all share the responsibility to protect our fatherland (fumu zhibang 父母之邦). It is said that if we fall to the some unfortunate fate and end up lost all our property, or lost our wife and sons, we shall be awakened and fight with the those who abuse their power. If many of them share none of this spirit, and instead just focusing on making prayers, fasting and stays out of other business. How can they not feel shameful about his country being invaded and their family falling apart? 48

In a seminal work that examines ways in which concepts of modernity being translated into another cultural sphere, Lydia Liu observes that a text becomes “translatable in the ordinary sense of the word” once linkages were established between two languages. Meanwhile, she points out that any existing linkages must derive from “historical coincidences whose meanings are contingent on the politics

48王靜齋，《謹守回教與愛護國家》，《月華》，卷2期3（1930年1月），版1。
of translingual practice.” The enormously consequential, if not also as much controversial, exegetic decisions Wang made in his Qur’anic translations were exemplary examples of the “translingual practice” described by Liu. Meanwhile, Wang Jingzhai was the first to translate the Arabic term al-watan (homeland) into the Chinese word guo (“country”, here refers to – at least the ideal of - the modern nation-state). In the same article, he introduced the word watan (ch. wodaini) in the dual sense of a religious duty and a territory-based nationalism.

The Arabs used to proclaim that ‘al-watan is part of the iman (faith)’. To translate it quite literally, it means that ‘loving one’s country is an article of a Mu’min’s faith.’ Some claim this line is from the Prophet Muhammad. I cannot say that this is false or true. However, it alone shall be enough to demonstrate that we Muslims should not only adhere to our religion, but also care for our country ... Whenever someone asks for my opinion on the attitude toward the country, I reply that the country is a place that matters life and death to every single person of our nation, and it is a land to which we should all be grateful (食毛践土之区). In order to strengthen the foundation of our nation, we shall love each other. Only out of solidarity, our country may levitate itself to the highest class, restore its former strength, and even gain some dignity. The most fundamental obligation for all the citizens (guomin) to their nation was their life and their property. (We say that) risking oneself for the benefit of one’s country was a laudable thing. How can those cowards be able to acquire true freedom in their lives? We all cannot avoid death. But for those who die for the country, their life will persist even though their body

49 Liu, p. 8
50 An article from Matsumoto Masumi also confirmed the first documented use of this term “aiguo aijiao” was from the same Yuehua article penned by Wang Jingzhai in January 1930.
has perished.⁵¹⁵²

Apparently aware of the meanings and importance of the term in the Arabic, Wang’s decision to equate the Qur’anic term *al-watan* (homeland) with the Chinese word *guo* (nation-state) may seem a little peculiar at first. Nevertheless, this particular interpretive act, despite a certain spuriousness it carries, laid out an important theoretical foundation for an enormous body of ensuing scholarships that aimed to justify Sino-Muslim’s dual loyalty to both the religion and to their state. As a manifestation of the subjectivity and the individual agency of a translator, the momentousness of this specific “translingual practice” - the amalgamation of *al-watan with guo* - was felt in China to this day.⁵³

⁵¹王静斋，〈谨守回教与爱护国家〉，《月华》，卷 2 期 3 (1930 年 1 月)，版 1。

⁵²“阿拉伯文之卧代尼(Watan)，亦即居所也……阿拉伯人常说，爱卧代尼是属伊玛尼(信仰)。直译之，为爱护国家，为穆民(有信仰者)所应有，或谓此语发自穆圣，确否我不敢知。但是，以此足可以证明吾侪穆民，不仅当遵守回教道理，且当爱护国家也……据说，父母之邦，各有维护之责，一旦不幸财产被夺，妻子离散，尤当怒起精神，与强权者相奋斗。不此之图，止知斋拜，不问其他，而不独以国破家亡为耻乎。……一旦有人向尔问及应如何对待国家，则曰，国家为吾辈国民同胞之生地，食毛践土之区，吾人为巩固国本计，自当相亲相爱，国家可借此亲爱，达到最高之地步。既可保旧有之势力，且得增加若许之尊严。国民最应尽之义务，首推生命与财产。为国将挺身冒险，皆利国利家之道。遇难苟且，贪生畏死者，能得自由生存乎?人人不免一死，为国捐躯者，其人虽灭，而其业永存于世也。”(王静斋，〈谨守回教与爱护国家〉，《月华》，卷 2 期 3 (1930 年 1 月)，版 1。)

⁵³ However, the absolute “author-function” of a translator, such as Wang Jingzhai’s, might well be put into doubt. Lydia Liu attributed this Foucauldian suspicion of the individual agency of the author (translator) to the intellectual orientation of a body of works inspired by Foucault that seek to reveal the “institutional practices and the knowledge/power relationships that authorize certain ways of knowing while discouraging others.” Seeing from this angle, Liu cautions, “the business of translating a culture into another language has a little, if anything, to do with individual free choice or linguistic
Aside from being a prolific translator, Wang Jingzhai also proved to be a successful sloganeer. As shown in the excerpted speech above, Wang was among the first to publicize the popular, alleged Hadith *hubb al-watan min al-iman* - “Love one’s country is an article of faith” inside China. Speaking with a social Darwinist undertone, Wang called on the Chinese Muslims to extricate themselves out of their self-imposed isolations and to put an end to their sectarian strives in order to be united under the Chinese nation. To Wang Jingzhai, who were deeply influenced by the works of Liao Qichao and the Islamic modernists of Egypt, the old expressions of Sino-Muslim’s embeddedness and their sense of belongings in the Chinese society from the pre-modern time must be transformed into a language of nationalism and citizenship – marked by both rights (including, of course, religious rights) and obligations of the individual to a political community - in its twentieth century context, the nation-state.

*In Arabic, the term al-watan means abode... The legal scholars of our time interpret the term ‘al-watan’ to be the place to which people’s rights, responsibility, life and property are attached. Therefore, the freedom of the people are joined together with their country... the definition of ‘watan’ – according to the Romans from the antiquity – were the place where people enjoy political rights and political responsibility.*

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54 「代尼」(Watan)一义即居所也。而今之法学家对于人民权利、义务、生命、财产寄托之地，称之为「代尼」。故谓人民之自由与国家，乃属并立者。换言之，无自由则无国家。法国博学士拉梭鲁威尔氏尝云：「专制时代，无国家可言」。代尼之定义，据古罗马尼亚人谈─称其即与人民有政治上权利与义务之地也。(王静斋，〈谨守回教与护国〉，《月华》，卷2 期
Ma Songting ahong, a co-founder and leading figure of the Chengda Normal School, also invoked the concept of patriotism as a religious duty in a well-known speech he gave at the YMCA Beiping in 1933. Compare to Wang Jingzhai, Ma approached the issue of the relationship between nation and religion from a different angle. He claimed that the attachment to one’s country is not only compatible to Islamic ethics but also a prerequisite to the maintaining of one’s faith. Meanwhile, he looked upon the anti-imperial movements in the Muslim heartland and anti-Qing rebellions of the Muslim subjects in imperial China, claiming that the self-determination of the nation is the precondition for the Islamic revival,

“The Prophet Muhammad said, ‘hubb al-watan min al-iman’ or ‘the love of fatherland is an article of faith’. In other words, if there is no love of the fatherland, then people will lose faith. Muslims appreciate faith the most. Because of this morality, there is no Muslim who does not accomplish his duties for the state, nation, religion, birthplace and family... Recently, Muslim countries such as Persia, Afghanistan and Arabia achieved independence and Turkey has recovered its strength and wealth. Moreover, Muslims in Egypt and India have succeeded in their Islamic revival. In China, Muslims have achieved patriotic activities since the Ming and the Qing periods. If you research into historical books, you can understand this fact easily. Recently, we have encouraged the harmony between the Hui (Muslims) and the Han for the common benefit of the whole country. What represents the distinctive spirits of Muslims is that, if someone oppresses or slanders us, everybody, even retailers or trainees, will offer resistance. This means that Muslims in China accept love of association and the doctrine of Islam. If each one can show the virtue of loving their own fatherland and religion, then other countries and religions will give up invading China.”

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3 (1930 年 1 月), 版 1。}

55 Ma Songting, , Matsumoto, p. 132
4. The making of a motto

“It is commonplace in speech-act theory that words exist not simply to reflect external reality but to make things happen.”

- Lydia Liu, *Tranlingual Practices*, p.41

Wang Jingzhai has the reason to doubt whether the expression “loving one's country is an article of faith” ("hubb al-watan min al-iman") was indeed authentic words from the Prophet. Nevertheless, his astute recognition of the relevance and powerful implication of this phrase was not only timely, but also, as it turns out, enormously consequential. In China, this motto was spread not only through leading Islamic journals such as Yuehua, Tujie, and Huijiao Dazhong (“the Muslim Population”), but also by means of Friday prayers, radio waves, legal interpretations (Ar. Fatāwā, فتاوى) and through public lectures of influential ahongs. The famous motto *Aiguo Aijiao* ("love of your country is equivalent to the love for your religion") that appeared around the same time was also a clever reinterpretation of this alleged Hadith. By condensing the lengthy Hadith into a four-character *xiyu* (习语, “idiom”) that is in keeping with Chinese customs, the slogan *Aiguo Aijiao* became widely known and had enormous currency among the Sino-Muslims, no matter to what fractions they claim allegiance. In fact, many Hui intellectuals in the People’s Republic had canonized this phrase to be one of the most fundamental expressions of the Muslim faith in China. In modern China, as the concept of religion being reinvented as a
subordinate category in the secular system of modernity—as Yoshiko Ashiwa put it—a “thread of the fabric of modernity”\textsuperscript{56}, the ideology of dual allegiances to the religion and to the nationalism was quickly mainstreamed among the Buddhists, Christians, and Taoist—namely, anyone whose faith is permitted a place in the New China as a “religion” (zongjiao). Thereafter, the slogan aiguo aijiao remained to be one of the most visible watchwords and has been repeated \textit{ad nauseam} within the so-called "religious sector" (zongjiao jie 宗教界) in China to this day.

Photo taken in 2009 at a tiny Sino-Muslim mosque located just outside the city of Turpan in

Xinjiang. The words on the blackboard read: “Prophet Muhammad said: ‘love of the country is part of faith (xinyang 信仰).’” (Photo: Wenhong Xie)

The enterprise of modernist *ijtihad* can be traced to the Arab world at least in the late half of the 19th century, where the concurrence of Islamic modernists and liberal nationalist movements has ushered in various reinterpretations of familiar concepts. The old terminology "*watan*", along with a range of traditional political and religious concepts, such as "*umma,“ justice,” opposition,” “freedom,” “education,” “politics,” and "government", was infused with new meanings in the political literature of the 1880s in light of the new conceptual development of the Egyptian nation. As religion was no longer perceived as the singular unifying feature of the concept “*umma*, the term “*watan*” (homeland) also evolved from its literary meaning (“a man’s place, his abode”) into a politically charged term that connotes a “place where one’s rights are secure and towards which he has duties.” 57 To the Islamic nationalist, the concept of “*watan*” seeks to articulate a reciprocal relationship between a land and its inhabitants – “the homeland had to ensure the safety of its people, protect their rights, and grant them freedom of rights, religion, and culture. Members of the *watan* in return had to love it.”

Moreover, in the 19th century context, the term “*watan*” was increasingly

57 Moaddal, p. 140
58 Zachs, The making of a Syrian identity: intellectuals and merchants in nineteenth century Beirut, p. 167
reinterpreted in order to *pacify* the conflict between religion and nationalism. The prominent journalist and leader of the Egyptian Nationalist Party Mustafa Kamil Pasha(1874-1908), for instance, saw no conflict between patriotism and religious duty, "for every living nation there are two great obligations: the obligation towards its religion and its creed, and its obligation towards its *watan* and the land of its fathers (*la patrie)*."\(^{59}\)

Though the authenticity of the phrase *hubb al-watan min al-iman* ("loving one's country is an article of faith") as the words of the Prophet has been a subject of vexed debate by historians and theologians, a survey of the existing secondary literature suggests that the “Hadith” was most likely coined by the prominent Syrian scholar and publisher Butrus al-Bustani (1819-1883) in the mid-19\(^{th}\) century.\(^{60}\)

According to one account, the phrase first appeared in 1860 in the Syrian newspaper *Nafir Suriyya*, and subsequently became the motto of al-Bustani’s influential political and literary review *al-Jinan* ("The Shield") in 1870.\(^{61}\) As an early promoter of Syrian nationalism and a converted protestant, al-Bustani popularized this fictitious Hadith after his conversion to Christianity in order to counter various forms of sectarianism and Muslim discriminations against the non-Muslim minorities.

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\(^{60}\) Zachs, pp. 167-168; Moaddel, p. 158; Tibi, Bassam. p. 103; Ussama Makdisi, p. 207, Hourani, p. 101; Matsumoto, p. 126

in the framework of modern nation-state.\(^6\)

By the end of the nineteenth century, the alleged Hadith “loving one’s country is an article of faith”, with its secular interpretation promoted by al-Bustani, was not only was widely known among the Muslims in the Middle East, but also provided a theoretical underpinning for the anti-imperialist and liberal nationalist movements in places like Egypt and Syria.\(^6\) While the Islamic reformers in Egypt recognize the term *watan* as a nation of Muslim majority in which the rights of religious and ethnic minority will be protected, the Islamic reformers in China, with a certain degree of irony, reinterpreted *watan* as the Chinese nation-state with the majority was non-Muslim.

5. **Political Self-consciousness**

The practices of Hui identity formation were not limited to the discursive ones. The Republican period also witnessed the appearance of various cultural and political associations of the Hui that sought improvement of the socio-economic condition of the Muslims, expansion of modern and religious education, and


\(^{63}\) Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930-1945, By Israel Gershoni, James P. Jankowski, p. 83
promotion of Islamic culture.\textsuperscript{64} Founded only a year after the downfall of the Qing dynasty, the Chinese Muslim Advancement Association (zhongguo huijiao jujinhui 中国回教进会) endeavored to eliminate the plaguing sectarian strifes and connect the fragmented Muslim communities in China. According to Ma Songting \textit{ahong}, a leader of Beijing’s Hui Muslims,

\begin{quote}
The Chinese Muslim Advancement Association (zhongguo huijiao jujinhui) is not subordinated under any Mosques. However, from its headquarter (benbu) in Beijing, to the provincial branches (zhibu), even to the local divisions (fenbu) at each county, town, and village-level, all are located within the Mosques... Its function, to put it in simplified term, is to represent the entirety of the Hui people to outsiders, and to lead the entirety of the Hui people from within.\textsuperscript{65}
\end{quote}

In addition to their nominal dedication to the cultural (religious) revival and unity of the Muslim population in China, Muslim leaders had to address more worldly matters – the economical hardships, illiteracy and social marginalization that have long crippled their own community. Despite the absence of trans-regional development efforts, concrete measures have been carried out to make improvement in the sectors of public education, transportation, hygiene and security within each local Muslim congregation\textsuperscript{66} (ch. \textit{jingfang 经坊} Ar. al-Jama‘ah) from

\textsuperscript{64} Aubin, p.241

\textsuperscript{65}马松亭. 1933. 中国回教的现状—埃及正道会讲演

\textsuperscript{66} \textit{jingfang} (lit. “scriptural community”) is a prevalent type of social unit among the traditional Sino-Muslim communities. Normally organized around a local mosque, the system was developed in tandem with the formalization of \textit{jingtang} education in the late-16\textsuperscript{th} century. According to Jonathan Lipman, “each \textit{jingfang} (Ar. jam‘i’a) can employ religious professionals to lead prayer, to preach, to teach, and to interpret the religious law and the sacred texts.”(Lipman, “WHITE HATS, OIL CAKES, AND COMMON BLOOD”)

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Beijing to Linxia.\(^{67}\) For example, every Muslim cultural association and its supporters advocated, as main practical action, the establishment of one primary school in each Muslim community, and, if possible, also secondary school. To the Sino-Muslim leaders, the practice of “local autonomy” would pave the road to the genuine “ethnic” self-determination that was thought soon to be coming.

Meanwhile, the changing socio-political circumstances have also given to a political consciousness among the Muslim modernists. Following its successful northern expedition in 1928, the Guomindang party formed the provisional Nanjing government in accordance with Sun Yat-sen (who died in 1925)’s famous "Three Stages of Revolution". According to the seminal *Fundamentals of National Reconstruction* (*jianguo dagang* 建国大纲) published in 1923, Sun Yat-sen outlined the second, or the so-called “Political Tutelage” stage\(^{68}\), to be a period in which a single party-state led by the Guomindang educating people about their political and civil rights in preparation for the last stage of China’s national revolution— the constitutional democracy. In the same document, Sun explicitly proposed “local self-government” to be a central component of the “Political Tutelage”.

*The second stage [the stage of Political Tutelage] is a transitional period, during* \(^{68}\)

\(^{67}\)Ma Songting 马松亭，（論著：中國回教的現狀(續)），《月華》，卷 5 期 17 (1933 年 6 月)，頁 2-4。

\(^{68}\) This term comes from Sun Yat-sen’s well-known formula for the three stages of revolution — military unification (*junzheng*, 军政), political tutelage (*xunzheng* 训政), and constitutional democracy (*xianzheng* 宪政)
which a provisional constitution (not the present one) will be promulgated. Its object is to build a local self-government system for the development of democracy. The Hsien or district will be unit of self-government. When disbanded troops are disposed of and fighting ceases, every district should accept the provisional constitution, which will regulate the rights and duties of the people and the administrative powers of the revolutionary government... the people in a district may be empowered to choose their own magistrate and become a complete self-governing body.  

The relative stability of the Nanjing period (1928-1937), manifested by the transition from the state of military unification (junzheng 军政) to political tutelage (xunzheng 训政), was interpreted among the Sino-Muslim leaders to be an invitation for more political participation. Responding to the changing political environment, Sino-Muslim leaders found it imperative to bring the inchoate groups of Muslims together not only for political recognition, but also for active participation in the representative politics. The reforms on the Sino-Muslim education, as a result, were aimed to “advance the intelligence of the Hui people (huimin)” and to enhance their ability of the Muslims to partake in the proposed “constitutional democracy” and self-government.

“All of our fellow Muslims must take the responsibility of the citizen... Currently, our country is still in the transition from the state of military unification to political tutelage. Once the politics is on its right path, the exertion of political author and the self-rule of local society must depend on the political consciousness and participation of the people. Therefore, all our fellow Muslims must be mindful of the prospect of the world politics, the current situation of China, the organization of the government, and the ideology of the party... We must be clear that our time is an era of people’s power (minquan 民权), all of us citizens shall have the rights

and responsible to participate in the national politics.”

6. Struggle for citizen’s rights of the Muslims

While Muslim leaders devoutly engaged in the project of remaking the Sino-Muslims into the citizenry of Chinese Republic. Stephen Henning suggested that the Muslims resisted inclusion into the nascent republic by coining their own terminology and with it their own vision of a community where the "fellow Muslim" (jiaobao) opposed the fellow citizen (tongbao) and where the "people of the religious community" (jiaomin) were more important than the "citizenry" (guomin). According to Henning, it was “foreign aggression... that effectively changed the orientation of Muslim politics in the Chinese nation.” In fact, with the intensification of Japanese military presence in China from the mid-1930s onward, when famous ahongs sought to publicize the knowledge about Islam (huijiao) through public speeches and broadcasts, their targeted audience was no longer only their fellow Muslims (jiaobao), but the “fellow citizens” (tongbao) of China.

70 Xin Wu 馨吾, 《回教徒與政治》, 《月華》, 卷 2 期 12 (1930 年 4 月), 版 3.
71 Henning, p. 243-244
72 The earliest documented effort of using radio wave to reach out to the Muslims was in 1934 by Ahong Da Pusheng, Ha Dengcheng and Xue Ziming. Ma Songting ahong also broadcasted his speech on radio in 1937. (編輯部, 《紀事: 上海: 繼續播音宣教播長期宣傳》, 《月華》, 卷 6 期 19.20.21 (1934 年 7 月), 頁 39. 編輯部, 《專件: 廣播教義》, 《月華》, 卷 8 期 13 (1936 年 5 月), 頁 10. 編輯部, 《專件: 馬松亭阿衡在電台講演稿》, 《月華》, 卷 8 期 14 (1936 年 5 月), 頁 4-6.)
Though the Sino-Muslim leaders of the Republic period were often praised for their “national consciousness” (guojia yishi) by their contemporary Chinese intellectual elite, and for their “modern consciousness” (xiandai yishi) by their posterity, their patriotism was not unconditional, and the narrative of Hui People’s position in the Five Peoples Under On Nation (wuzu gonghe) was emphasized toward the end of securing the recognition of genuine autonomy (zizhi) and the equal rights provided for the all citizen within the nation-state.

The various slander incidents (ch. rujiao an 殴教案) during the Republican years were most illustrative of not only the longstanding intolerance and discrimination against the Hui in the Han-majority society, but also the thickening of a supra-regional group consciousness of the Hui. Similar to “Sexual custom” (xing fensu) incident in 1989 documented by Dru Gladney, in which Muslim demonstrators protested “not only as Muslims but also as members of state-assigned Islamic nationalities”, Sino-Muslim in the Republican period demanded the Republican government for the protection of the religion as their citizen’s right. According to Fu Tongxian, a leader of the “protecting the religion movement” (hujiao yundong) and author of one of the most valuable history of Muslims in China, the Nanjing government eventually gave in to the pressure from the organized Hui protestors from “all across China.” Not only did it close down two of the journals that published

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73 Gladney 1991, p. 5
insulting articles in 1932, the government also offered public statements in
demonstrating their unswerving commitment for the protection of the religion.\textsuperscript{74} By
coordinating the \textit{Hui} protests against slandering and discrimination, Muslim leaders
challenged the nationalist and ethnic inclusiveness of Guomindang
government.\textsuperscript{75} The Muslim journals such as Yuehua presented themselves as a
leading voice for \textit{all} of the Sino-Muslims and an important medium for the
dissemination of authoritative information on the updates of the protests.

Meanwhile, as Mao Yufeng points out, the Sino-Muslim leaders also expressed
certain interest in the Turkic-speaking Muslims of Xinjiang in light of the “possibility
of uniting all Muslims in China to form a political voice.”\textsuperscript{76} In an article published on
Yuehua shortly after a rebellion in Xinjiang that led to the establishment of the
(short-lived) First East Turkestan Republic (ETR) in 1933, Wang Mengyang (王梦扬),
one of most important commentators for Yuehua, sought to frame the recent
development in Xinjiang as a positive event (part of \textit{our} Hui ethnicity starting a
revolution against the ruthless oppressors\textsuperscript{77}). Drafted in an incendiary tone, the
article lamented the fact the pledged “autonomy” for the Hui ethnicity amounts to
just an empty promise:

\textsuperscript{74} Fu, Tongxian. 1936. \textit{Zhongguo huijiao shi} (中国回教史, \textit{A history of China’s Hui religion})
\textsuperscript{75} Nedostup, p. 17
\textsuperscript{76} Mao, pp. 376-377
\textsuperscript{77} The ruler of Xinjiang at the time was the warlord Jin Shuren 金树仁, successor of an equally brutal
Yang Zengxin 杨增新.
... Our China is comprised of the five nations (wuzu), and the Northwestern region is the place inhabited by huizu. (In accordance with) the constitutional right for self-determination and autonomy for our huizu, the government should have guaranteed the full right of citizen (minzu) long ago. Since our Chinese Nation is comprised of five nations, all the five nations should have the equal status, (so that) they can be unified and work together for the sake of the Chinese Nation. However, the truth is, since the beginning of the Republic (gaiyuan), though the central government has not been particular lenient to the nations like Mongolian and Tibetan, nor had the government bestowed them full citizen rights (minzu, lit. “democracy”)... Nevertheless, it does set up governmental organs such as the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission, an act that assigned some dignity to the Mongolians and Tibetans. As for our huizu, aside from moaning under the rule of a small group of people, and living as obedient citizens (shunmin) under the Chinese state, where is the promised self-determination (zizhu 自主)? Where is the promised autonomy? (zizhi, 自治)? Where is the promised “people’s power” (minquan 民权)? Where is the guarantee of “People’s welfare” (minsheng 民生)? (Many of us) have never heard of these terms before. If this Jimi (羁縻) system and paltering policy are allowed to continue, seeking the cooperation among the nations (minzu) of China and protection of our frontiers would be like to fish in the air! (yuanmu qiuyu)

7. Islamic publication

Newspapers serve modern man as a substitute for morning prayers.

- Benedict Anderson, quoting Hegel

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78 Wang, Mengyang 梦扬：新变感言. 月华：第 5 卷第 30 期, p. 6

79 The Jimi ("loose rein") system was China’s frontier policy during the Tang (618-907) dynasty. Here the term was loosely applied to designate archaic policy of dealing with the frontier people during the imperial period.

80 Wang, Mengyang 梦扬：新变感言. 月华：第 5 卷第 30 期, p. 6
Many scholars of nationalism, Benedict Anderson to be the most famous among them, extolled the emergence of periodical press as the greatest discursive innovation of the modern time. The relatively low cost and wide distribution of newspapers, magazines, and journals, coupled with a process of “vernacularization” in the society, enabled the print-culture to reach an unprecedentedly large readership.\(^81\) With a reference to Hegel, Anderson likened the power of modern periodical press to that of “mass ceremony” that was performed “in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull.”\(^82\) Consequently, the expansion of what Anderson terms “print-capitalism” led to the creation of secular, “historically-clocked”, “imagined”\(^83\) communities as the newspaper readership became amalgamated by their shared consciousness of a synchronized, undifferentiated time-space.

In a way similar to the endeavoring Chinese nationalist and publisher Wang Tao and Liang Qichao, Muslim intellectuals of the Republican period also sought to infuse national consciousness to the their readers through newspapers and journals (qikan). First appeared in 1904, the Muslim periodicals in China have flourished during the Republican period. According to Francoise Aubin, a total of 133 Muslim periodicals have been circulated from 1904 to 1949\(^84\) – out of which 30 were published in Beijing alone. These including the modern-style newspapers published by

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\(^81\) Anderson 1983, pp. 41-44
\(^82\) Anderson 1983, p. 39
\(^83\) Ibid.,
\(^84\) Aubin, p. 254
Sino-Muslims (which itself not necessary contains religious content), such as Zhuyuan Vernacular News 竹园白话报(1907 -); and journals and magazines that target specifically at a Muslim audience, such as Xinghui pian 醒回篇(1908) and Yuehua 月华(1929-1948). The objectives of these Muslim publications were epitomized by the purported goals of Yuehua - first, to promote of Islam in China in accordance with modern (and later national) trends; second, to report the news and conditions of local Sino-Muslim communities across the country; and third, to introduce the information of rest of the Islamic world among Muslims in China.

Instead of a secular, profit-driven sensibility that the term “print-capitalism” may suggest, the Muslim newspapers that aimed to create an imagined community of coreligionists often had to struggle with a stringent budget. In an editor’s talk section in 1932, Yuehua mentioned the difficult financial situation it faced, “in the past, we lost 6 coins (tongyuan) for every issue we sold out. Now the cost is reduced to two to five coins per issue. However, since the circulation has doubled this year, each month we lose more money than last year.”

Thanks to the relative political stability Nanjing government maintained, the period from 1928 to 1937 was the most active period of both the Muslim revival movement as well as the development of Muslims newspapers. Although the majority of the newspapers and journals were short-lived due to low circulation and lack of funds – Claude Pickens Jr., for example, reported that even the nine most popular journals

peaked at about 3000-4000 per issue, the print-culture functioned as the only vehicle carrying modernist interpretation of Islam into the segmentary Muslim communities across China.

Increasingly, the Muslim newspapers and magazines sought to construct the imaginary of a collective group of Muslims in China – an “imagined community” comprised of the Chinese-speaking Muslims from different localities. A section of Yuehua featured “the condition of Hui communities in various localities” (gedi huimin zhuangkuang 各地回民状况) was followed with much fascination. Meanwhile, the periodical dedicated itself in showing Sino-Muslim’s commitment to the national building project. Almost all of the contributors and readers correspondence showed an unswerving opposition to the Japanese invasion and call for unity in resistance in the name of the national salvation (ch. jiuguo 救国). Additional, the awareness of the impact of independent religious interpretation (ijtihad) also found expression in the leading Muslims journals over the period. Ostensibly motivated by ahong Wang Jingzhai’s innovative exegeses of Qur’an for the legitimation of modern and nationalist values, in 1931, the journal Yuehua started to include the tafsir (Ar. Tafsir al-Kabir lit. “The Large Commentary”) – exegeses and commentaries of the Qur’an and the Hadith – at the beginning of each issue.

86 Pickens, Claude L. “The Challenge of Chinese Moslems,” The Chinese Recorder, 68
87 In fact, I suspect that only Yuehua that achieved this number during its most prosperous time.
88 Matsumoto, p. 127
Starting from the late 19th century, the journals and newspapers influenced by modernist Islamic movement were established in many major Muslim communities throughout the world.\(^89\) Through “reprinting, translating, or summarizing” articles from similar periodicals both in and outside their own country, these journals and newspapers formed a transnational network of Islamic publications that helped disseminate news of the movements throughout the Islamic world.\(^90\) While Rebecca Karl and Prasenjit Duara have shown that the transnational intellectual discourses of nationalism made important contribution to the shaping of early nationalisms in China\(^91\), this impact was not limited to the sphere of the Han majority. In China, the Muslim readers and editors also began to pick up information about from the rest of the Islamic world through translation and journal exchanges. From the Yuehua magazine published in Republican China between 1931 and 1947, one can often find translated articles from reformist journals such as al-manar (at the time almost single-handedly run by the famed reformist scholar Rashid Rida) and Nur al-Islam, the bulletin of al-Azhar University. In the mean time, English and Arabic articles written by Chinese Muslim intellectuals started to appear on Yuehua, apparently intended for an international audience.

\(^89\) Kurzman, p. 15  
\(^90\) Ibid.,  
\(^91\) Karl, Staging the World; Duara, Rescuing History from the Nation
8. Pan-Asianist Japan – from sources of inspiration to a menacing other

There was a time when the Pan-Islamic movement and the Pan-Asian movement (spearheaded by Japanese intellectuals but also appropriated by different groups in China) looked at each other with mutual admiration for their anti-imperialists and anticolonialists struggle.92 As Selçuk Esenbel and Komatsu Hisao have demonstrated, many Muslim nationalists and Pan-Islamists viewed the Pan-Asianist Japan as both a potential ally of Muslim countries in contesting Western imperial powers and an “alternative” model to Western modernization.93 Meanwhile, Japan had been reaching out to the Islamic world since the early 1900s. In the early years of the 20th century, Japan was a haven for Muslim activists seeking collaboration with Japan against Western powers and Han nationalists scheming for the overthrow of the Qing dynasty.94 As cases in point, the meetings that led to the creation of the 

*Tongmeng Hui*, a precursor of *Guomindang*, took place in the headquarters of the

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92 The world of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed a bewildering paradox: on one hand, old gigantic empires fragmented into a number of smaller contentious nation-states; on the other hand, in the same period, there emerged a variety of pan-movements whose aim was to unify independent sovereign states into larger political entities in the name of cultural, linguistic, religious, or racial affinities. (Chen, p. 45)


94 For example, based on the famous pan-Islamic activist Abdurreshid Ibrahim’s publications, Esenbel have shown that Tokyo in 1908 was a hub for Muslim activists seeking collaboration with Japan against Western powers.
Black Dragon Society (Ja. *Kokuryuukai* 黒龍会). Meanwhile, the very first Chinese-language Muslim journal, *xinhui pian* (“A brochure to awaken the Hui”), was published in 1908 by a group of about thirty Chinese Muslim students in Tokyo. The initial number of *xinhui pian*, according to Derk Bodde, contained an article entitled "Islam and Bushido", suggesting a possible influence of Japanese militarism on the “patriotic” movement of the Sino-Muslim students in Tokyo. This link, of course, is better to be left buried from the view of today’s official historiography of Hui.\(^95\)

After the Japanese invasion into Manchuria in 1931, and especially after the outbreak of Sino-Japanese war in 1937, the onetime rosy picture of Japan as a model and potential ally quickly eroded. The intensification of Japanese imperialism in China has ostensibly become a powerful unifying factor of the internally demarcated Sino-Muslim communities. The personal experience of daily interactions with the Japanese army – forced closure of Muslim schools, plundering of Chinese cities, burning of mosques, not to mention army brutalities – furnished emotional fuels to the anti-Japanese mobilization among the Sino-Muslims. During the course of the Sino-Japanese war, the Sino-Muslim scholars and students engaged in countering Japanese propagandas both inside China\(^96\) and in the Middle Eastern countries\(^97\),


\(^{97}\) According to an American professor Derk Bodde’s report in 1940s, prior to the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war in 1937, Japan's activities among the Sino-Muslim communities were “confined in
while religious leaders issued *fatāwā* in justifying both patriotism and anti-Japanese struggle an important religious duty. The *Yihewani* leader Hu Songshan, for instance, required all the mosque leaders (*jiaozhang*) in Ningxia to include specific lines into the each week’s Friday prayer (ch. *zhuma* or juli, Ar. *Jumu’ah*). This additional prayer is to be uttered in both Arabic and Chinese,

\[\text{Oh God! Help our government and nation, defeated the invaders, and exterminate our enemies. Protect us from the evil deeds done by the violent Japanese. They have occupied our cities and killed our people. Send upon them a furious wind; cause their airplanes to fall in the wilderness, and their battleships to sink in the sea! Cause their army to scatter, their economy to collapse! Give them their just reward! Allah, answer our prayer! Amen.}\]

### Conclusion

At the beginning of the 20th century, the hegemonic discourse of nation-building and large measure to ‘investigations’ and intrigues”. Only after 1937 were efforts made forcibly to “organize and control the Chinese Muslims on a large scale.” However, he also mentioned that the Japanese-controlled All China Muslim League (*zhongguo huijiao zong lianhe hui*), founded almost immediately after the outbreak of Sino-Japanese War, reportedly had more than 500 Sino-Muslims representatives from all provinces of China attending it opening ceremony. (Bodde, Derk. “Japan and the Muslims of China”. *Far Eastern Survey*, Vol. 15, No. 20 (Oct. 9, 1946), pp. 311-313)


98 Hu, Songshan, in Xu, Xianlong, p. 159
the increasingly palpable role of the state in the society entailed new processes of subject-formation even among the “subaltern” minorities who were often left out of the teleological narrative of national history. As the impacts of Islamic modernism and liberal nationalism reached China, a dual individual allegiance to the nation-state and to the Islamic faith became theoretically possible, in some cases even desired. For leading Republican-period Muslim intellectuals such as Wang Jingzhai\textsuperscript{99}, Ma Songting, Ma Jian\textsuperscript{100}, Ha Decheng\textsuperscript{101} and Hu Songshan\textsuperscript{102}, their decisions for strategic integration to the Chinese nation were not a forced one, but were contingent upon a variety of factors, including one’s education, one’s intellectual and cultural disposition, local and national politics. In the case of Wang Jingzhai ahong, the nationalist movement epitomized in the slogan aiguo aijiao (爱国爱教, “love for country is equivalent to love for religion”) and the Ikhwan-inspired zunjing gesu (遵经革俗 “sticking to the scripture and abandoning the vulgar teaching”) were two intellectual orientations that undergirded his teaching throughout his life.

In a recent book, theorist of nationalism Anthony Smith suggests that the modern

\textsuperscript{99} For a short biography of Ahong Wang Jingzhai, see chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{100} See Ma, Haiyun. “Patriotic and Pious Muslim Intellectuals in Modern China: The Case of Ma Jian”, URL: http://i-epistemology.net/attachments/912_ajiss23-3-Haiyun%20Ma%20-%20Patriotic%20and%20Pious%20Muslim%20Intellectuals%20in%20Twentieth-Century%20China%20-%20The%20Case%20of%20Ma%20Jian.pdf ; last accessed: 10/25/11
\textsuperscript{101} See Wang Haobin, Minguo shiqi de yisilan fuxing yundong: yi Da Pusheng wei dabiao de huizu zhishi fenzi de sixiang lichen. (民国时期的伊斯兰复兴运动：以达浦生为代表的回族知识分子的思想历程). MA Thesis. 2010. Shanghai Normal University
\textsuperscript{102} See Lipman 1997, pp. 208-211
nationalist reformers saw nations “as communities of action and purpose, and their creation as the work of innovative individuals and groups within the community... not just for ending oppression, but to create the fully participant political community of the modern nation.” In tandem with this view, Sino-Muslim reformers of the 20th century began to engage in activisms that aimed not only to integrate the former Muslim subjects of the Qing Empire into the cultural-political sphere of the Han majority, but also to advance their own visions of the Chinese nation-state. To this end, they advocated for further political participation of the Muslim communities in the national politics, and struggled to influence the state policy for the broadening of the space for religion.

This chapter sought to present the various political, ideological, discursive, and exegetical devices that Sino-Muslim intellectuals of the early 20th century relied on in making their contribution to, and articulating their vision for China’s nation-building project. Muslim modernist reformers from Chinese coastal cities, with a keen interest in the contemporary events, endeavored to rationalize patriotism among various Sino-Muslim communities with a synergetic language of scriptural exegesis, nationalist ideology, Republican politics, and anti-imperialist propaganda. The Western notion of “citizenship”, for instance, was reinterpreted among the Sino-Muslim intellectuals in conjunction with the Islamic Nationalist idea of “homeland’s rights” (Ar. al-huquq al-wataniyya), epitomized by the alleged Hadith

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103 Smith, Anthony. 2009.
“loving one's country is an article of faith” (*Hubb al-watan min al-Iman*). The thesis of the incompatibility of Islam and Chinese society, therefore, does not stand further examination.
Chapter 5

Language, Identity, and the Narration of Hui – the Huijiao huizu bian in Republican China

What creates the power of words and slogans, a power capable of maintaining or subverting the social order, is the belief in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them. And words alone cannot create this belief.

- Pierre Bourdieu, Language and Symbolic Power, p. 170

The nation’s “coming into being” as a system of cultural signification, as the representation of social life rather than the discipline of social polity, emphasizes this instability of knowledge.

- Homi Bhabha, “Narrating the Nation”

This chapter continues the previous section’s thematic focus on the reconstruction of Sino-Muslim identity in China in the time of nationalism. Instead of attending to the episode in which Muslim population in China became integrated into the Chinese nation-state, I seek to contextualize and analyze Sino-Muslim intellectuals’ narration of their “selfhood” prior to the fateful moment of consolidation and objectification of minzu paradigm in the PRC. Meanwhile, building upon Zvi Ben-dor Benite and Jonathan Lipman’s scholarship, I hope to uncover the flexibility and fungibility of the cultural categories and ethnic labels in China’s Republican period, and to examine the symbolic politics that thrived on the accessibility of such categories.

1 Bhabha, p. 2

2 Benite, “From ‘literati’ to ‘ulama’”, p. 87; Lipman, “travelers”
1. “When did the Huihui become a minzu?”

Students of Muslims in China tend to notice a glaring divergence of scholarships along national lines with regard to the *minzu* identity. While most of the Chinese scholarship, started with Jin Jitang (金吉堂)’s systemic study of the history of *huizu* in the 1930s, argue that the identity of Hui *minzu* (“ethnicity” or “nation”\(^3\)) appeared in late-Yuan or Ming China and was already firmly established by the Qing (1644 – 1911).\(^4\) Most of the leading scholars in the Euro-American academic circle, however, maintain that the Hui emerged as a clearly defined *minzu* only *after* the PRC’s *minzu shibie* (ethnicity or nationality identification/classification) project in the 1950s.

Jonathan Lipman, for instance, argues that the Hui *minzu* was *created by* “the rise of Chinese nationalism in its particular forms and with its particular concerns,”\(^5\) and that the *minzu* paradigm was “applied consistently as a political tool by an effective central government” only in the People’s Republic. Nevertheless, as an essentially feature of many nationalist projects, the programmatic construction of *minzu*

\(^3\) In this chapter I rely on a preliminary distinction between race, nationality and ethnicity - race speaks of a model of classification based on shared phenotypic characteristics and/or a common ancestry; Nationality denotes a state-imposed, “objective” categorization of population; while ethnicity is associated to one’s own self-perceived identity. The concept of *minzu*, depending on the historical context that it is being used, operates on one or more of the three registers.


\(^5\) Lipman 1997, p. 216
projects itself backward into a time “before the technological and social intrusions and capacities of the modern nation-state made that possible.” For this reason, Lipman avoids using the name *Hui* to make reference to the Chinese-speaking Muslims in the pre-PRC periods, and instead adheres to the categorical term "Sino-Muslim" in his 1300-plus-year history of Muslims in Northwest China.  

Meanwhile, Dru Gladney claims that “[u]ntil the 1950s in China, Islam was known simply as the ‘Hui religion’ (*Hui jiao*). Until then, any person who was a believer in Islam was a ‘Hui religion disciple’ (*Huijiao tu*). One was accepted into Hui communities and mosques simply on the basis of being a Muslim. If one stopped believing in Islam, one lost one’s membership in that community of faith.”

Although Gladney recognizes the existence of a "localized and less fully articulated ethnic identity” among the Hui prior to its institutionalization, he maintains that prior to the PRC period the Hui “related to each other as fellow Muslims.”

Meanwhile, Gladney not only marks the 1950s as a time of institutionalization and legalization of the state-imposed category of the Hui as a *minzu* (*nationality*), but also suggests that the Chinese Muslims began to objectify their own identity only *after* the epistemic closure actuated by the *minzu shibie* (*minzu classification*)

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6 Lipman 1997, p. 215-216

7 In justifying his word choice, Lipman suggests that term Sino-Muslim "combines Chinese linguistic and material culture and Islamic religion without relying on an anachronistic category scheme" of *Huizu*.

8 Gladney, p. 97

9 Gladney, pp. 96-97
I believe this sharp contrast of Sino-Muslim identity in the pre-PRC China and in the People’s Republic presents a narrative too rigid to accommodate the fissures and contestations in China’s nation-building process. For a certain degree of continuity from the pre-1949 era to the People’s Republic existed both on the level of state’s identification of its nationalities as well as non-Han people’s self-representation of their ethnic identity.

To start with, as Thomas Mullaney convincingly demonstrated, the official *minzu shibie* projects during the first decade of PRC, instead of what is thought to be a strict adherence to Stalin’s criteria of nationality, was in fact “a partially modified version of taxonomic theories developed by Chinese ethnologists and ethnographers in the late Republican period (1928-1949).”

Changing the English translation of the term *minzu shi* from “ethnic classification” in his doctoral dissertation to “ethnic identification” in his recent monograph, Mullaney shows the social scientific paradigm that the PRC relied on in categorizing its minorities derived in part from the repertoire of practices and discursive reifications formed in the Republican period. Meanwhile, the *muzi shibie* in the 1950s, though often regarded as a social

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10 Gladney, p. 97
11 Mullaney 2006, p. 11
12 Mullaney, 2006
13 Mullaney, 2011
engineering project *par excellence*, was in fact originated as the state’s response to the “political crisis” generated by unfettered self-representation by the various peoples themselves – in the words of Mullaney, “the state would need to intervene and discipline the imaginations of its people.”

Meanwhile, historian Prasenjit Duara, rejecting the view of the radical “modernness” of the national identity, argues that an incipient “nationality” comes into being when a less clearly articulated, “soft” boundaries of a traditional “us-and-them” dichotomy must be transformed into “hard” ones. The hardening of the proto-ethnic group boundaries was often effected, as anthropologist Fredrik Barth suggested, through a variety of boundary-making rituals, symbols and rites, whereby small differences were used as “subjectively important markers of differentiation.” Meanwhile, other scholars have demonstrated that this imagery of common ethnic communities often furnishes on shared myths, ancestry, customs, and above all, a common *history*. According to Prasenjit Duara’s definition, a “nation” is formed as a community adopts a master narrative of “descent/dissent” to solidify the proto-ethnic boundaries.

\[14\] Mullaney 2011, p. 39

\[16\] Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*

\[17\] For an account of the early development of the historiography of Sino-Muslims (Hui), see Benite, “From ‘literati’ to ‘ulama’”

\[18\] Duara, p. 153
In the case of Sino-Muslims in the first half of 20th century China, as shown in my previous chapters, the idea of transforming the formal imperial Muslim subjects into a self-conscious cultural group has already been frequently invoked by prominent ahongs such as Wang Jingzhai, Ma Songting in the 1930s, and been disseminated through a supra-local network of journalistic publications, cultural associations, and modern Islamic schools. Meanwhile, due to a constant need for the preservation of their own identity in Sino-Muslim’s daily interactions with the neighboring Han, the social and cultural boundaries between the Muslims and non-Muslim Chinese in various localities, paradoxically, had become increasingly clear over the *longue durée* of Muslim communities’ indigenization and acculturation in China.  

While the Republican period marked Muslim elites’ effort of transforming Muslim subjects of imperial China into citizens of the Chinese nation-state, the dissemination of modern nationalist discourse worldwide has also necessitated unprecedented *politicization* of the pre-existing group distinction based on inclusion and exclusion.

Now if we return to the outstanding divide between the Chinese and Western scholars regarding the time of crystallization of a “national identity” (*minzu yishi* 民族意识) of the Sino-Muslims, one of the main reasons for this situation lies in their conflicting definition of and sensibility to the term *minzu*. On the one hand, the contemporary Chinese scholars, if no longer invariably and unreflectively apply the

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19 As numerous anthropological works have demonstrated, a group’s proximity with a foreign cultural sphere often results, paradoxically, in the enhanced need for boundary maintenance and articulation of one’s own (group) identity.
objectified category of minzu in their analyses of pre-modern peoples, were less
critical to the legacy of the political-socio-psychological construction of minzu in the
1950s. On the other hand, the Western scholarship of Muslims in China, while
mostly attentive to the deconstruction of the sacrosanct quality of the
state-sponsored, hegemonic, and even “Procrustean” paradigm of minzu in the
contemporary China, paid considerably less attention to the self-conscious efforts of
identity-formation on the part of Sino-Muslim communities prior to the
establishment of the PRC in 1949. As Mao Yufeng quite bluntly argues, while until
recently Western scholars have been largely attending to the role of the Chinese
state (and its Han elites) in the shaping of minority identities, they have
“unintentionally collaborated with Chinese official historians in minimizing the
agency of minority players in China’s nation-building process. (emphasis added)”

In this chapter, I intend not to ascertain whether there is a burgeoning “ethnic”
identity of the Muslims in the Republican period. Nor am I interested in probing into
questions such as “when did the Sino-Muslims become a minzu?” For their answers
will be inextricably associated with the variant definitions of the terms such as minzu
and ethnicity. Instead, this chapter seeks to sketch the political discourses over
Sino-Muslims’ group identity immediately before the Sino-Muslim population
became concealed into what Lipman terms “legally and politically defined black
boxes” of state-sponsored social scientific categories, whereby state may exert

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20 Mao 2011, p. 374
authority on its people and regulate their behaviors.\textsuperscript{21} Specifically, I am interested in answering the question of how Sino-Muslim (elites) named the condition of their existence. What discursive choices the Sino-Muslim intellectuals resorted to in their self-representation? In what socio-political context did the dispute over Sino-Muslim group identity arise?

The space in this chapter is too limited and the sources too jumbled for me to attempt a thorough examination of the symbolic politics of Republican China over the definition of \textit{Hui}. What I intend to present are simply a few “snapshots” – taken both synchronically and diachronically – from speeches and writings of leading cultural, political, and religious figures of the Republican period regarding their position on the “Hui problem”. My objective is to shed some preliminary lights on the complexity of the issue of identity-formation during the Republican era, and to illustrate the socio-political topography in which the terms such \textit{minzu} was contested, manipulated, negotiated, and transacted; before it was reinvented, imposed, institutionalized, naturalized and sedimented in the People’s Republic.

\textbf{Revisiting \textit{Wuzu gonghe}}

After the fall of the Qing dynasty, the Chinese revolutionaries, confronted with catastrophic territorial failure, began to abandon the racial discourse of “expunging

\textsuperscript{21} Lipman 1997, p. 221
the Manchus” and to advocate greater inclusiveness of the state. As James Leibold puts it, members of the early Republican regime “harkened back to the Qing model” and started to re-conceptualize Chinese nationhood as a ‘Republic of Five Peoples’” (races, nations) - Han Chinese in parallel with the Manchus (Man), Mongols (Meng), Tibetans (Zang) and “Turkestanis” – based on the Qing’s “multiethnic” landscape. Subsequently, the “Five Races Under One Union” (wuzu gonghe) became one of the founding doctrines of the Republic. As a slogan, a discursive formation, and a political symbolism, wuzu gonghe had gained wide currency among the people with divergent social, partisan, and class affiliations in the early days of the Chinese Republic as a rallying cry to unify the former Qing territories.

Before we start our discussion of the Republican politics over the categorization of the Chinese-Speaking Muslims, it is important to bear in mind that despite the widely-shared assumption in the current scholarship that the Republican government had recognized all Muslims as one of the five races or nations (zu) that constituted the Republic of China, the name Hui, which the Sino-Muslims used to call themselves, was never officially adopted by the powers-that-were to designate the same group of people.

22 Please refer to Chapter 2 for a discussion on the eclipse of the so-called “racial nationalism” by “cultural nationalism” at the early years of the Republic.
23 Lipman, “a fierce and brutal people”, p. 87
24 Leibold, p.2
The Sinophone Muslims, as Jonathan Lipman points out, “have presented problems of categorization and control for all of the states that have ruled China since the Song dynasty.” While under the Qing rule, the Sino-Muslims still could not gain recognition as a distinct “cultural bloc”. The conceptual boundary of the term Hui, in its common usage by the Qing court, was conterminous with the term “Muslim region” (huibu 回部 or huijiang 回疆) - an old name for the territory of Xinjiang. As Qing dynasty’s linguistic-territorial identification of its subjects became the imprimatur of the “Five Races Under One Union” (wuzu gonghe) formation of the Republic, the label Hui, as one of the five constituents (Han, Hui, Tibetan, Mongols, and Manchu) of the “Chinese nation”, referred only to the Chanhui (lit. the “Turban-head Hui”) – namely, the Turkic-speaking Muslims of Xinjiang. However, it soon became clear that the categorization of the zu in wuzu gonghe, inheriting the territorial-based designation from the imperial dynasty of its multi-ethnic frontiers, generated enormous taxonomical difficulties when it being applied to the peoples in the modern nation-state – a putatively undifferentiated, internally homogenous and “imagined” community.

Specifically, the existence of the Chinese-speaking Muslims (hanhui), given their

25 Lipman, “a fierce and brutal people”, p. 87
26 Ibid.,
27 Both Chanhui and Hanhui were exonyms - that is to say – they were both used by the Han population to differentiate the Turkic-speaking and Chinese-speaking followers of Islam in China.
28 Yao, Dali. 姚大力, “回回祖国”与回族认同的历史变迁”, 《中国学术》, 2004.01
large population, posed nomenclatural challenges to the Sun Yat-sen’s five-point
definition of minzu - a group of people who shared “common blood”, “common
lifestyle”, “common language”, “common religion”, and “common customs”. Should
the neidi huimin (内地回民 “Muslims from China proper”) be grouped as a part of
the Hui (Muslims), despite of their language being Chinese? Or should they be
categorized as part of the Han, despite of their Islamic faith? As it turned out, the
political leaders of the Republican government tended to favor the latter treatment.

Though widely regarded as the principal promulgator of the wuzu gonghe doctrine,
Sun Yat-sen had initially opposed to such a formulation. He grudgingly accepted this
term only after his failure in raising opposition in the provisional assembly in early
1912. In the mean time, while preoccupied with the gnawing border problems at
the late-Qing multiethnic frontiers, Sun Yat-sen had only the Turkic-speaking
Muslims in mind when he spoke of the huizu (hui race). In a seminal speech given in
1921 that intended to subsume the racialist discourse of wuzu gonghe to the new
paradigm of zhonghua minzu, Sun implied that the Chinese-speaking followers of
Islam do not have their own ethnic claim in the nation,

*In terms of the population of the Five Races, there are only four, five hundred
thousand Tibetans, less than a million Mongols, and two million Manchus.
Though the believers of the Hui religion (huijiao) are more populous, most of

29 Mullaney, p. 25
30 By 1921 Sun Yat-sen has already regretted the popularity of the slogan “Five Races under One
Union”. In his speeches around the time, he attempted to downplay, if not repudiate, the relevancy of
the “Five Races under One Union” as a policy, and sought instead to further expand the concept of
“zhonghua minzu” through active assimilationist policy.
In the same vein, the Guomindang-controlled Nanjing government (1928-1937) never explicitly recognized the Sino-Muslims (hanhui) as part of the Huizu. While the official documents of the Republican era overwhelmingly treated the term “Hui” exclusively as the Turic-speaking Muslims (chanhui) of Xinjiang, the Sino-Muslims (hanhui) were sometimes referred to as “national citizens with a special livelihood” (生活特殊的国民) or “national citizena with a different religion” (宗教信仰不同的国民). In other words, they were perceived as part of the Han Chinese with a difference that is too minor to deserve a distinctive legal recognition.

Although the “Five Races under One Union” policy was upheld as an official doctrine well into the 1940s, the "five colors" flag (wuse qi) that symbolizes it fell out of use after Guomindang’s Northern Expedition. In the mean time, seeing wuzu gonghe—a formulation based on the racialist discourse imported from the Western countries— as fundamentally divisive to the national unity, the Guomindang party-state sought to gradually replace the wuzu gonghe policy with a monogenetic conception of China’s ethnic composition (zhonghua minzu), and deliberately circumscribed the

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31 Sun, Yat-sen 孙文: 关于中华民族和五族共和 （一九二一年三月六日）
33 “the five-bar national flag (ch. wuse qi)” of the republic, with one color for each zu, was rectified as the national flag of the new Republic in January 1912 and fell out of use after the Guomintang’s northern expedition in 1928.
34 By some accounts, the Guomindang government also carried out a policy of actively Hanification
usage of zu in reference to the non-Han people in the society at large. As a case in point, the Muslim cultural associations and publications of the Republican period were at times forced to use the designation “huijiao” (lit. Hui religion), instead of “huizu”, in their title. In September 1940, the National government in Chongqing even issued a decree (tongling 通令) that the Sino-Muslims “shall only call themselves as Mohammedans [Huijiaotu] and shall not refer themselves as huizu” because “they have no difference from the Han people except their religious rituals.”

Moreover, in Zhao Zhenwu’s listing (1936) of fifty-nine Islamic publications from 1911 to 1936, the term huijiao made into the title of seven journals, while the term huizu and huimin each only appeared once.

The views from the non-Muslims

During the tumultuous Republican period, the need to advance a vision of national unity dictated the (public) position of most Guomindang officials on the status of minority minzu. Chiang Kai-shek, for example, not only equated the Chinese nation with the Han people but also insisted that the Chinese nation was the product of a long historical evolution in which “various racial stocks blended into the Chinese (Hanhua) to assimilate ethnic minorities and frontier territories into an indivisible unitary Chinese nation (zhonghua minzu), while other scholars, such as Jame Leibold, believe that this assimilationist orientation remained largely nominal. (See Leibold, chap. 2)

35《中国回族大词典》,江苏古籍出版社 1992 年版,第 28 页。
Resorting to the symbolic power of linguistic innovation, Chiang claimed that China consisted only of one national race (guozu 国族), the Han, and all the others were subsidiary branches, which he calls zongzu (宗族), were divided only by religion and/or language. In *China’s Destiny* (zhongguo zhi minyun 中国之命运), a famous political tract published under Chiang’s name in 1943, he explicitly denied any distinctiveness of the Sino-Muslims from the Han majority,

> As to the so-called Mohammedans [Huijiaotu] in present-day China, they are for the most part actually members of the Han clan [minzu] who embraced Islam. Therefore, the difference between the Hans and Huijiaotu is only in religion and different habits of life. In short, our various clans actually belong to the same nation, as well as to the same racial stock... that there are five peoples designated in China is not due to differences in race or blood, but to religion and geographical environment.\(^\text{38-39}\)

Many prominent Sino-Muslim political and military leaders in the Republican period, such as Bai Chongxi (白崇禧)\(^\text{40}\) and Ma Hongkui (马鸿逵), complied to Guomindang’s discursive imaginary of a “unified and homogenous” Chinese nation.\(^\text{41}\)

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37 Leibold, pp. 171-172

38 Chiang, Kai-shek. 1943. *zhongguo zhi minyun* (China’s destiny). *trans.* by Dru Gladney. In Gladney, p. 84

39 Derk Bodde, as a contemporary observer, noted the ostensible change in the name of the *Hui* as a significant policy shift in one of his papers on “China’s Muslim Minority” published in 1945:

> Subsequently, recognizing the danger of stressing difference in race, the Chinese government altered its policy to one of treating the Muslims of China as a separate religious group. Muslims are no longer referred to by the Chinese as hui min (a Muslim people or race) but as hui-chiao jen (believers in Islam). This point of view has been emphasized by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek in public addresses. （Bodde, “China’s Muslim Minority”, p. 241）

40 General Bai Chongxi was a prominent warlord of Guangxi and a member of the Guomindang. Though not a Muslim himself, he presented himself as the protector of Islam in China and harbored Muslim intellectuals fleeing from the Japanese invasion in Guangxi.

41 Xue, Wenbo. 薛文波．《雪岭重泽》卷 1，页 101，兰州，甘新出 001 字总 1674 号（99）135 号。
Nevertheless, even the positions of those Republican figures were contextualized by their differing political motivations. While Bai Chongxi prevaricated in his casual usage of the term *huizu,* Ma Hongkui, a secular Hui general, was more concerned with the preservation of his power in *xibei* (Northwest China).

The glaring division between the Han Chinese and the Sino-Muslims in the society also attracted the attention of leading Chinese intellectuals such as Gu Jiegang. Though steadfastly positing himself against to the Han chauvinistic scholarship, Gu Jiegang argued strenuously for the unity (and apparent singularity) of *Zhonghua minzu* (Chinese Nation). Meanwhile, Gu optimistically believed that cultural and religious dialogues can serve to fix the deep fissures among the among the

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42 Yao, Dali. 姚大力, "回回祖国"与回族认同的历史变迁", 《中国学术》, 2004.01

43 Tapping, p. 61

44 Nevertheless, in a speech given on the importance of the link between nationalism and Muslim education in 1934, the Ningxia warlord tersely stated that *Hui* should be treated not as an ethnical marker, but simply as Chinese believers of Islam.

Since *Islam* entered China during the Tang dynasty, *it has remained through more than thirteen hundred years of the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties.* In each dynasty quite a few sagacious Muslims made great contributions to the country…. the country has been exceptionally good to Islam, except during the last years of the Manchus. Then politics were not on the right track, and officials knew nothing of the masses’ opinions….at present, the central government is promoting even more Islamic education in the northwest…. Because of religious freedom, Chinese people may profess Islam, but they still belong to the Chinese nation (*zhonghua minzu*). *They certainly are not Arabs because of their religious beliefs. The same reasoning holds for Chinese who profess for Buddhism or Christianity: they cannot become Indians or Jews [sic]… We only know that we are Chinese... there is no people called Hui; there is no people called Han.*

(ZHNSYL, pp. 13, 46, Ma Hongkui, "Xibei liang da wenti".)
numerous disparate peoples “positioned uncomfortably beneath the Han ethnonym.” As Jonathan Lipman mentions, Gu once stated “the Han and the Hui are one” in the sense that “Islam could be understood in Confucian moral terms” just as “Meng, Zang, and Han are all united by Buddhism.”

In a special issue of his Yugong journal that dedicated to the matter of Chinese Muslims (huijiao), Gu included an article of his own that provoked enthusiastic responses from Muslim intellectuals. At once an emblematic case and an anomaly in the political and intellectual tides he lived in, Gu proposed that the culture of Chinese Muslims should be allowed to play an important role in the building of new China. Specifically, he argued that in order to create the “same consciousness” of Muslims and non-Muslims, the Republican government should prioritize “connecting the Hui and the Han peoples through a mutual understanding of each other’s culture” as the danger of Japanese invasion became imminent.

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46 Lipman, “travelers”

47 Please refer to Chapter 2 for further discussion of Gu Jiegang’s view on the ethnic minorities.

48 Gu wrote in his article,

On the cultural level, the separation between the Hui and the Han was not due to the lack of understanding of the Han culture from the Hui people (huiren), but due to the lack of understanding of the Hui culture from the Han people (hanren), and also the knowledge of the Islamic culture (huijiao wenhua) in the past was not widespread among the Hui themselves. Had the Han people know more of the Hui culture, they would abandon their discrimination toward the Hui; had more Hui people get to know their Islamic culture in the past, they would come to realize that ‘Hui and Han belong to one family’, and that they are different only by religion.
In the mean time, as Thomas Mullaney describes in his doctoral dissertation, both Communist party and the Republican-era ethnographers (ethnologists) stressed the minzu recognition as the only means to obtain support of the nation's many minority population. In particular, the Communist Party began to relentless criticize Guomindang's "assimilationist" and "Han-chauvinistic" ethnic policy. While the Nationalist government became increasingly reluctant to include the term minzu in their vocabulary, the CCP has positively confirmed its usage. Many important CCP documents even explicitly reaffirmed the promise of "self-determination" (zijue) of all the minzu of China. When it comes to the question of political identity of the Sino-Muslims, unlike Chiang Kai-shek who regarded all the hanhui as Han Chinese believing in Islamic religion, and therefore awarded them no special treatment, the CCP, during the course of its "Long March", started to discern a certain "ethnic consciousness" among the Sino-Muslims and sought to turn it into a political advantage.

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Comments:

49 Mullaney 2006, p. 115

50 Later, the promised "self-determination" (zijue) will be downgraded to a nominal "autonomy" (zizhi).

51 民族问题研究会, 1940. 《回回民族问题》; Leibold, pp. 96-102, 170-171
The views from the Sino-Muslim intellectuals

Similar to the conflicting narratives of the leading Han Chinese figures regarding the Chinese nation and its minorities, a full spectrum of views also existed among the Sino-Muslim intellectuals themselves on the notions of minzu and zongjiao. During the first decade of the 20th century, as the discourse of racial wars still figured prominently in the society, the Sino-Muslim intellectuals, while calling for an Islamic awakening movement, hoped to discount any difference between the Hui and the Han as racial one. For instance, Huang Zhenpan(黃振磐), a contributor to xinghui pian (醒回篇 “A Brochure to Awaken the Hui”), suggested that the Hui was just a name for a group of Muslims who have no intrinsic difference from the Han except their Islamic faith,

A great variety of peoples have long intermingled within the land we call China (shenzhou), the only exception being the long-held separation between the Manchu and the Han Chinese. The people who are named Hui have lived among them without causing any trouble.... The people nowadays are oblivious to this point. They often call the Muslims in China Huimin (“Hui people”), some even named them Huizu (“Hui race”). In effect, these designations would establish yet another enemy race for the Han aside from the Manchus.52

If the early years of the Republic have already witnessed the appearance a “ulama”, as Zvi Ben-dor Benite suggests, that assumed “religious, social, and political leadership”53 within Muslim communities of the coastal cities, the “ulama” seems to

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52 Huang, Zhenpan 黃振磐, 论回民, 醒回篇, 兰州: 兰州大学出版社, 1987. p.33
53 Benite 2004
be in favor of the view that the Chinese-speaking Muslims were not racially different from the Han people. For instance, in 1926, the Shanghai-based “Chinese Muslim Scholars Association Monthly” (Zhongguo Huijiao Xuehui Yuekan 中国回教会月刊), in an effort to “disperse the confusions of our fellow Muslims who call themselves huizu”, published Muslim scholar Yin Boqing (尹伯清)’s article titled “On the differentiation between Huijiao and Huizu” (回教与回族辨).\(^\text{54}\)

In this influential essay, Yin not only defined content of jiao and zu as the modern concepts of “religion” (zongjiao) and “race” (zhongzu) respectively, he also denied any overlap between these two allegiances. In Yin’s view, while “the distinctions among religions (zongjiao) derive from one’s religious faith, the distinctions among various zu (races) are based on physical and mental differences.” Therefore, he stated, “religion is religion and race is race, the two should not be confused.” The talks in the society that trying to frame a religious collectivity as a racial group, he believed, were not only uncritically aligning with the separatist propaganda promoted by the Japanese “Rōnins” (ch. langren 浪人), but also detrimental to the Islamic faith. To Yin, since the religious and racial identities were so fundamentally in opposition to each other, if “more Sino-Muslims subscribe to the racial conception of the Hui, fewer would focus on the religious aspects.”\(^\text{55}\)

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\(^{54}\)“足破我国回胞误以回族自称者之惑”

Diametrically opposed to the opinion above was the view held by a small but growing number of Muslim intellectuals that the Chinese-speaking Muslims must be recognized on the basis of an ethnic group (zu), and specifically, as one of the five constituents of the Republic. Faced with the Nanjing government’s increasingly assimilationist policy, the Muslim elites found themselves contemplating a gnawing dilemma - on the one hand, the deeply entrenched dichotomy of “us” and “them” that is perpetuated from everyday interactions with the non-Muslims forbad them to identify themselves as being in the same (or a subordinated) category of the Han Chinese; while one the other hand, their Islamic religion, while recognized by the Republican government a viable category, did not guarantee them any political representation or legislatively recognized right as a group.

On the part of the Hui nationalist intellectuals, the need to protect their distinct group identity of the Hui was particularly exigent, as it became clear that the Sino-Muslims were denied any legal rights and representation in the National Congress as a distinct group. Although never became a dominant discourse during

56 For example, in a Yuehua article published in 1936, Jin Jitang (金吉堂) described that “Muslims all over China” were exasperated toward the Nanjing government’s effective denial to Sino-Muslims any special position within the Republic.

In order to establish the foundation of the “giving politics back to the people” (huazheng yumin 还政于民) policy, the central government is going to convene the National Congress of Citizen Representatives (国民代表大会) by the end of this year. The government issued detailed guidelines on the selection of representatives in each province and district, each military and social unit, and even among the Mongols, Tibetans and the dislocated population from dongbei (Northeast China, or Manchuria). However, as we read the decree over and again, there was no
the Republican period,\(^57\) the ethnic conception of the Hui (\textit{huizu shuo}) gained increasing persuasiveness among the Sino-Muslim intellectuals following the Nationalist government’s Janus-faced policy in 1928.\(^{5859}\) The contestations over the name of the Sino-Muslims, therefore, was intimately associated with the struggle of making the \textit{hanhui} a legally recognizable group of people, lest they submerge into a section for \textit{huizu} at all. As a result, the Hui people from all over China were greatly shocked and started to petition for representation.

(金吉堂, 《关于国民代表大会》, 月华. 第八卷 第十六期 民国二十五年（1936年）六月十日)

\(^{57}\) For example, among the titles of all the articles published on the Yuehua from 1929 to 1948, the term \textit{huijiao} appear 340 times, while \textit{huizu} was only used for only 13 times (\textit{huijiao minzu} 6 times). Some influential Muslim intellectuals, such as Zhao Zhenwu, even discounted the seriousness of academic journals with \textit{huizu} in their title for their apparent political agenda. Although the consternation to the imminent erasure of the Hui identity were widely shared among the Hui leaders, many Muslim intellectuals’ ostensible apathy, even distaste in some cases, for the ethnic concept of Sino-Muslims, I believe, derived from the fact that such a characterization sounded alarmingly like the Japanese or Communist propaganda of \textit{minzu zijue} (“national self-determination”). In fact, as Benite points out, Jin’s book on \textit{huijiao minzu shuo}, being translated into Japanese in 1940, earned its author the label of traitor [\textit{Hanjian}] in 1945 and a two-year prison term in 1947. (Benite, pp. 103-104)

\(^{58}\) Please refer to Chapter 3 for further considerations on the ethnic policy during the Nanjing Period (1928-1937). Meanwhile, although the \textit{minzu} policy of the Communist party does seem to have influence on the left-leaning Sino-Muslim intellectuals and even Muslim intellectuals at large, I cannot ascertain the nature of the connection between the Communist movement and the dissemination of the ethnic concept of Hui among the Muslim intellectuals based on the primary source I have read.

\(^{59}\) On the one hand, the Nanjing government, in tandem with Sun’s three-staged vision for China’s national revolution, called for political participation and self-determination of the “minority” \textit{minzu}; on the other hand, the Nanjing period marked an acceleration of Sun Yat-sen’s \textit{minzu zhuyi} (民族主义, i.e. national assimilation) policy, marked by the revitalization and circulation of the term \textit{Zhonghua minzu} (Chinese Nation). While I believe that the “ethnic concept of Sino-Muslims” developed mostly as a discursive resistance to the imposed acculturation from the state, Mao Yufeng argues in her doctoral dissertation that it was the promise of political representation that made the \textit{huizu shuo} more appealing to the Muslims. (Mao 2007)
the category of the Han and become “invisible”.

Jin Jitang (金吉堂), a Beijing-born Muslim scholar, educator and author of one of the important histories of Sino-Muslims, made perhaps the most exemplary argument for the ethnic differentiation between the Sino-Muslims from the Han majority. In his seminal work huijiao minzu shuo (“On the Islamic Nation”), Jin asserted that the Muslims of China were all descents of a variety of foreign peoples from Central Asia and Asian Minor, who subsequently integrated into the Chinese society over an extended period but remained their ethnic uniqueness because of their “outsider” (wairen 外人) status. Aside from the emphasis on the Hui people’s shared foreign descent, Jin identified the centrality of religion in the formation of what he believes an ethnic consciousness of all the Muslims. Apparently responding to Huang Zhenpan and Yin Boqing tenacious argument that a “religion” (jiao) should not simultaneously be an “ethnicity” (zu)\(^6\), Jin argued that faith of Islam, as a great synthesizing agent, has a unique power to create a separate ethnicity through the process of amalgamation of multiple peoples. In addition, due to Islam’s unique religious law (i.e. Shari’ā) that commands all aspects of the Muslim lives, Islam existed not merely as a religion but also an integrated social and political system:

\(^6\) The argument Yin Boqing presented in his essay was particularly representative of this view, *While all the population of the inner provinces of China are of Han race, among them there are Confucians, Buddhists, Taoists, Christians, as well as Muslims. Why are [the non-Islamic religions] not named the Confucian race (ruzū 儒族), the Buddhist race (fōzū 佛族), the Taoist race (dàozū 道族) and the Christian race (yēzū 耶族) respectively?* (内地居民尽汉族也，而儒、佛、道、耶、回诸教并行，何以不称儒族、佛族、道族、耶族乎？)
Someone may ask, ‘if you say the followers of the Islam (huijiao) turned into a Hui ethnicity (huizu), then why are the Buddhists not named the Buddhist ethnicity (fozu 僧族)? Why the Confucians are not Confucian ethnicity (ruzú 儒族)? By extension, why does no one call the Taoists and Christians as Taoist ethnicity (daozú 道族) and Christian ethnicity (jiduzu 基督族)? Here is my answer - only the followers of Islamic religion can form a minzu because no other religions possess the same degree of holistic power that Islam has. The Islamic religion does not only reveal its followers divine knowledge, profound ideas and the moral to be a human. It also possesses all-encompassing social rules and institutions...These social rules and institutions of Islam are in fact what make it superior to other religions. Because of this unique characteristic of Islam, the follower of huijiao came to form an ethnic group (minzu), while the followers of other religions could not.”

While rationalizing his huijiao minzu shuo with a sort of “Islamic exceptionalism”, Ji Jidang also argued against the famous Han Chinese scholar Chen Yuan (陳垣)'s characterization that the history of Muslims in China represented an almost complete process of sinicization. Jin Jidang maintained that the Shari’a and the pan-Islamic connections of Sino-Muslim communities not only effectively insulated the Hui from the assimilating force of the Han majority, but also led them on a distinct path to an alternative nationhood - “while other religions also had people from different nations (minzu), they all merged into the Han nation. Followers of Islam, who were Arab, Persian, and Turks, merged into one great nation (yida minzu).”

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61 Jin, Jitang. 金吉堂, 1937. 回教民族说. 《禹贡半月刊》第五卷第 11 期
63 金吉堂, 1937. 回教民族说. 《禹贡半月刊》第五卷第 11 期
Despite the sacrosanct quality of the ideology of Sun Yat-sen throughout the Republican era, Sun’s articulation of the five-point criteria of *minzu* never gained the Procrustean quality as Stalin’s “four basic criteria” of nationality\(^{64}\) on which the *minzu* paradigm in PRC was believed to be based. Illustrious of the malleability of the Republican categorization of its population, Jin Jitang’s book included an elaborate demonstration that the “ethno-religion” of Hui (*Huijiao minzu*) – which he did not take into account the Turkic-speaking Muslim peoples in the Xinjiang province – fit well into Sun Yat-sen’s five-point definition of a *minzu* in that they shared a “common blood”, “common lifestyle”, “common language”, “common religion”, and “common customs”.\(^{65}\)

Similar to Jin Jitang, Xue Wenbo (薛文波), a Sino-Muslim scholar and one of the most outspoken Hui nationalists, started to assiduously promote the ethnic concept

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\(^{64}\) According to Thomas Mullaney, author of *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China*, the work team of the *minzu* classification project were ordered to assess independent *minzu* status in strict accordance with the Soviet definition of *natsia* as articulated by Joseph Stalin. Founded upon the evolutionary theories of Lewis Henry Morgen and Friedrich Engels, and formalized by Stalin in his 1913 tract, Marxism and the National and Colonial Question, this model lines out four criteria for a nationality - a common language, a common territory, a common mode of economic production, and a common psychological make-ups (culture. 共同心理素质 in Chinese). (Mullaney 2006, p. 72)

\(^{65}\) In 1940 Jin’s book was translated into Japanese. As a result, its author was labelled a traitor [*Hanjian*] in 1945 by the Guomindang, and was put into prison in 1947. According to Benite, although later cleared of the charge, Jin was never able fully to rid himself of the label, which haunted him periodically until his death in 1978.
of the Sino-Muslim after the Japanese invasion of the Northeast China in 1931. Once a member of the Guomindang party himself (!), Xue joined the cause of having the Sino-Muslims recognized as a minzu (nationality) after he came to the realization that only those who had "minzu" status could enjoy collective political rights equivalent to the Han. Although he used the term huijiao (hui religion) in his published articles prior to 1930, Xue was remarkably consistent in using the term huizu (Hui race) thereafter to stress the importance of constructing the Hui communities around a common national identity instead of a religious faith (zongjiao). Meanwhile, compare to Jin Jitang’s pan-Islamic formulation of huijiao minzu, Xue Wenbo spoke of a dual belongings of the huizu (Hui nation) – on the one hand, the huizu is a subset of a worldwide “Islamic nation” (huijiao minzu), whose common faith is the only unifying characteristic of their group-identity; on the other hand, however, it is also one of the five constituents of the Chinese nation (zhonghua minzu). While Huizu, as part of the huijiao minzu, contains pan-Islamic elements, Xue believed that it must be simultaneously grounded in the politics of the Chinese nation-state. 66

66 For example, Xue explicated on this what he sees a dual nature of Huizu in a lengthy article on Yuehua published in 1932,

“What do we need to understand? We must know that we are a nation (minzu) within our country. We are a nation of China. We are one of the nations (minzu) that believe in Islam (huijiao). We are not huizu (hui nation) from Turkey, nor are we huizu from Persia... We must be very clear about these points. Moreover, we are recognized as a huizu within the country (guojia) because of on our collectivity as a minzu. We did not gain our status as huizu today because of our Islamic religion (huijiao). We must be very clear on this point, as well.”

(薛文波，《中国回族的地位和本身应有的认识》，月华: 1932年第4卷 10-12)
To the Hui nationalists such as Xue Wenbo, Sun Yat-sen's inclusion of clauses on the rights of "national self-determination" (minzu zijue 民族自决) and "national self-autonomy" (minzu zizhi 民族自治) into his famous Fundamentals of National Reconstruction (jianguo dagang 建国大纲) in 1923, and the Declaration of the Chinese Nationalist Party's First National Congress (Zhongguo Guomindang diyici quanguo daibiao dahui xuanyan 中国国民党第一次全国代表大会宣言) in 1924\(^{68}\), presented an encouraging turn of the event. During the period from the adoption of the 1931 Provisional Law for the Tutelage Period (Zhonghua xunzheng shiqi yuefa 中华训政时期约法) to the formulation of Constitution of the Republic of China (1947), the Nationalist government essentially inherited and expanded the "legacy of the Father of the Republic" (guofu yijiao 国父遗教) – principally, Sun's articulation of the "Three Principles of the People" (sanmin zhuyi 三民主义) and his three-staged formula for the National Revolution (guomin gemin 国民革命).

Although contemporary scholars held differing opinions on Sun's true intentions regarding minzu zijue and minzu zizhi,\(^ {69}\) the symbolic power of such linguistic utterances, as Pierre Bourdieu has shown, while "produced in particular contexts or


\(^{68}\) Leibold, Chap. 2

\(^{69}\) Matsumoto 2010, pp. 103-104; Leibold, pp. 54-55
markets,” is always misrecognizable in others. As Sun himself was posthumously made into a paramount national symbol - the “father of the Chinese Republic” (guofu) - during the Nanjing period, his writings and speeches had become a particularly important source of legitimacy to the activism of the Hui nationalists. For instance, in a seminal article published on a 1932 issue of Yuehua, Xue Wenbo cited a passage from Sun Yat-sen’s informal remarks with a representative from Kashgar (presumably a Turkic-speaking Muslim) one year before his death (1924). According to Xue, Sun not only extolled the essential role that the “Hui nation” (huizu) played in the China’s national revolution, but also called on Chinese Muslims to help connect China with Muslims’ anti-imperialist movement worldwide. Sun’s words soon became one of the most cited passages by the Sino-Muslim in demonstrating huizu’s patriotism and “revolutionary spirits” and their own agency in China’s national project,

The Three Principles of the People (sanmin zhuyi) aimed primarily at liberating all the nations (minzu) in our country, so that they would be all treated equally. The huizu was subject to most oppression during all the dynasties. They suffered most pain. Therefore, they have the strongest revolutionary spirits…The task of national revolution (minzu yundong) aimed primarily at defeating imperialism. However, this task cannot be fulfilled by the Chinese nation alone. It is imperative to have all the weak nations of Asia united. Many of weak nations of Asia, such as Persia, Turkey, India, Afghanistan, and Arabia are countries made

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70 Bourdieu, p. 17


72 As Mao Yufeng also points out, Sun viewed Chinese Muslim as an important lynchpin for achieving the global anti-imperialist cause. (Mao, p. 378)
up by the huizu.⁷³ They all have very strong revolutionary potentials, and they endured enormous oppression, as well. One day all the weak nations will be united to fight against the European imperialist, and cause them to fall. In short, the national revolution of China can hardly be successful without the participation from the huizu. The defeat of imperialism can hardly be achieved without the participation with the huizu as a whole.⁷⁴

With a certain irony, while Xue Wenbo sought to revitalize the minzu argument to form a “united front” of Han and Hui in resisting Japanese invasion, his articulation of a Hui nationality sounded alarmingly similar to the Japanese propaganda.⁷⁵ In the mean time, while the modern categories of minzu and zongjiao both developed from the European political thoughts, Xue Wenbo and Jin Jitang’s formulation of the “ethno-religion of Hui” (Huijiao minzu) was, again ironically, marked a self-conscious resistance not only to the Western discourse of the separation of religious sphere and political sphere as a defining characteristic of modernity, but also to the modern, discrete sense of the term “religion” (zongjiao), that was introduced into China by means of triangulated translations⁷⁶ and popularized by Christian missionaries in the late-19th century.⁷⁷ For example, in the opening issue of the journal huimin

⁷³ Here Sun’s understanding of Huizu is similar to Jin Jitang’s pan-Islamic concept of huijiao minzu – namely, a minzu unified under the same religion.

⁷⁴ Xue, Wenbo 薛文波：《中国回族的地位和本身应有的认识》，月华：第四卷 10,11, 12 合刊, pp. 19-20

⁷⁵ The Japanese, as Benite observes, marked the first major political power in the region to argue that the Chinese Muslims were of their own nation. (Benite, p. 99)

⁷⁶ (religion- shukyo-zongjiao) The term 宗教(Jp. shukyo, ch. zongjiao) as a neologism was first coined in Meiji Japan and then reintroduced to China. According to Rebecca Nedostup, the shukyo/zongjiao pair “brought a modern sense of religion as national characteristic and evangelistic instrument of social Darwinian competition.” (Nedostup, p. 8)

⁷⁷ Nedostup and Duara both suggested that a “global models of religious citizenship,” was brought to
qingnian（回族青年 “Youth of Hui ethnicity”），the editors (of which Xue Wenbo was part) justified their choice of using huizu in the title of their journal with an argument that “huizu” (hui ethnicity) and “huijiao” (hui religion)” is essentially the same thing - unlike any other “religions”, when it comes to the followers of Islam, their “religious consciousness” (zongjiao yishi) is their “ethnic consciousness” (minzu yishi). 78

“Religion” and “ethnicity” (minzu) are two different categories. Under one religion, there is not necessarily only one ethnic group; meanwhile, people from a single ethnic group do not necessarily believe in the same religion. Hence, we must not thoughtlessly equate the notion of “ethnicity” to “religion”.... As for all the other religion or ethnicity, their "religious consciousness" (zongjiao yisi) has no association with their "ethnic consciousness" (minzu yisi). However, the situation is different when it comes to the Sino-Muslims. ... In many occasions, what the term “religion” entails is almost the same as that of what we call ethnicity (minzu). As the renowned Indian Muslim leader Ali 79 wrote in his commentaries of the world politics in 1914, “the European people see the fact that the Muslims are all tied together by their common religion in the 20th century as the social and political feature of Europe’s Middle Age. Why could they not comprehend the impact of religion on the Muslims? [Because] they forget that Islam is not merely a “religion” but also - when it is manifested in its social forms - a race (zhongzu), a culture, and a minzu.” ... the hui religion and hui ethnicity has long become a single unity. It is completely different from other religions or


Xue Wenbo, in one of his most important essays in Yuehua, also hinted that the works of Christian missionaries into China has introduced a novel sense of religiosity.

Before Christianity was introduced into China, the “religions” (zongjiao) we generally knew were just dajiao and gejiao. What does dajiao entail? It is a collective term for Buddhism, Taoism and Tibetan Buddhism (lama jiao). The so-called gejiao is our one and only Huijiao. （薛文波：《中国回族的地位和本身应有的认识》, 月华：第四卷 10,11, 12 合刊, pp. 19-20)

78 中国回族运动. 回族青年. 1933 年第 1 卷第 1 期. 北平：回族青年社.

79 Referring to Mohammed Ali Jinnah (1876-1948), head of the All-India Muslim League and then leader of Pakistan's independence movement.
As the arguments above have shown, the Sino-Muslim intellectuals not merely endeavored to stretch their group tradition to fit Sun Yat-sen’s criteria of minzu. Similar to their Qing-era precursors, they also actively sought to redefine what the category of minzu entails in light of transnational (pan-Islamic) intellectual vocabularies and concerns. However, within such a political environment, the ethnic concept of the Hui community (huizu shuo), was itself a politically charged, if not overtly dissenting, discourse. For example, Ma Fulong, with an apparent intention to dilute the political implications of huizu shuo, sought to frame the contentions over huizu and huijiao as purely an academic issue.

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80 中国回族运动. 回族青年. 1933 年第 1 卷第 1 期. 北平: 回族青年社.

81 Zvi Ben-dor Benite, for example, has shown that while the Qing period was characterized by “relentless efforts of the Manchu emperors to project themselves as ‘universal’ rulers presiding over a ‘multiethnic’ empire”, “Chinese Muslims also sought to express their distinctive voices within a multiethnic society and legitimate their claims to a certain respectable status within the changing society.” (Benite, pp. 87-88)

82 Ma Fulong was a former Muslim student at Peking University. Aside from Ahong Wang Jingzhai, he was the only Republican-era Muslim scholar that I am aware of who has written an autobiography. (He wrote it in prison before his death in 1968). (马福龙: 《马福龙自述》)

83 For instance, Ma Fulong wrote in 1948,

Quite a number of people have joined the discussion over the Hui identity. Their arguments, in general, do not fall out of two categories – ‘Hui as a minzu’ and ‘Hui as Han who converted to Islam’. Ever since the anti-Japanese war mobilization, the various newspapers and magazines across the country all advocate the view that all the Muslims in China, with the exception of Xinjiang, were all Han converts to Islam. However, I argue that this is (fundamentally) a matter of
Representing the Hui identity in early 20th century China – self-examination or reconstruction?

While both anthropologist Dru Gladney and historian Zvi Ben-dor Benite describe the emergence of the national identity of Hui as “a dialogical process of self-examination and state-recognition,”84 I argue that the Sino-Muslim intellectuals, faced with deliberate erasure of the group consciousness of the Hui, cared little about presenting accurate picture of how most of the Muslim population related to each other. Instead, at a time when the “ethnic” label of the Hui – just as other categories such as “Muslim” or “Han Chinese” – had “yet been clearly articulated or filled with specific content,”85 the Muslim elite’s narrations of the Hui identity, like Guomindang’s imagining of a homogeneous, unified zhonghua minzu, was fundamentally a simulacrum that aimed to situate the Sino-Muslims within the symbolic exchanges of Republican politics.

As numerous writings of Republican-period Muslim intellectuals, reports from academic (ch. xueli 学理) concerns, instead of a matter of politics. In practice, if we forcefully insert the Mu’min (the followers of Islam) to the group of Hanzu, instead trying to alleviate their pain and suffering, the problem will not go away. (This act) will no help alleviate the current situation, but will instead intensify their mutual hatred.

84 Gladney 1991, p. 97; cited in Benite 2004, p. 87
85 Benite, p. 93
Western missionaries who travelled to the Mohammedan (Muslim) regions of the Republican China, as well as the recollections of elder generations of Sino-Muslims have documented, the Sino-Muslims called, and to a degree, continue to call themselves *xiaoqiao* (小教, lit. “small religion”) or *jiaomen* (教门), while referring everyone else – not only the Han followers of Buddhism and Christianity, but also Chinese non-believers, Tibetans and Mongols— together as *dajiao* (大教, lit. “large religion”) or *gejiao* (隔教, lit. “the separate religion”). The pervasiveness of the dichotomy of *dajiao* and *xiaoqiao* reflects the fact that the majority of Sino-Muslims, prior to the state-imposed *minzu* classification project in 1950s, continued to see themselves as a bounded “us”, instead of one of the constitutive members of the Chinese nation, or a minority nation among others. In a sense analogous to how the Han *minzu* is perceived today, to the majority of Muslims in the pre-modern China, the term Hui symbolized an unmarked, empty category.

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86 As discussed in the previous chapter, here the term *jiao* should not be understood as “religion” in its modern sense, but rather as a bounded collectivity that simultaneously encompasses and transverses other valences.

87 The term *gejiao*, as an exemplary boundary-drawing linguistic device, was (is) also used by the non-Muslim to call the Sino-Muslims, and even by the Sino-Muslims to refer to themselves. Meanwhile, the Han Chinese who live in proximity with the Muslims often adopt this distinction and refer to themselves as *dajiao* when speaking with the Sino-Muslim people.

88 尹伯清, 回教与回族辨, 薛文波, 《中国回族的地位和本身应有的认识》, 月华: 1932 年第 4 卷 10-12

89 This language of an “us and them” distinction certainly persisted even after the *minzu* classification project, as recent ethnographies among the Hui societies in Henan and Beijing have shown.

In other words, in the “lifeworld” (*Lebenswelt*)\(^{91}\) in which Sino-Muslims lived and from which the meanings of their daily life derived, there was no such thing as a “multiracial” or “multi-ethnic” China, neither was there a Chinese nation separated by different religions or cultural habits. According to this distinction, one is either a Hui or a Han.\(^{92}\) A Christian Chinese, a Mongolian Buddhist or even a white person from the United States can be seen as a Han.\(^{93}\) If the diagram stated above is representative of the *doxa* of the majority of the Sino-Muslims in the Republican period, both the *huijiao shuo* - Guomindang’s formulation that the Sino-Muslims were just Han who follow Islamic faith, and the *huizu shuo* (*or Huijiao minzu shuo*), represented by Muslim intellectuals such as Jin Jitang and Xue Wenbo, which states that Sino-Muslims as a *minzu* of the multiethnic state of China, were deviated from the actually existing group consciousness of the Sino-Muslims.

The contentions in the 1920s and 1930s over the “differentiation on Huizu or Huijiao” (*huizu huijiao bian*), therefore, was fundamentally not an issue of differentiating (or examining) the religious identity and ethnic identity of the Sino-Muslims, but rather a contest project of *reconstructing* the content of meanings

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\(^{91}\) In Husserl’s usage of this term, *Lebenswelt* denotes a world (a field or horizon) that subjects experience together.

\(^{92}\) There existed, nevertheless, some grey area between this binary construction of Hui and Han. For example, the term “Han follower of Islam” (*suijiao hanren* 随教汉人), which is clearly distinguished from the Chinese-speaking Muslims (*hanhui* 汉回), can be traced back at least to the Dungan revolt (ch. *tongzhi huiluan* 同治回乱) in late-Qing. However, my knowledge of this matter is too meager to allow me to consider it in any depth.

\(^{93}\) My thanks to Professor Jonathan Lipman for providing me with this information.
of the group identity of the Chinese-speaking Muslims within the Chinese nation. In other words, the ostensible debate of names of the Sino-Muslims was indeed a political struggle among various interest groups regarding on what terms the Chinese-speaking Muslim might participate in China’s national project. Meanwhile, while never mentioned in China’s national or minzu history, the conflicting attitudes among the Muslim intellectuals themselves toward the ethnic concept of the Hui reflect their differing responses to Guomindang’s ostensibly assimilationist policy and their divergent visions for Muslim’s participation in Republican politics.\(^{94}\)

\(^{94}\) The fact that Muslim leaders have been self-consciously weighing over their options of participating in China’s nation-building process was never more explicitly stated than in a speech given by Liu Boshi (刘伯石), a director of the Chengda Normal School. Addressing “more than a thousand Muslims” at a grand welcome ceremony held in 1930 for Wang Cengshan (王曾善)’s return to China after his peripatetic study in the Middle East, Liu mentioned,

> We are Chinese, and our relationship to the Republic of China is a relationship between the state and its people. How do we define this relationship is a political problem... According to our observation, the prevailing opinions regarding this issue fall into two categories:

1) Assimilation - Some people said, “Since the five nations (zu) all belong to one family, there shall be no ‘they and we’ distinction among them. The non-Muslims are not treating us like outsiders. Therefore, we must get rid of the difference between us and them. Whatever they like, we should try to be as accommodating as possible...”

2) Self-determination - Other people said, “we must maintain control over the internal affairs of our own nation(zu). Never shall anyone use any excuses to interfere our internal matters. In respect to the affairs of the Chinese state, we shall strive to work with our friendly nations – the Han, the Manch, the Mongol, and the Tibetan in forming a Republican government, in order to protect China from the foreign invasions and manage the inter-ethnic affairs. We should adhere to the Article IV of Premier Sun’s Fundamentals of National Reconstruction - ‘the government shall support and cultivate all the nations (minzu) in China, so that they can develop the capacity of self-determination (zijue) and self-autonomy (zizhi).’”

Both assimilation and self-determination were common themes in the history of the minzu all over the world. The “national spirit” (minzu jingshen) of a nation would be dead or alive is dependent on the choice they make. (quanyi minzu jingshen de sihuo wei biaozhun 全以民族精神的死活为标准) However, whether we choose the path of assimilation or self-determination, we have to make a decision, lest we waste our productive energy on an irresolute cause.

(刘伯石，〈致欢迎词：北平回教同人迎王大会志盛〉，月华：第 2 卷第 27 期. 1930)
In the meantime, this binary linguistic construction of the social world in the Sino-Muslim tradition should also alert us to the fact that the conceptual reifications such as “race”, “religion” and “ethnicity” (terms that we are now so accustomed to in our description of the social reality, though terms the Guomindang officials and the Sino-Muslim intellectuals in the early 20th century were just starting to grapple with) are incapable of rendering the pre-modern “us” and “them” distinction that remained central to the phenomenal existence of Sino-Muslim communities before the 1950s. Our perception of group identity, centered on those modern social scientific categories, are epistemologically, if not also ontologically, different from the Lebenswelt that the Sino-Muslims lived in.

Conclusion

The well-known dispute over the “differentiation of the ethnic and religious concepts of Hui” (huizhu huijiao bian,回族回教辨), peaked after the establishment of the Nanjing government in 1928, was ostentatiously a debate over the status of the Sino-Muslims as an ethnic group or a collective of followers of the Islamic religion. However, in keeping with the longstanding Chinese fascination with the “rectification of names” (zhengming 正名), it also marked an episode in which Sino-Muslim elites pondered their strategies of preserving and defending their group identity (of which religious identity is part) in the time of nation-building.
Meanwhile, as the Republican state intensified deliberate erasure of the group uniqueness of Sino-Muslims, a prevailing taxonomical impreciseness continued to exist in practice regarding whether the Chinese-speaking Muslims should be treated as a distinct people. This ambiguity suggests that the legacy of the Qing dynasty’s linguistic-territorial labeling of its subjects became even more inadequate in categorizing the peoples residing in the territory of China in the time of modern nation-state. Similar to the intended ambiguity of "zhonghua minzu" in singular or plural, I argue that a taxonomical impreciseness also applied to the term of Huizu (Hui race or ethnicity) during the Republican period. However, instead of seeing Republican China merely as a transitional period before the advent of a more solidified, institutionalized ethnic policy in the PRC, a number of scholars have shown that the Republican China represents a time when – due to the absence of a “unified or consistent vocabulary for understanding ethnocultural difference,”\(^\text{95}\) – competing political discourses vied to “select, adapt, recognize and even re-create”\(^\text{96}\) the pre-modern group identifications with a common set of new vocabulary and social categories. By means of discursive analysis, this chapter seeks to uncover the “hidden scripts”, slippages and sleights-of-hand in the circulation of these categories.

Primarily, I sought to present the construction of Hui identity in the Republican period as developed out of triangulated negotiations between the (Nationalist)

\(^{95}\) Lipman, “travelers”, p. 115
\(^{96}\) Duara 1996, p. 153
government, the Han Chinese intellectuals, and the Sino-Muslim leaders. The discourses over the *huizu* and *huijiao* in Republican China, I argue, should be viewed as a contested field in which different views of the nation were raised and repressed. Meanwhile, the conflicting opinions among the Muslim intellectuals themselves reflect their various responses to Guomindang’s overtly assimilationist policy and their differing visions for political participation of the Muslims.

By tracing the various reconstructions of the group identity of the Hui during the Republican period, I sought to illustrate Muslim intellectuals’ own agency in China’s nation-building processes. Specifically, I attended to how they sought to appropriate the inchoate category of Hui *minzu* in their own terms, to their own advantage – in particular, how they brought in pan-Islamic intellectual vocabularies to dislocate the hegemonic discourse of China’s nationalist elites.

Secondly, I sought to uncover the instability and malleability of symbols, languages and meanings, with which national identities, viewed as products of constant contestation and repression of different views of the nation, are closely associated. The notion of *minzu*, as I sought to illustrate in this chapter, always signified different meanings to different people at different time. While Sun Yat-sen’s writings and speeches were used as an important source of legitimacy for Hui nationalist activism, the Muslim intellectuals did not understand the concept of *minzu* the same way Sun Yat-sen did.
Meanwhile, the flexibility and even “fungibility” of cultural categories and ethnic labels that persisted throughout the Republican period were illustrative of how novel and untried were the vocabularies associated with the notion of nation and nationalism. In *Translingual Practice*, Lydia Liu characterizes the nation-building project during the Republican period as “a vast gray area of intellectual discourse in which different people and interest groups [could] pick and choose from among different shades of ... language to energize their own politics.”

If Saussure’s model of language and linguistics is of any guidance to our understanding of the relationship between language and identity, it is in its key message that all types of “speech - discourse, enunciation itself – is always placed within the relationship of language.” If we are to understand the forces that shape one’s conception of identity and difference, we must unpack the various group markers – terms such as zu, jiao, minzu, guozu, huizu, huijiao, dajiao, xiaojiao – and situate them within the system of language in which they were uttered, revitalized, circulated, appropriated, and transacted.

Lastly, I sought to probe into the links between the assertion of an ethnic identity of

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97 For instance, even among the articles published on Muslim journals such as *Yuehua*, the term *huijiao* (Islamic religion), *huizu* (Hui ethnicity) and *huimin* (hui people) often coexisted in a single issue – sometimes even in the same article – without much clarification on their definition.

98 Liu, p. 189

99 Hall, p. 339
Hui and the making of Han majority in China’s period of transition from the empire to the nation-state.\textsuperscript{100} The Han Chinese majority, long held as an “unmarked, empty or even invisible”\textsuperscript{101} category, was just starting to receive systematic scholarly attentions to its historicity, constructiveness, and internal fissures.\textsuperscript{102} Mark Elliott, for instance, proposed in a recent study of the evolution of the ethnonym Han that the Han majority should be seen as “the product of repeated efforts to create and foster political unity,” rather than the source of it.\textsuperscript{103} Among the specialists of Muslims in China, while anthropologist Dru Gladney argues that the identity of Han majority was constructed in “relational alterity” with the “colorful, backward and exotic/erotic” national minorities through a process of “Oriental (internal) Orientalism”,\textsuperscript{104} Historian Jonathan Lipman ponders on how had the Sino-Muslim population – marked at once by their proximity, familiarity, and “strangeness” to the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{100} Aubin, p. 263
\bibitem{104} Leibold (forthcoming 2012), pp. 348-349; Gladney 2004.
\end{thebibliography}
Han Chinese – contributed to the formation of Chinese majority identity.  

The contentions over hanren huijiao shuo (汉人回教说) and huizu shuo (回族说) accounted in this chapter, therefore, aims to present a “snapshot” into the more obscure history of contestations, negotiations, and transactions between the making of a Han majority and the Muslim elites’ unsuccessful (?) bid for the discursive construction of a Hui nation(ality). Lest being rendered into an invisible, internal “Other”, the elites of non-Han minorities, simultaneously resisting to and co-opting with the Chinese nationalist discourse during the Republican era, inadvertently contributed to the reconfiguring of both the boundary and inclusiveness of the Han majority.

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105 For example, Lipman has suggested that Muslim population in China, in part by “remaining different but present, and resisting homogenization,” subverted (subverts) the dominant definitions of Chineseness. (Lipman, “Hyphenated Chinese”, (note 51), p. 111. quote in Aubin, p. 263; Lipman 1997, p. XXXV)
Chapter 6

Now in earlier times the world's history had consisted, so to speak, of a series of unrelated episodes, the origins and results of each being as widely separated as their localities, but from this point onwards history becomes an organic whole: the affairs of Italy and Africa are connected with those of Asia and of Greece, and all events bear a relationship and contribute to a single end.

- POLYBUS (died 118 B.C.), on the rise of Rome

Muslim Education Reforms in Republican China – between Islamic Modernism and May Fourth

The introduction of modernist ideas and fresh knowledge of Islam into the Sino-Muslim society in the Republican era brought unprecedented momentum for reform. In a way similar to the May Fourth intellectuals, progressive Sino-Muslim leaders sought to propel reforms through publication of Islamic journals and magazines, as well as modernization of the traditional mosque-based schools.

Meanwhile, at a time when their May Fourth counterparts who - though often labeled as “anti-Confucian” and “iconoclastic” – felt the exigency to come to terms with their past, the Islamic reformers had to draft their own responses that seek to simultaneously inherit and jettison their tradition.

1. Redefining the concept of “religion” in the time of nationalism

Echoing Benedict Anderson’s seminal scholarship\(^1\) on the constructiveness of

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\(^1\) Anderson’s investigation was apparently inspired by genealogical method formalized by Friedrich Nietzsche (On the Genealogy of Morality) and more recently by Michel Foucault (Archaeology of
modern nationalism in his *Imagined Communities* (1983), a growing body of recent scholarship has been focusing on interrogating many other crucial analytical categories of social polity – concepts such as *religion, superstition, race, ethnicity* that were so naturalized in our common parlance – to reveal their historicity. What was discovered is that nearly all of these categories had insidious attachment to the emergence of a historically specific, *Western* concept of modernity.

For instance, in *Genealogies of the Religion* published in 1993, Talal Asad argues that the concept of "religion" as we commonly understand today was created out of the politics of modern state formation in Europe. Observing that the “socially identifiable forms, preconditions, and effects” of the modern concept of religion differ greatly from those considered in the medieval Christianity or Islam, Asad argues that the definition of religion as a universal and transhistorical phenomenon with an unalterable essence – as it was (is) often presumed in anthropology, political science, and history – is ungrounded. Furthermore, he argues that the very effort to consolidate an essentialist definition of the term “religion” is itself a “historical product of discursive processes”, and a “construction that authorizes... particular forms of ‘history making’."² In this process, the liberal ideal that religious beliefs must be separated from science and politics – or, as Asad put it – from the “domain of power” has contributed to the discursive construction of religion as an

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² Asad, p.7
“analytically identifiable”, discrete category.  

With the Western cultural and political (military) dominance in the world in the late 19th and early 20th century, the liberal-rationalist model that born out of a particular, Western trajectory of post-Reformation history spread into the rest of the world through a complex process of colonial interactions, knowledge (re)productions, as well as symbolic exchanges between Europe and the non-European world. This hegemonic framework of "religion", as a modern concept, and part of the newly reified Western norm, was readily embraced by many non-Western elites, as if, as Lydia Liu suggests, there was “an anxiety or intellectual bias that gravitates toward European theory as a universal bearer of meaning and value.”

The dissemination of the liberal ideals into the Islamic world, for example, resulted in a wide range of modernist movements that fundamentally transformed the Muslim communities worldwide. The apologists of Islam in the 19th and 20th century, who were often the modernist reformers themselves, sought to defend their “religion” using rationalist and empiricist arguments. They also oppose "superstition", and advocate the professional training of clergy, and popular education.

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3 Ibid.,

4 Liu, p. 5

Similarly, the Muslim intellectuals of early 20th century China also had to come to terms with the reassignment of religion’s place in the modern society. In the meantime, unlike some of their Middle East counterparts, they also had to react to the increasing curtailing of legitimate space for the “religious” groups in the massifying, homogenizing self-narrativization of the modern nation-state. Moreover, the prevailing secularist narratives of the era that frequently associated religious beliefs with the opposite of reason generated gnawing anxieties among the Muslim elites. In response, many of them believed that only through a continuous effort of integrating rationalism and disciplinary studies into the realm of religion, as well as distancing the religion from the supposed enemies of the modernity - superstitions, myth, magical thinking, witchcraft, the use of hallucinogens, spiritual possession, and other irrational and unscientific practices, would the religion be allowed a space in this accepted vision of modernity.  

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6 In fact, Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity and Islam in early 20th century China all sought to formalize their own responses to the impact of post-Enlightenment modernity. Monk Taixu’s “Humanistic Buddhism” (renjian fojiao 人间佛教), Cheng Yingning’s “New teaching of immortality” (xin xianxue, 新仙学), the “localization” of Christianity (bense jidujiao, 本色基督教), Islamic revival movement, were examples of the reformist religious thoughts of the early 20th century China which sought to make religion compatible with modernity. For instance, Rebecca Nedostup notes that in early 20th century China, the “self-styled modernizers” from an “astonishingly broad range of the political, cultural, and religious spectra” have joined the witch-hunt of irrationality and backwardness. They pinned “superstition” (mixin) – a neologism that, like the term “religion” (zongjiao) itself, was only recently introduced to China through triangulated translation – to be an obstacle to China’s
The prominent Sino-Muslim scholar Wang Jingzhai, for instance, has repeatedly argued that the Islamic religion is rational not superstitious, practical instead of dogmatic. In a speech titled “Islam and Life” given at the YMCA Beiping in 1933, Ma Songting Ahong also eloquently defended the position for what he terms as a humanistic (renben 人本) and world-engaging (shisu 世俗) interpretation of Islam,

*The Hui religion is worldly, instead of otherworldly; it is word-engaging, other than world-renoucing; it is progressive, not retrogressive; it is optimistic rather than pessimistic; it is congruent with human nature, not trying to suppress human nature; it aims to develop one’s potential instead of to obviate it. [Islam] leads people’s spiritual life with a transcendental philosophy, steers people’s social life with progressive, responsible attitudes, while guides people’s material life with empathetic, economical principles. It makes enormous contribution the totality of the life of an individual.*

Ma Songting’s explication on the Islamic faith clearly marks a significant shift in the popular concept of religion in the Chinese society of the modern era - the traditionalist, deterministic and otherworldly values has given way to the individual and participatory aspects of religion. This changing sensibility was best exemplified in the Muslim Education Reform movement during the Republican period.

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progress that must be rid of. (Nedostup, Rebecca. Superstitious regimes: religion and the politics of Chinese modernity. Harvard University Asia Center, 2009, p. 18)

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Ma Songting 马松亭; “回教与人生”，《月华》第五卷第三十五期
1. The *jingtang* education

The formulation of the *jingtang* (经堂, “scriptural hall”) education system at the end of 16th century most importantly by Hu Dengzhou from Henan marks one of the most significant innovation in the history of Islam in China. In order to protect the religious identity of the Sinophone Muslims from the daily encroachment by the lifestyle of their neighboring Han community, the traditional *jingtang* education system in effect institutionalized the passage of Islamic knowledge among the Muslims. Eventually, together with the pork taboo and a genre of scholarship that was retroactively known as Han *Kitab*, the *jingtang* education became one of the cornerstones of the Sino-Muslim’s group identity.

Located in the mosque of local Muslim congregations (ch. *jiaofang*, 教坊), the *jingtang* education system was traditionally divided into two levels – *jingtang xiaoxue* (elementary education) and *jingtang daxue* (advanced learning). Xiaoxue, or the elementary education, accommodates Muslim children from about five to thirteen years of age, in there the students were being taught Arabic script and learn to recite Qur’an passages for prayers and ceremonies. It is distinct from *daxue* (grand school or “university”), which accept only a very small number of students who were to be trained to become imams or ahongs – religious scholars who would serve as

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8 Aubin, 248
9 Prior to the modern Muslim education reform in the Republican period, there has also been a third type of traditional Islamic schools called *jingtang zhongxue* (secondary education), which were designed for the Muslim adults who have not received a religious education in *jingtang* in their youth.
Arabic teacher, ritual leader and judges in a Muslim congregation.

At jingtang daxue, the religious students (hailifan or manla) were often trained under several masters over a course of some ten years. The “textbook” they relied on were a collection of sacred scriptures, Islamic theologies, jurisprudence and Qur’anic commentaries (in both Arabic and Persian) that are collectively known as the “thirteen classics” (ch. shisan jing 十三经). When a master of the jingtang daxue believes his trainees have a sufficient mastery of the scriptures, they would be permitted to “take on the robe” (Ch. Chuanyi 穿衣) and “put up the banner” (ch. guazhang 挂幡) in a ceremony and be pronounced an ahong.  

However, due to the Sino-Muslim communities’ severed tie with the center of Islamic knowledge, and a general lack of innovation in their “scholastic” pedagogy in the mosques over time, the religious education among the Muslim communities were increasingly marked by a certain shallowness and ossification. Three centuries after its formalization, many leading Muslim intellectuals have seen the jingtang education as an obsolete, hidebound system that was directly responsible for impoverishment and decline in religious identity with the Muslim communities. In their reiterated call for a renewal and rejuvenation of Islam in China, the jingtang

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system must be the first to transform.

2. Nationalism as a sentiment

Ernest Gellner (1983), one of the leading theorists of nationalism, has suggested that modern nationalism operates simultaneously on three registers: as a principle, as a sentiment, and as a movement.\(^\text{12}\) If one of the most crucial emotional bases of the Chinese nationalist movement in the 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century was the sentiment of “shame” (Ch. chi 耻)\(^\text{13}\), what was at the core of the Sino-Muslims’ revival movement is an overpowering feeling of “emasculaton” (ch. shuaitui 被顯) generated by the discourses of “backwardness”, “irrationality” and “ossification” of Islam in China from both within and outside the Hui community.

In a way analogous to the Egyptian Muslim intellectuals in the early 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century, who looked upon Europe and realized the agonizing backwardness of their society – the “archaic technology, the primitive level of scientific knowledge, the despotic political institutions, and the poverty and illiteracy of the masses.”\(^\text{14}\) The Sino-Muslim communities shared a similarly profound sense of plight – destitution, prevailing and crippling illiteracy, social and cultural marginalization, misunderstanding and discriminations from the Han majority all became dominant

\(^{12}\) Gellner, p. xxvii

\(^{13}\) Tsai, Weipin. 2010. Reading Shenbao: Nationalism, consumerism and individuality in China, 1919-37. Palgrave Macmillan. p. 103

\(^{14}\) Moddal, p. 83
themes on newspapers and journals. The great Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk, in his wistful portrait of the cultural life in the 19th and 20th century Istanbul, used the word huzun\textsuperscript{15} to describe the communal feeling of “worldly failure, listlessness, and spiritual suffering.”\textsuperscript{16} Within the Sino-Muslim communities, a similar cultural concept of “debilitation” (shuaitui) continued to dominate daily discourse, symbolisms, and ways people imagine themselves in the first half of the 20th century. In Beiping, for example, the decline of the Muslim communities was felt on the many registers: “first, the degeneration of Islam among all religions; second, the degeneration of China among the nations; third, the degeneration of Beiping among all the capitals; and fourth, the degeneration of Ox Street where the Hui people are crowded together”.\textsuperscript{17} This widely shared sentiment of tristesse among the Muslim communities denotes a mindfulness of the history of Islam in China, its glorious past, and its current decline.

The discriminatory policy toward the Chinese-speaking Muslims in the imperial dynasties was directly responsible for the outstanding destitution in many Muslim communities in the early Republican China. While the great majority of the Chinese-speaking Muslims were illiterate, the career options for them were limited to butchery and small restaurant business. As the saying goes, the Huihui “lives on 

\textsuperscript{15} Turkish for melancholy, the meanings it connotes should be close to the term tristesse used by Levi-strauss.

\textsuperscript{16} Pamuk, p. 91

\textsuperscript{17} Wang, Mengyang 梦扬: 牛街回民生计谈. 月华 (第 2 卷第 16 期), 1930. 第 2 版
two knives: one for selling goat meat and the other for selling oil cakes.”

Meanwhile, with the ascendancy of Western discourse of modernity and social Darwinism in China at the beginning of the 20th century, many Sino-Muslim intellectuals attributed the degenerated state of their community to lack of group consciousness, lack of Islamic knowledge, and lack of modern education. They generally shared the view that the economic impoverishment (pin 贫) of the Muslim communities was caused by the “uneducatedness” (yu 愚) of the people – not only did they have no resources to gain knowledge of the modern life, their deeply-rooted antipathy for modern learning also forbid them to be aware of the source of their predicament. This reciprocal relationship between lack of education and the decline of religious consciousness was noted by many Muslim educators. As Wang Cengshan (王曾善), one of the leading Sino-Muslim cultural figures of the Republican era, argued, “the relationship between education and living standard is one of cause and effect. Obviously, without education there would be no people of talent, without talented personnel there would be no better means of livelihood.”

3. Moral degeneration of religious leaders and fossilization of Islamic knowledge

Above all, the lack of well-educated, charismatic and morally impeccable Muslim leaders in the early 20th century was widely regarded as a major cause for the “degeneration” (shuailuo) of Islam in China. The late-Qing and early Republican

18 “回回两把刀，一把卖羊肉，一把卖蒸糕。”
period saw a gradual and uneven transition from the hereditary imam (ch. yi ma mu 伊瑪目) system to the more meritocratic ahong system in many local Muslim communities. Instead of confining Islamic knowledge and religious authority to the families of imam – a position traditionally passed on from father to the son - the local elders, who collectively represented a local Muslim congregation (jiaofang), now sought to employ ahongs – respected religious scholars, but not necessarily permanent members of the community – to be their religious leaders. Not only was this transition marked by much factional conflict, the coexistence of two types of religious leaders also led to negative perception of unqualified imams who had inherited the teaching post by birth.

_Zhenzong_ Newspaper (zhenzong bao 震宗报), a comprehensive monthly journal founded by the Chinese Muslims in Beiping, broke the news in 1930 that “members of Guomindang Party have made the motion for the abolition (of the teaching) of Arabic language (in schools).” According to the reporter, this proposal was based on the rationale that “Arabic language is no longer practical in China. Therefore, people cannot make a living with knowledge of Arabic in China. They are bound to live a parasitic life.” Instead of formulating an outright refutation to the apparent assault to the Islamic religion, Wang Huanchen (王煥宸), a contributor to Yuehua, seized the

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20 The hereditary post of imams, which used to be in charge of matter of community organization, became the religious and socio-political leaders of many Sino-Muslim communities when the post Kadi (Qâdî, Islamic judge) was abolished under the Mongol rule during the Yuan dynasty.

21 禹贡：回教专号, p. 157
opportunity to draw his fellow Muslims’ attention to the moral degeneration of the religious leaders.22

According to Wang, it was obvious both to the Guomindang members and to the Hui themselves that “Muslims had failed to integrate Arabic into their way of life.” Putting forward a biting moral critique, he accused the ahongs (and imams) of soliciting young men to be their hailfans (religious students) as a matter of prestige, regardless of whether they have the qualification to teach or whether their mosque commands the resources to support them: “they are maintaining a school for the training of future ahongs only in name, they are fooling themselves, as they are fooling others.”23 This type of virulent attack on the backwardness and ossification of the traditional ahongs were in fact commonplace in the beginning of the 20th century.24 In addition to their inadequacy in imparting valuable religious knowledge, the ahongs were often attacked for their hypocrisy, vanity, conservatism, factionalism and avariciousness.25 One of Ikhwan’s famous slogans, “If you read the

22 Wang Huanchen (王焕宸). "Thinking about the need to reform the Arabic school system after it had been suggested to be abolished" 剧废除亚拉伯文的建议想到阿文学校有改革的必要. Yuehua, 3:26, pp. 3-8
23 Ibid.,
24 However, it was notable that many of the authors who wrote articles to criticize the status-quo of Muslim education or "educatedness" were using pen names.
25 For instance, many journal articles of the Republican period opposed to ahongs eliciting donations (Ar. Niyah, ch. 也贴) – in many cases the only source of income for an ahong - when they provide prayers at the various occasions.
scripture, don’t read; if you eat, don’t read scripture” (*nianle bu chi, chile bunian* 念了不吃，吃了不念)\(^{26}\) were widely known even outside the *Ikhwan* circle as a moral critique of the greed of the *ahongs*.

Meanwhile, the *jingtang* system itself was also jettisoned for its obsolete didactic style and its incompatibility to the changing environment. Though Chinese had effectively become the vernacular of all the Muslims in China, and Sino-Islamic scholarship in the form of “Han *Kitab*” has been incorporated into the teachings within some mosques, the idea of Chinese curriculum remained anathematic to most of the Imams. As a result, nearly all of the *ahongs* or Imams at the beginning of 20\(^{th}\) century were solely educated from the traditional “scriptural hall” education in the mosques, which emphasizes the passage of knowledge instead of the reproduction of knowledge. Meanwhile, among the religious leaders, community elders and even the average folks, there was an abiding belief that “reading Chinese books is tantamount to the betrayal of Islam” (*ch. dushu ji fanjiao* 读书即反教).

Consequently, with the tide of modernization and Westernization sweeping over most of the cities in China, most of the local leaders of the Muslim communities chose to shelter their people from the tectonic changes in the outside world.

A Yuehua article identified three main impediments to the modernist reform of religious education - first, the “mechanical” and “woodblock printing” style of

\(^{26}\) Lipman 1997, p. 205
teaching within the *jingtang* schools; second, outstanding shortage in suitable teachers and appropriate textbooks; and third, both teachers and students paid little attention to the correct pronunciations of the Arabic words. “Every province”, according to the author, “has its own tones to pronounce Arabic, every person has his or her own way of pronouncing Arabic.”

As the result, when meeting with people from the Arabic-speaking world, “even the well-learned grand ʿālimūn cannot express themselves in Arabic language at ease.”

The act of reciting Qur’anic texts in Arabic or Persian was closely tied to defending the religious and group identity. However, in the early 20th century China, this didactic style was often associated with fossilization of Islamic knowledge and the failure to adapt to the changing time. During the Republican period, the Muslims educated in the traditional *jingtang* schools were often referred to as “the ones who read scriptures” (*nianjing de*, 念经的), as opposed to “the ones who read books” (*nianshu de* 念书的) – namely, the Hui Muslims who received a modern,

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27 In fact, one issue that became the central focus of the Ikhwan movement was the correct teaching of the Arabic language in the religious schools. In *jingtang jiaoyu*, which was widespread in the northwest province, Chinese characters are used to phonetically represent the Arabic language. This system of Chinese transliteration lowers the bar to Arabic studies, but it also resulted in incorrect pronunciation of Arabic language, which was considered by some as embarrassing. An example of this was al-Salam, being represented in Chinese characters as 色俩目 - se liang mu, rather using the characters to translate the meaning. Francoise Aubin also points out that the primary affirmation of one’s Islamic faith - the *shahada* “la ilaha illallah” - was rendered into Chinese as "la-yi-la-ho yin-lang-la-ho". (Aubin, p. 241)

28 Hu, Shiwen 虎世文: <欢迎埃及两位博士有感>, 月华: 第 5 卷第 25 期, pp. 4-6
state-sponsored school education which contained little, if any, religious content.  

According to a critic on the former type of students, the traditional jingtang model was so bankrupt that it amounts to nothing more than some empty rituals,

*Students from the traditional Jingtang schools spend their whole life studying Arabic and Persian*, while they do not study Chinese at all. This school may have produced many grand َأَلَمِن (Islamic scholars). However, even theseَأَلَمِن cannot speak Arabic or Persian fluently. The majority of the graduates from the traditional schools cannot even write a letter in Arabic or Persian!*  

Meanwhile, another critic blamed both the traditional Muslim education and the Republican-style Muslim schools (gongli xuexiao) for the decline of Islamic knowledge within the Muslim communities. He proposed that to combine the two existing types of education model within a modern religious school was the only way to preserve Islam,

*The tendency of ossification and corruption among those who read the scriptures (nianjing de) and the inclination to desert the religion among those who read the books (nianshu de) both contributed to the degeneration of Islamic religion in China. What we need to do is not simply to ask them to cooperate with each other. We must cultivate a type of people who are well-versed in both religious studies and modern education...We must establish a type of religious school...* (in

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29 Ma, Xiangfu. 马翔孚，（「念書的」與「念經的」），《月華》，卷 2 期 7 (1930 年 3 月)，版 2

30 Here the “Arabic” (a-wen) and “Persian” (bosi wen) should not be understood strictly as language lessons or textbooks based on Arabic and Persian. Within many Hui communities, while Arabic (a-wen) normally refers to all religious subjects – Qur’an studies, exegesis, Islamic jurisprudence, etc.; Persian (波斯文, or 回回法尔斯) is more associated with the non-religious aspects of Islamic culture – Sufi poetry, folklores, rituals, etc.

31 Ma, Xiangfu.馬翔孚，（“念書的”與“念經的”），《月華》，卷 2 期 7 (1930 年 3 月)，版 2。
which) both the religious school-educated and public school-educated are responsible for (formulating) its curriculum.32

Many reformist Muslim intellectuals, among them Yuehua’s editors and the faculty and students of Chengda Normal School, brought forward more calculated criticisms on the traditional jingtang education and its inheritors. It is notable that the basis of their criticism, as well as the language they adopted, was influenced, quite paradoxically, by the reformist movement formalized by the current Yihewani (Ar. Ikhwan, known in the West as “Muslim Brotherhood”) movement in China’s Northwestern provinces.

For instance, while the opinion editorials published on Yuehua generally had a liberal stance regarding the Chinese translation of Qur’an, the ongoing transformation of the curriculums in the religious schools from Arabic-only to Sino-Arabic, as well as the addition of subjects such as natural sciences and social sciences into the curriculum, it also took an adamant scripturalist (Ch. zunjing gesu) position with regard to the efficacy in teaching and studying Arabic language– a disposition no doubt bears the imprint of the Yihewani. According to Élisabeth Allès, Leila Chérif-Chebbi and Constance-Hélène Halfon, it was al-Nahda (Islamic modernists)– a school of thought that formulated by Muhammad Abduh and his disciple Rashid Rida in Egypt and later the entire Middle East - that inspired the Ikhwan leaders and Muslim scholars of the Eastern China to converge the two

32 Ibid.,
movements at a later time.\textsuperscript{33} The common focus of scripturalist (late-19\textsuperscript{th} century to early 20\textsuperscript{th} century) and Islam modernist (early 20\textsuperscript{th} century) movement among the Muslim intellectuals – reforming the hackneyed ways of teaching, adapting to contemporary practices, and a faithfulness to the original Arabic text– provided the basis for the modern Muslim education reform in 20\textsuperscript{th} century China.

I. Transmission of Islamic knowledge from the Arab world

Changes in the religious landscape of the Sino-Muslim societies have often been closely associated with the introduction of new knowledge, ideas and practices from the Islamic heartland. From the seminal arrival of Sufi teachings in the late-seventeenth century to the “scripturalist fundamentalism” (ch. zunjing zhongjiao) movement in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the advent of new Islamic knowledge had considerable impact on the “religious ideas, institutions, community structures, intra- and interethnic relations” among not least those who lived in Northwest China.\textsuperscript{34} The late Joseph Fletcher aptly observed this uni-directional pattern of knowledge production and dissemination between Muslim heartland and periphery. He noted in a posthumously published article, ”the more secluded and remote a


\textsuperscript{34} Lipman, “Remapping China”, p. 103
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.  

Even in the middle of the tectonic tide of May Fourth movement, the transmission of Islamic knowledge from the Arab heartland continued to carry unparalleled significance among the Muslim revivalists in China. Scholars went abroad to learn and investigate, they returned to embark on projects of translation, language, educational and curriculum reform. As correct teaching of Arabic language and religious texts featured as one crucial concern in the program of innovation, the increased exchanges between the Sino-Muslim communities and the Islamic heartland also resulted in the proliferation of much-coveted Islamic scholarships—among them the new Arabic-language teaching materials and Western scholarship of Islamic studies – in early 20th century China.

In an article, Wang Jingzhai ahong attributed the unprecedented influx of Islamic knowledge to two major developments of the modern era - the heightened accessibility to maritime transportation and the introduction of modern printing technologies:

After the lifting of maritime isolationist policies and the invention of printing, Arabic books from the West [sic] proliferated like bamboo shoots after a spring rain. An enormous amount was conveyed to China. Quite a few came into the

35 Fletcher, “Naqshbandiyya in Northwest China.” In Gladney 1991, p. 54
36 Aubin, p. 248
interior of China from India and Egypt; those from Turkey were next in number, and Mecca and Syria next after that. Subsequently, when Chinese pilgrims visited Mecca, they did not escape the hardships of traveling on foot, but at least they did not have to double their chore by loading up with books to take back.  

Indeed, following the Xinhai Revolution in 1911, an increasing number of Muslims began to travel to the Middle East. According to a Yuehua article, a total of 834 Sino-Muslims from the China proper (ch. Neidi) made hajj in organized groups from 1923 to 1933. The number of people making hajj from the frontier “provinces”, such as Xinjiang, was not documented, but was estimated to be between 2000 and 3000 per year. The emergence of organized hajj groups (Ch. chaojin tuan 朝觐团) also brought the Sino-Muslims from the Eastern coastal cities and those from western provinces closer to each other. Among the 66 Hui Muslims who made the hajj with the group led by prominent Hui intellectuals such as Ma Songting and Zhao Zhenwu in 1933, only seven of them are originally from central and east China (Hebei, Henan and Shanxi), while the rest of them come from Gansu, Ningxia and Qinghai provinces.  

Thank to the much-improved maritime trade route in East and Southeast Asia, the hajj groups were able to embark on steamers from Shanghai and

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38 Unnamed, 月华，第 5 卷 17 期，p. 14  
39 Rev. Claude L. Pickens, Jr., an American missionary who stayed for prolonged years among the Muslims in northwestern China, also reported that 834 Hui Muslims who made Hajj between the year of 1923 and 1934. However, I suspect that his information was from the same source. (Gladney, Dru C. Muslim Chinese: ethnic nationalism in the People’s Republic. Harvard University Press.)  
40 Unnamed, “民国二十二年度中国朝觐团题目录”，月华，第 5 卷 18 期，pp. 19-20  
41 That is to say, their ancestral homes (Ch. jiguàn 籍贯) are from those provinces.
sail straightly to Jeddah via Singapore, a route that was not available in Ma Fuchu’s time.

By 1939, at least 33 Chinese-speaking Muslims had studied at al-Azhar University in Cairo.\textsuperscript{42} At the time, the political supremacy and scientific norms from the Western countries had an enormous impact during the transformation of the Islamic education system.\textsuperscript{43} Though the number of Hui Muslims who studied in the Arabic countries was relatively small compared to the students coming from other parts of the Muslim world, an education from al-Azhar - extolled among the Chinese Muslims as the “the foremost Educational Institution of the Islamic world” (\textit{Huijiao zuigao xuefu}) - was automatically associated with high prestige. In fact, the recent Chinese graduates from the universities in the Middle East often found the Muslim communities in China already anxiously waiting for their return.\textsuperscript{44} Consequently, many graduates from the Middle Eastern universities went back to China to play a significant role in reshaping the Muslim identity, Islamic politics and cultural life of the Sino-Muslims communities with the a systematic knowledge of Islamic religion and an understanding of contemporary thoughts from the Arab world they learned during their student years.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{42} Gladney, Dru C. \textit{Muslim Chinese: ethnic nationalism in the People’s Republic}. Harvard University Press.

\textsuperscript{43}unnamed, “马宏道君行将返国” 月华，第 5 卷 18 期，p. 16
\end{footnotesize}
According to an article written by Sun Shengwu (孙绳武) in 1939, when Wang Haoran (王浩然) ahong met the then Ottoman Sultan and Caliph Abdül hamid II in Istanbul in mid-1900s, he explained the great scarcity of up-to-date knowledge of Islam in China,

*[Ever since Prophet Muhammad sent out ambassadors to China for proselytizing missions, the church (ch. Jiaoting) has not sent a single person to China for more than a thousand years. During this period, there were only 14 volumes the Islamic scriptures available in China aside from the Qur’an. Among them, eight were in Arabic and six in Persian.]*

45 ... Meanwhile, the writings on the Arabic culture over the thousand-plus years have exceeded 10,000 volumes... yet none of them is available in China... As for the Arabic language, there is quite a difference between the new and the old, in terms of grammar, syntax, and pronunciation... The Muslims in our country have been studying are all extremely old-dated knowledge. We are completely isolated from the new schools of thoughts.46

In the mean time, Wang Haoran ahong asked the Caliph for two things – first, to send Islamic scholars to spread their knowledge in China; and second, to donate copies of “all the major scholarships on Arabic (Islamic) culture.” According to Sun Shengwu, the Caliph not only responded favorably to Wang’s requests, but also showed great interests in the situation of Islam in China:

“*[the Caliph] asked Wang, ‘what is the total population of the believers of Islam in*
China? Wang gave the number of forty to fifty millions, or one ninth of the entire population of China. The Caliph was awfully surprised, for in the past the Muslims of the Near East never knew that they had so many co-religionists in China. The Caliph then asked if any Muslims in China are shouldering great responsibility for the country. Wang said no. The Caliph then asked if there are many social leaders who are Muslims. Wang again said no. The Caliph then inquired about the national language (guowen 国文) of China, and literacy among the Muslims in China. To all these questions, Wang gave truthful answers. As a result, the Caliph said to Wang, “Chinese is the national language of China, and all the Muslims in China are Chinese, yet they do not read Chinese books. It is no surprise that they live in destitution and ignorance, and enjoy marginal status within the society. When you return to your country, you should advocate your fellow Muslims to read (Chinese) books. This action would demonstrate your love for both your religion and your country.”

Upon Wang Haoran’s return to Beijing in 1907, he collaborated with other progressive Muslim intellectuals to establish the first reformed jingtang daxue ("scriptural hall university") in China – the huijiao shifan xuetang (回教师范学堂 “Islamic Normal School”) – which was located within the Grand Mosque at Beijing’s Ox Street (niujie 牛街). At huijiao shifan xuetang, two Islam scholars dispatched by Sultan Abdül hamid II served as the earliest foreign professors that taught among the Muslims in China. As Sun Shengwu reminisced some thirty years later, the opening of the modern Islamic school at Ox Street was nothing less than a watershed event for the Sino-Muslim communities, “for the first time in the history, the Muslims in China began to acquire a clear sense of the history of Arabic culture over the thousand-plus years. It was also from that time that the Sino-Muslims started to understand and use the Modern Arabic, and to read Arabic newspaper and magazines.” Meanwhile, the educators at huijiao shifan xuetang had made

\[47\text{ibid.}\]

\[48\text{孙绳武: ＜三十年来的中阿文化关系＞}\]
groundbreaking introductions of “modern” subjects such as nature (ziran 自然) and society (shehui 社会) into the school’s curriculum. The reformed Islamic school that Wang Haoran founded, though only opened for two years due to financial difficulties, became an inspiration and model for ensuing modern Islamic education reforms.

Ahong Ma Songting (1895-1992), who is a generation younger than Wang Haoran, was similarly credited to be an important courier of Islamic knowledge to China. He was instrumental in the establishment of two important hubs of Muslim culture during the Republican period - the Chengda Normal School and the Yuehua magazine. Returning from a successful trip in persuading the King Fuad I of Egypt to sponsor Chinese students at al-Azhar, he founded the Fuad Library (ch. Fude tushuguan 福德图书馆) in 1936 at the campus of Beiping Chengda Normal School with the collection of Arabic books donated by King Fuad I of Egypt and the director of al-Azhar.

Meanwhile, the Fuad library also received generous supports from the prominent figures from the Chinese intellectual circles such as Cai Yuanpei, Gu Jiegang, and Chen Yuan. Gu Jiegang, for instance, has served as the head of the board of trustees of the Fuad Library for most of its history. The success of Fuad library symbolizes not only the fundamental influence on the Islamic awakening movement

49 尹伯清, “王浩然阿衡传”，《月华》第 7 卷第 24 期（1935 年）

50 Ibid.,
in China from the Middle East, but also a close relationship between the leading Muslim educators and the Han Chinese intellectual circle.

II. Muslim Education Reforms in Republican China

1. The emergence of modern Muslim schools

Situated between the Islamic modernist and the May Fourth activists, and between the traditional “scriptural hall” (jingtang) education and the modern Republican schools, the Muslim reformers in China strived to formulate their own response to the unprecedented and rapidly changing time. In response to the perceived obsoleteness in the jingtang education system and the “degenerated morals” of the ahongs, the topic of Islamic education reform was fiercely debated throughout the Republican period. Various Sino-Muslim schools attempted different combinations of secular and religious education.

Meanwhile, the pressure from the Republican government to nationalize all schools, and the Muslim communities’ response to it, resulted in the coexistence of two paralleled systems of modern Muslim schools education in China. The first category – which was variously termed as Islamic public school (putong xuexiao, lit. “standard school” or xuexiao jiaoyu 学校教育, “school education”) – was founded by the Muslim educators “in accordance with the school organization policy promulgated
by the government.”

The state-founded Islamic public schools, first appeared in the 1920s, were founded successively in Beijing, Shanghai, Sichuan, Jinan, Yunnan, Ningxia, among other places. The emergence of the state-sponsored Islamic public school system represented a radical break from the time-honored educational experience that Muslim scholars of the older generations – such as Wang Jingzhai himself - received in jingtang. In Wang’s youth, his intellectual curiosity has drawn them to all available subjects except Chinese classics – in his own words, “Whenever I heard about studying Chinese classics (guowen), I would run away in a hurry.”

This defensiveness was best manifested in a widely popularized axiom “reading Chinese books is tantamount to betrayal of the religion (dushu ji fanjiao 读书即反教).”

In contrast, the Muslim students in the Islamic public schools (gongli xuexiao) receive a primarily Chinese education. While most of the Islamic public schools were located within Muslim communities and directed by Muslim scholars, they were largely independent from the mosques and barely distinguishable from the Chinese schools of the same period in term of pedagogy, curriculums, language of instruction, or the employment of the graduates. Not only had the Islamic public schools in large part adapted to standardized “national” curriculum and textbooks, they also actively sought certification and financial supports from the nationalist government, in order

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51 Hu, Shiwen 虎世文, 〈五年以来之中國回民文化〉, 頁 26-29.
52 Wang, Jingzhai 王静斋: 五十年求学自述, 〈中国伊斯兰教史参考资料选编〉(1911—1949) 下册
to ensure that its graduates may continue their education in higher-level schools which receive more official oversight.\textsuperscript{53}

Though the Islamic public school were founded to equip Sino-Muslim students with the modern skills and some knowledge about their religion, only a handful among them actually had the capacity to offer courses in Islamic theology, jurisprudence or even Arabic in addition to the national curriculum imposed by the government. Meanwhile, Han students were also recruited as an effort to increase the financial income.\textsuperscript{54} Many Islamic intellectuals were mindful of the deliberate dilution of Islamic knowledge and the marginalization of religion by “Mr. Science” in the public schools. As one contributor of Yuehua lamented,

\begin{quote}
The public school training requires the students to follow the ideology of the state. As a result, all other schools of thought and ‘-isms’ were excluded from the curriculum. Meanwhile, the teachers never stop promoting the ideas of scientific thinking and the pursuit of the truth... as a result, when a youth has not yet understood the highest truth of religion, how can he not be persuaded by the truth of science?\textsuperscript{55}
\end{quote}

The so-called “religious education” (\emph{zongjiao jiaoyu}), or modern religious schools (\emph{zongjiao xueyiao}), was the other type of institutes that coexisted with \emph{putong jiaoyu} (Islamic public schools) before their eventual and complete nationalization by the state in the 1940s. Drawing inspiration from the \emph{huijiao shifan xuetang} (回教师范学

\textsuperscript{53} Hu, Shiwen 虎世文, 《五年以来之中國回民文化》，页 26-29。

\textsuperscript{54} \emph{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{55} An, Qinglan 安慶瀾, 《回教青年的信仰問題》, 《月華》，卷 3 期 27 (1931 年 9 月)，页 12-13
Islamic Normal School”) founded by Wang Haoran in 1907, the Muslim religious schools focused on nurturing the future teachers and religious leaders in the mosque who are also exposed to standard modern education. Although this type of institutions was also referred to as “modern school” (xiandai xuexiao), they were reluctant to undertake any sweeping “modern” reforms. Additionally, the religious schools were generally not registered with the national government and were under much less state supervision. Accordingly, they were at much more liberty to teach courses such as Arabic language (a-wen) and Islamic jurisprudence (jiaoyi), though they still have to, both voluntarily and by decree, adapt their course design to the national curriculums.56

Most of the “religious schools” during the Republic period inherited and revolutionized the time-honored jingtang jiaoyu (“scriptural hall” education) system. Guided by popular slogans such as zhong-a bingzhong (中阿并重, “emphasizing both Chinese and Arabic”) and jinghan jianxi (经汉兼习,”studying scriptures together with Chinese books”), many traditional jingtang schools in the mosques began to reinvent themselves by adding Chinese curriculum into their Arabic lessons. Therefore, they were often known as zhong-a xuexiao (Chinese-Arabic schools).57 For most of the jingtang schools, this type of renovation was relatively inexpensive and would

56 Zhao, Zhenwu 赵振武, <三十年来中国回教文化概况>, 禹贡《回教专号》, pp. 16-18
57 The first Chinese-Arabic School was the Arabic-language Normal School (Huiwen shifan xuetang “回文师范学堂”) founded by Wang Kuan (Haoran) ahong within Beiping’s Ox street mosque in 1907. Though it did not last long, it served as an important model for later religious schools.
enable them to continue their operation without much external support. Once the Sino-Muslim leaders receive substantial financial or political backing, they would consider upgrading a Chinese-Arabic School into a more full-fledged, and considerably more modern and prestigious type of Muslim school – the Muslim (Huimin) normal school. For instance, the No. 1 Provincial Chinese-Arabic School (shengli diyi zhong-a xueiao) of Ningxia originally funded by general Ma Hongkui was able to metamorphosize into the Provincial Hui People’s Normal School of Ningxia (shengli huimin shifan xueiao) with financial support from the provincial government with the reimbursement of Boxer Rebellition Indemnity (gengzi peikuan 庚子赔款).58

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Chart 5-1: the evolution of the old and new Islamic Education system during the Republican period up until the Second Sino-Japanese War (1912-1937)

Nevertheless, due to the prevailing illiteracy that plagued many Sino-Muslim communities, it was unusually difficult for the school to recruit enough capable teachers even when money is not an issue. Thirty years after the year that Hajji Wang Haoran ahong founded the Huiwen shifan xuetang in Beiping (1908), the number of Islamic normal schools in the entire country can still be counted with one hand.\(^6\)

Since the Islamic revival movement came into being primarily as a moral critique, the modern-style Islamic normal schools aimed to pass on to its graduates not only a thorough training in Islamic studies but also an “incorruptible morality”, for the students are expected to work both as teachers in the jingtang school and instructors at the state-sponsored Huimin xiaoxue (Muslim elementary school).\(^6\)

\(^6\) Aside from Chengda Normal School (Chengda Shifan Xuexiao 成达师范学校), other notable Modern Islamic schools (zongjiao xuexiao) during this period include Shanghai Islamic-Arabic Normal School (shanghai yisilan huiwen xuexiao 上海伊斯兰回文师范学校), Wanxian (now Chongqing) Islamic Normal School (wanxian yisilan shifan xuexiao 萬縣伊斯蘭師範學校), Ningxia Provincial Hui People’s Normal School (Ningxia Shengli Huimin Shifan Xuexiao, 宁夏省立回民师范学校). All of them primarily aimed at Muslim normal education. Meanwhile, Some notable Islamic public schools (putong xuexiao) include Ningxia’s Mongolian-Muslim Secondary School (menghui xuexiao, 蒙回学校), Jincheng (晋城)'s Chongshi Secondary School (崇实中学), Beiping’s Xibe Public School (西北公学), Yunnan’s Mingde Secondary School (明德中学), and Beiping’s New Moon Women’s Secondary School (新月女中).

\(^6\) 赵振武，<三十年来中国回教文化概况>，禹贡《回教专号》, pp. 16-18
This situation reflects both the wide split between the coexistent “religious” and “secular” education, and a hope from the Muslim educators to bridge the gap. Consequently, the Normal School students had to survive an outstandingly hefty course load, including not only what is taught at the Chinese-Arabic school (a combination of traditional jingtang teaching and new Chinese national curriculums) but also courses of educational sciences. Just as famous ahongs such as Wang Jingzhai who was initially tiptoeing between the ideas of “zunjing zhongjiao” (“revere the scripture and treasure the religion”) and “aiguo aijiao” (“love for the country is equivalent to love for the religion”), schools that advocated modern Islamic education were careful to keep the balance between the traditional scriptural education – which was still regarded as the cornerstone of the Sino-Muslim identity, and the modern curriculum which was both secular and nationalistic in tone.

2. Chengda Normal School

Among all the modern Islamic schools founded during the Republican era (1911-1949), the Beijing-based Chengda Normal School (Ch. Chengda Shifan Xuexiao 成达师范学校) was the most influential and was widely celebrated as the model of modern-style Islamic educational institutions in the later years. Founded by a group of progressive Muslim leaders⁶² in 1925 inside a mosque in Jinan, Chengda aimed

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⁶² The six founding figures of Chengda include famous Hui intellectuals such as Tang Kesan (唐柯三), Mu Huating (穆华亭) and Ma Songting (马松亭).
from the beginning to cultivate Muslim teachers with both modern and Islamic knowledge. In its formative years, the school suffered from shortage of funding, appropriate textbooks, capable teachers, administrators and qualified students. As Ma Songting \textit{ahong} recalls, due to the general apathy within the Sino-Muslim communities toward the Chinese (modern) curriculum, the number of qualified applicants at the time when Chengda opens its door was far from desired that they had to bend their standard in order to form the first class,

\begin{quote}
It was originally planned to admit 20 students. However, as it turned out, only twelve people applied at the various test points. Among them, only one person met the admission standard – two of the applicants were only twelve years old and they were graduated from the elementary school (gaoxiao); four of them were sixteen and not graduated from elementary school; two of them have received traditional Islamic education but never a modern one; and there were three people who have neither had any religious education nor studied at an elementary school... As the result, we had to stretch our standard to admit ten students to form the pioneer class. \textsuperscript{63}
\end{quote}

Meanwhile, though many projects of modern Islamic reforms in China originated from the more literate eastern coastal cities such as Beiping and Shanghai and subsequently emanated to the rest of the country, the resources and ideas (e.g. \textit{yihewani} movement) from the Muslim communities in Northwest China (\textit{xibei}) were essential in their coming into being. For instance, following the Japanese invasion of Shandong in May 1928, the still nascent Chengda Normal School was out of funding and forced to close down for the second time. It would hardly survive the financial hardship without generous financial support from Ma Fuxiang (马福祥) – a

\textsuperscript{63}马松亭，〈中国回教与成达师范学校〉，禹贡：回教专号, pp.4-6.
prominent Muslim warlord from Gansu with deep Confucian training and values.\textsuperscript{64}

With the help from Ma Fuxiang, who was also the initiator of the \textit{Yuehua} journal, Chengda was able to relocate to Beiping in the spring of 1929.\textsuperscript{65} Thereafter, the Chengda Normal School formed a close relationship – almost a symbiosis - with Ma Fuxiang’s influential \textit{Yuehua} journal. While Yuehua served as the major channel for Chengda’s publicity, the students and faculty of Chengda were among the most fervent contributors to Yuehua.

3. Structuring Chengda

According to the Main Chapter (\textit{zongzang}) of the Chengda Normal School, the school’s principal mission is to “cultivate teachers and promote the Islamic religion”.\textsuperscript{66} To that end, the school offered three types of education programs over the course of its history: the six-year Elementary Education Division (ch. \textit{xiaoxue bu 小学部}) that is analogous to the reformed Hui People’s Elementary School (ch. \textit{Huimin xiaoxue 回民小学}); the six-year Normal Education Division (\textit{shifan bu 师范部}), which was set up to be the core part of Chengda’s normal education\textsuperscript{67}; and the

\textsuperscript{64}Ibid.,

\textsuperscript{65}unnamed, 〈附錄：成達師範學校沿革略〉, 頁 66-67. 金吉堂, 〈教史拾零：故馬雲亭先生興辦教育事略〉, 《月華》, 卷 7 期 25.26.27 (1935 年 9 月), 頁 28.

\textsuperscript{66}Unnamed, 《成達師範學校致全國回教學校團體清真寺書》, 月華, 第 5 卷 19 期, p. 14

\textsuperscript{67}馬松亭, 〈論著：中國回教的現狀(續)〉, 頁 4.
short-lived two-year Graduate Education Division (ch. yanjiu bu 研究部), which, according to its advertisement on Yuehua, only recruit the leaders of local Mosques (jiaozhang) or graduates from Chinese-Arabic universities (ch. Zhong-a daxue 中阿大学).\(^{68}\)

Chengda’s Normal Education Division (shifan bu), in principle, admits only students who graduated from the modern Huimin Xiaoxue (Hui people’s elementary school). A degree in Normal Education from the Chengda Normal School generally requires six continuous years of rigorous studies in both religious and non-religious subjects (see Table 5-2 for details of the course structure).\(^{69}\) Once a student is admitted, his six years of tuition, room and board are paid for by the school (though he is still responsible for the other costs, such as textbooks and uniforms).\(^{70}\) In return, they are required to work within the field of Muslim education for a minimum of six years, or they will be asked to pay back all the cost of attending Chengda.\(^{71}\) The advanced students from the Graduate Division also receive a small stipend in addition to the exemption of paying for the room and board.

The Normal Education Division of Chengda was organized according to a principle known as sanzhangzhi （三长制, “three leaders system”) – namely, the students

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\(^{68}\) Unnamed. 《北平成達师范学校研究部第一班招生广告》, 月华, 第 5 卷 19 期, p. 7

\(^{69}\) Unnamed. 《附录：北平成達师范学校总章》, 月华, 第 5 卷 19 期 (1933 年 7 月), p. 14-15.

\(^{70}\) Unnamed. 《北平成達师范学校招考第四班新生》, 月华, 第 5 卷 16 期, p. 4

\(^{71}\) Unnamed. 《成達师范学校致全国回教学校团体清真寺书》, 月华, 第 5 卷 19 期, p. 14
were trained to have all the skills to serve as an ahong at the Mosques, as a teacher in the Muslim Schools, and as an organizer in the Sino-Muslim cultural organizations. In fact, they were expected to take up one (or more) of the three roles upon their graduation. Instead of going through the jingtang to be the traditional ahongs, the progressive-minded Sino-Muslim students now have the opportunity to be the leader of the religious, educational and political sector at the same time, even though only a few of the graduates from Chengda ended up being active in all of the three spheres. The boundaries between the realms of religious life and politics became increasingly porous, as the reformed Islamic education was designed to encourage its students to transverse the two and bring them together.

Table 5-2: The objectives of Beiping Chengda Normal School’s Normal Education Division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Objectives for Arabic lessons:</th>
<th>Course Objectives for Chinese lessons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Having the ability to directly read Arabic texts.</td>
<td>1. Having the ability to read and write (publish) in Chinese (guowen).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Having a comprehensive understanding of the basic Canon of the Islamic religion – the Qur’an.</td>
<td>2. Having a summary knowledge of the history and geography of China and the foreign countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Having a comprehensive understanding of the basic teaching of the Islamic religion – the Hadith.</td>
<td>3. Having the ability to read and write (publish) in Chinese (guowen).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Having a summary knowledge of the Islamic philosophy.</td>
<td>4. Having a summary knowledge of the history and geography of China and the foreign countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Having a holistic understanding of the Islamic law (shari’a).</td>
<td>5. Having a totalistic understanding of the legal aspects of being a citizen.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

72馬松亭. 1936. 《中國回教與成達師範學校》, 《禹貢》半月刊(卷5期11, 回教專号), p. 12
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Having a comprehensive understanding of the Islamic morality and structure of the Islamic society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Having a summary knowledge of the natural science.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Having a comprehensive knowledge of the history of Islamic religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Having basic knowledge of the Chinese classics (guoxue dianji)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Having basic knowledge of mathematics, logics, psychology, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Having a holistic knowledge in the discipline of education, history of education, methodologies of education, and the school administration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Proficient in all the skills that related to teaching, and having the ability to teach them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Proficient in the applied writing skills – such as writing letters and memos.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the meantime, the *sanzhangzhi* (‘three leaders system’) developed by *ahong* Ma Songting, with its emphasis on the versatility of its graduates, also aimed to bridge a widening schism between the modern-minded and the traditional Muslim communities. Although talks of reforming Islamic tradition have preponderated in the Muslim newspaper and journals, which – as our best source of information on the Hui communities of this period – was itself a product of modernity, Ma Songting,
in his speech at Beiping YMCA in 1933, aptly observed that the current situation of Muslim education in China was not characterized by “the new replacing the old”, but the coexistence of the two. This “dual-track” system has increasingly led to two mutually distinctive socio-cultural spheres among Muslims in China. In other words, while the Islamic revival movement has actuated an unprecedented degree of modernization with the Muslim communities through state-sponsored schools, a parallel universe of traditional Islamic education - the private, mosque-centered education model continued to produce an alternative, and increasingly defensive, cultural sphere and individual subjectivity. The graduates of the Chengda, serving as the leaders of both modern-style Islamic schools and traditional jingtang schools, were expected to bring the two divergent groups into a single, unified Hui constituent under the Chinese nation.

4. The Making of Republican Citizen

What the symbolic action is intended to control is primarily a set of mental and moral dispositions.

- Godfrey Lienhardt, Divinity and Experience

The Republican period’s substantial imprint on Chengda was embodied not only in its curriculum structure, but also in its educational philosophy. Subsequent to the May Fourth movement (1919) and the renxu xuezhi (1922), the concept of (public) education took on a populist orientation, with increasing emphasis on the

73 Ma Songting 马松亭，（論著：中國回教的現狀(續)）
individuality of the students, accessibility of the schools, as well as practicality and scientific vigor of the curriculum. In addition, for the first time in Chinese history, the normative function of public education became associated with an urgent need to nurture a generation of citizenry of the Chinese Nation. Following the genesis of the Republic of China in 1912, many political leaders, educators, and social reformers looked to public education as a powerful tool in imbuing a national consciousness to the former imperial subjects. At the same time, many Muslim and non-Muslim leaders expected modern schools to coalesce the “loose sand” of huijiaotu (“followers of Islam”) into an imagined community of the Chinese nation (zhonghua minzu), of which the Sino-Muslims were an integrated part. The idea shared by the religious and non-religious elites that the former imperial subjects of the Islamic faith need to be educated, guided, and trained in order to be integrated into the national imagery, was succinctly captured in a popular mantra since the late Qing, “Save the Country by means of education” (jiaoyu jiuguo 教育救国).

In a seminal study on Republican education in China, Henrietta Harrison argues that the inculcation of customs and knowledge in the public education of the early Republic was primarily interested not to accustom the pupils to their everyday lives but to a "proposed world" of the nation-state - "teachers were preparing children not merely for a world they had not experienced, but for a world that hardly

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74 Harrison, p. 84
75 Aubin, p.247
Similar practices can also be observed in all types of reformed Islamic schools during the Republican period. Aside from pedagogical innovation, which is the main focus of this chapter, various economic, exegetical, symbolic, and illocutionary (e.g., speech-act) strategies were also used to entrench the Republican bodies and subjects with national symbols.

After each weekly gathering, Chengda’s students and the faculty members would conclude their meetings by shouting slogans together. As a useful device to form the group identity within the school, the almost ritualistic rally cries are illustrative of the changing priorities in the school’s objectives within the increasingly secular environment in which the faculty and students locate their ethnic, religious and national identity. In the early years of the Chengda, the slogans at the end of the rallies were largely religiously based, with only tangential references to the “national revolution”. Later, we would see the religious expressions eclipsed by slogans explicitly evoking allegiance to the Chinese nation. For instance, the slogans uttered at the end of the weekly rallies in 1929 generally start with the shahaba – “There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God” (stated in Chinese). This primary affirmation of Islamic faith would be followed by a series of slogans - “the Holy Qur’an is the light that leads the human being onto the bright and peaceful path

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76 Harrison, p. 85
77 See chap. 3 for the section on exegetical strategies adopted by the Qur’an’s Chinese translators.
78 See chap. 4 for the section on aiguo aijiao ("love for the country is equivalent to love for the religion").
of Islam. In order to lead the Sino-Muslim, we need teachers! In order to have teachers, we need a functioning education system! We must broaden the publicity for the Islamic religion. We must support the independence of the Hui people while joining the revolution of the Chinese nation!”

Two years later, in the commencement ceremony in the summer of 1931, the Shahada was on longer vocalized. The declaration of Islamic faith has given way to more secular and practical concerns - “Cultivate Muslim teachers, promote the justice of Islamic religion! Support the independence of the Hui people and join the revolution of the Chinese nation!” Subsequently, these two lines would become a fixed expression uttered at Chengda’s conventions. At the end of the meetings, all the Chengda’s students and faculty will shout out three concluding lines in unison, in a manner that would be unimaginable, if not anathematic, to the traditional ahongs of the jingtang - “long lives Chengda Normal School! Long live Republic of China! Long live Islamic Religion!”

5. Education and life

Hardly any modern thinker had more profound an impact on the education system
reforms in Republican China than American philosopher John Dewey (1859-1952). Since the first introduction of his work into China in 1912, Dewey’s philosophy of education – which makes pragmatism and experiential learning the centre of the educational objectives – have been “widely read, interpreted, applied within changing social, cultural, and political context” in Chinese society. A number of Dewey’s former pupils at Columbia - Hu Shih, Feng Youlan, Tao Xingzhi, Jiang Menglin, and Guo Bingwen (郭秉文) – also became leading figures in China’s education reforms. During Dewey’s visit China from May 1919 to July 1921, coinciding with the May Fourth movement, his former students tirelessly promoted their teacher’s vision for education reforms and located his philosophy within the tides of modernization in the country.

John Dewey, in articulating his ideas on the philosophy of education, emphasized the “organic connection between education and personal experience.” According to him, experience provides a stable basis for action, while knowledge serves merely a tool for it. In other words, instead of limiting its function to the transmission of knowledge, education should be prioritized for social improvement. In the early 20th century, Dewey’s view on education reverberated among the contemporary Islamic scholars from the Arab countries. In Egypt, the new plan for religious

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82 Popkewitz, p. 256

83 Ibid.,


teaching in the universities, influenced by the prevailing Islamic modernist thought, also stressed the need to apply religious dogma to life and to social conditions.  

Situated between the May Fourth activism among the Han Chinese and the Islamic modernist movement in Muslim communities worldwide, many Sino-Muslim educators of the Republican period were clearly attentive to both of the voices that emanated from distant land. Ma Dequan, an advanced student from Chengda, cited Hu Shih’s definition of education – “a continuous process of reorganizing, extending one’s experience and enhancing one’s capacity to adapt to new experience” – in his proposal for modern Muslim education reforms. Wang Weihua (王蔚华), one of a few female contributors to Yuehua, also echoes Dewey’s belief in the intimate relationship between education and life in her articles published in Yuehua in 1930. With an emphasis on Muslim woman’s education, Wang argues that “the progress of the society, and the development of the religion, all depend on the experience passed on through education... Because the environment is constantly changing, our experience should be transformed accordingly.”

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87 Ma Dequan 马德权.〈論著：論宗教教育復興中國伊斯蘭的先決問題〉, 《月華》, 卷 6 期 31.32.33 (1934 年 11 月), 頁 9-11。


89 Wang Weihua 王蔚华, 〈對伊斯蘭人們談談教育問題〉, 《月華》, 2 卷 30 期 (1930 年 10 月), 版 2. 王蔚华, 《伊斯兰运动与妇女问题》, 《月华》, 2 卷 11 期
putatively ossified and scholastic pedagogical model of the jingtang. The purpose of education, therefore to Wang, is to “continue the renovation of experience”, so that “people can swiftly adapted to the changing environment and make use of it.” In other words, Wang advocates a socially-engaged model of education, and exhorts the Sino-Muslims to participate in social life through education reforms. 90

The view of education as a means to social improvement also found expression in the activism for woman’s rights to education. Though the Islamic reform movement in early 20th century China was predominantly “initiated by men, conducted by men, with educated men assuming leadership and authority” 91, the modernist reformers were also, to an extent, attentive to the need for the modern woman’s education for the other sex. In 1930, the influential Yuehua journal devoted an issue to “women’s education” (another issue was devoted to “early education” in 1935), in which many aspects regarding the equality between the sexes - Muslim women’s school, liberation of women, breaking the gender stereotype, unbinding of feet - were brought up. Wang Weihua, for example, cited a line from Qur’an to demonstrate that “in terms of advancement in both spirituality and morality, male and female are equal.” 92 In the mean time, the divergent objectives in the education of male and female were also made clear in these articles. Developing modern education system

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90 Ibid.,
91 Shui, Jingjun. p.245
92 Wang, Weihua 王蔚華，〈伊斯蘭運動與婦女問題〉，《月華》，卷 2 期 11(婦女專號)(1930年 4 月), 版 1-2.
for girls (funu jiaoyu), though aimed to familiarize Muslim women with the Islamic
culture, was also closely associated with early education (you’er jiaoyu), for the
Muslim women were predominantly heeded for their role in bringing up the younger
generation.\textsuperscript{93}

In the middle of Wang Weihua article, she cited a widely popular slogan at the time -
“education is life” (jiaoyu yu rensheng) - itself a condensed quote from Dewey’s
famous line “education is not preparation for life; education is life itself”. The
increasingly popular concept of education as an instrument to extend one’s
concreteness through experience, suggests the intellectual elites’ recognition of
education’s role not only in making the Republican citizen, but also in creating a
modern Self.

6. The Renxu Reform

Over and again, we saw Islamic intellectuals in China, with an attentiveness toward
changes in China as a whole, incorporated knowledge (or what Foucault would call
“discursive formations”), rhetorical strategies, naming practices, tropes and
legitimizing processes from their May Fourth counterparts into their own project of
Islamic revival. Though principally aimed at restructuring the old-fashioned jingtang
system, Chengda and its peer schools came into being bearing imprint from the
momentous reforms in the public education sector, of which the May Fourth

\textsuperscript{93} Lu, pp. 206-215
intellectuals such as Hu Shih, Cai Yuanpei, and Luo Jialun played a crucial role in shaping its organizations and core values.

On November 1, 1922, the Beiyang Government passed a new legislation, renxu xuezhi, which radically shifted the school system in China based on the Japanese system since 1904 to one that looked to American education as its model. The renwu educational system (ch. Renxu xuezhi 壬戌学制), also known simply as the “new system”, was most famous for its 6-3-3 didactic structure (six years of primary education, three years of elementary secondary education, and three years of advanced secondary education). Aside from Chengda, most of the prominent modern Islamic schools in the East Coastal cities—Beiping’s Northwest Public School (Xibei Gongxue) and Shanghai’s Islam Normal School (yisilan shifan xuexiao), for example—are also organized in accordance with this model.

Born out of intricate Republican politics, the “Reform Plan for the School System” (Ch. xuexiao xitong gaige an, 學校系統改革案), decreed by the Beiyang government in 1922, listed seven guiding principles for the new education model.96

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94 Gao, Mingshi 高明士, 2004. 中國教育史, 國立臺灣大學出版中心, p. 206

95 Because of Chengda’s particular emphasis on the scriptural education and cultivation of religious leaders, its normal education program is not separated into two three-year programs. (See Table 5-2 for entails)

96 “xuexiao xitong gaige an” (Reform Plan for the School System), in Gu, Zhongguo jiaoyu daxi, 4:2200-2202. First printed in Xin jiaoyu (New education) 5, no.5 (1922)
1. Adapting to the need for the evolution of society (Ch. shehui jinhua),
2. Advancing the spirits of popular education (pingmin jiaoyu)n,
3. Cultivating personality of the students,
4. Attending to the economical aspects of the citizens,
5. Focusing on teaching practical knowledge of daily life,
6. Making popularization of education more feasible,
7. Allowing flexibility in carrying the reform out in different locations.

Dewey’s promotion for the “democratization of education” and his focus on the role of education for social improvement clearly undergirded the renwu education reform in China. The seven principles of renwu xuezhi were frequently invoked in the writings and speeches of the Muslim leaders of the Republican era. Nevertheless, as the local social environment differed enormously in China in the 1920s, to impose a top-down, Procrustean vision of the school reform in all of the localities in China was well beyond the capacity of the Beiyang government. In this regard, the last point from the seven-point decree - the flexibility in carrying out the educational reform according to the local situation – was particularly relevant. Hu Shih, a chief drafter of the “Reform Plan”, calls this elasticity in the enforcement of the education reform “one of the most valuable features of the new system.”

In effect, except for trying to follow the central regulations and curriculum recommendations, individual

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97 “1、適應社會進化之需要；2、發揮平民教育精神；3、謀個性之發展；4、注意國民經濟力；5、注意生活教育；6、使教育易于普及；7、多留各地方伸縮餘地。”

98 Hu Shih. 1922. “guanyu xuezhi de ganxiang”, (“a few thoughts on the new education system”.)
schools operated “essentially as individual units.”\textsuperscript{99} Similarly, many traditional-style schools (\textit{sishu}) were still allowed to open after the sweeping \textit{renxu} reform in 1922, even though the \textit{keju} (“Imperial Examination”) has been abolished in 1904.

In the mean time, the flexibility sanctioned by the governmental decree also leaves a certain space for the modern Muslim educators to construct their own system. For instance, one of the most salient differences between Chengda Normal School and other Republican-era normal education schools was Chengda’s courses in Arabic.

Since Chengda’s objective was to educate its students to be future leaders of local Muslim congregations and instructors at modern Islamic schools, more than fifty percent of its curriculum (all of religious content) was conducted in Arabic. \textsuperscript{100} Meanwhile, all the modern subjects such as mathematics, history, sciences and citizenship also have to be integrated into the curriculum, resulting in a rather overextended program of study. (See Table 5-2 for details)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Types of Education</th>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Elementary Level</td>
<td>Non-religious Education</td>
<td>國文、算術、歷史、地理、理科、體育 Chinese (guowen), Mathematics, History, Geography, Sciences,</td>
<td>Conducted in Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Course Details</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Education</td>
<td>試驗、古蘭、文法、教授</td>
<td>Conducted in Arabic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arabic reading, Qur’an, Arabic Grammar, Shari’a</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Advanced Level</td>
<td>古蘭、古蘭証、聖訓、阿拉伯文</td>
<td>Conducted in Arabic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>言、文法、理學、語理、教</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>法、教史、倫理學</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qur’an, Quranic Commentary, Hadith, Arabic Literature, Arabic Grammar, Islamic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jurisprudence (lixue), linguistics, Shari’a, Islamic History, Islamic Ethics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>社會學、法學通論、國文、史、</td>
<td>Conducted in Chinese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>地、哲學瀋要、倫理學、党義、</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>公民、经济</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sociology, Introduction to Law, History, Geography, Introduction to Philosophy,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethics, Party (Guomindang) Doctrine, Citizenship, Economics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>教育學、教育史、心理學、教</td>
<td>Conducted in Chinese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>學法、學校管理法、教授實習</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education, History of Education, Psychology, Methodology in Education,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School Administration, Practicum</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5-3: Course structure of Chengda Normal School’s Normal Education Division (shifan bu) in 1928

III. Conclusion

In the field of intellectual history, as in many other disciplines, the question “what do old and new add up to?” often generates unexpected and revealingly involute answers. In the case of the famous ti-yong ("Chinese learning as essence, and Western learning for practical use", lit. body-function) formula that was proposed to be a basis for China’s political, cultural, and educational modernization in the Hundred-day Reform (ch. bairi weixin) in 1898, the body-function construct turned out to be neither an unproblematic binary as Zhang Zidong may have suggested, nor a logically fallacious masquerade invented to pacify the conservatives. Instead, as Joseph Levenson points out (and paraphrased by Timothy Weston), “the ti-yong model - its language, logic, and stated goal - helped generate new intellectual possibilities.”

Similarly, the educational experience that the Sino-Muslim students received at

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102 The course structure of Chengda’s tends to change every one or two years since its foundation, reflecting the changing environment in the education sector overall. Here I only to present a most representative curriculum.

103 Weston, p. 104
Chengda Normal School in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century China should not be viewed as simple juxtaposition of an old-fashioned \textit{jingtang} education with the Westernized Republican-style schooling. On a general level, the introduction of modern system of education based on rationalist-positivist ideas posed a devastating challenge to the authoritative-traditionalist teaching in the \textit{jingtang} system. On the epistemological level – the “empirical” knowledge taught in the modern Islamic institutions jettisons the “revealed” knowledge that was passed on in the \textit{jingtang} schools. In terms of the core educational values, the spirits of innovation, self-determination, this-worldliness, and reliance on the power of science and technology advocated by the modern educational philosophy, represents a complete revaluation from the conformist, deterministic and otherworldly values often found in the traditional education. Last but not least, the modernization (secularization) and nationalization of Islamic schools marks the reassignment of religion’s place in the modern society.

\footnote{As Talal Asad would argue, the religion is now re-conceptualized as a “sub-system in a secular system”, instead of as an all-encompassing social and political totality.}

Because of the Sino-Muslim reformers’ intellectual affiliation with the Islamic modernism from the Middle East and the May Fourth modernists among the Han Chinese, the Islamic revival movement in the early half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century China has been often remembered as the “May Fourth of the Hui Muslims”, or the “Islamic

\footnote{Saqib, pp. 73-75}
\footnote{Asad, pp. 27-29}
modernism in China”. Neither of the term captures the agonizing hybridity of the Muslim education reformers, or their multifaceted concerns in carrying out their reform. In an environment where iconoclastic vibes and secular ideals were profoundly felt, the Islamic intellectuals had to draft their own responses that seek to simultaneously inherit and rebel against their tradition. Meanwhile, they had to at the same time conciliate with and resist the legacy of modernization in the society and nationalization of the schools from the Republican state.

In a recent article, Prasenjit Duara suggests that the institutionalized differentiation between the “religion” and “secular” in the era of nation-states was always accompanied by both a “conscious challenge” to this separation and a “constant ‘traffic’” between the two. In the case of the Islam revival movement in early 20th century China, the practices and ideas involved in the subject-formation of the modern Hui Muslims (as both modern citizen of China and religious subjects of Islam) by means of education illustrate the continuous negotiations, transactions, and “traffic” between the realm of “religious” and “secular”. The Muslim educators from Chengda, like many other social and religious groups of the Republican period, not only constantly traversed the separation of the “religious” and the “secular” sphere designated by the state, they also worked - both together with, and independently from the “legal, classificatory, and coercive powers” of the state—

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106 Duara, “Religion and Citizenship in China and the Diaspora”, p. 45
107 Ibid., pp. 45-46
108 Ibid.,
in reshaping the content of meaning of religion and its place in the modern world.
Conclusion

In this study, I sought to examine various interrelated aspects of the life of Sino-Muslims during China’s Republican period – their participation in the Republican politics, their narrations of Hui identity, their visions for the Chinese nation, and their education and religious reforms. While each of the chapters focuses on individual topics, the entire study is unified by four underlying themes.

The making of modern subjects

Primarily, I sought to show how the creation of modern national and religious subjects in China, like the rest of the world, was intimately associated with the successful diffusion of post-Enlightenment discourses on nationalism, religion, ethnicity, and citizenship from the West. The pre-modern social identities and identifications, as Prasenjit Duara suggests, “do not necessarily or teleologically develop into the national identifications of modern times.” Instead, “a new vocabulary and a political system selects, adapts, recognizes and even re-creates these old identities.”1 In fact, during China’s period of transition from the Qing Empire to a modern nation-state, we see constant efforts from a variety of societal and political forces all seeking to graft a new vocabulary onto the pre-existing social circumstances. By attempting to make sense of the condition of China through the

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1 Duara 1996, p. 153
lens of modern concepts and sensibilities, these forces in effect contributed to the reshaping of such a condition.

**Instability of meanings**

In the meantime, while the modernity in China was articulated in part through the dissemination of new social and political concepts, I caution that the symbolic power of linguistic utterances, as Volosinov puts it, is always “multi-accentual and Janus-faced”.\(^2\) With an attentiveness to the instability and malleability of symbols, languages and meanings, I sought to outline in all the foregoing chapters how cultural-political categories – nation, ethnicity, *minzu*, religion, etc. – were at once imposed, contested and negotiated in the modern era, through not least the social and discursive apparatuses of normalization, naturalization, institutionalization, translation, sloganeering, and exegesis. Due to the absence of a unified or consistent vocabulary for people to grasp the modern condition, the nation-building project over the Republican period, as Lydia Liu characterizes, poses as “a vast gray area of intellectual discourse in which different people and interest groups [could] pick and choose from among different shades of ... language to energize their own politics.”\(^3\)

**Competing voices for China’s nationhood**

Thirdly, I follow Prasenjit Duara and other scholars’ line of inquiry, which animates the nation-space not only as a community of shared actions and purposes, but also

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\(^2\) Bhabha, p.3

\(^3\) Lipman, “travelers”, p. 115; Liu, p. 189
as “a site of contestation and repression of different views of the nation.”\(^4\) Several chapters of this study have sought to illustrate how the (usually urban male) Muslim and non-Muslim elites – publishers, educators, translators, religious leaders, government officials and even warlords – worked both together and separately in articulating their notions of modernity and nationhood. While other chapters aimed to examine the “relational” reconstructions of majority and minority identity over the course of China’s nation-building project.

**The world of Republican intellectuals**

Lastly, combing biographical sketches with narratives of sociopolitical context, I sought to offer passages into the minds of the leading Republican Muslim and non-Muslim intellectuals such as Wang Jingzhai, Xue Wenbo, and Gu Jiegang. Specifically, I hope to contextualize their understanding of the notions and conditions of modernity, their relation to the nation-building project, as well as their narration of ethnic and religious identity by situating their words and actions within the social, political and linguistic horizons in which they lived. In the meantime, I hope to reveal the often-ignored “messiness” – not only the complexity, hybridity, and ambiguities of their thoughts, but also paradoxes, ironies, internal conflicts and afflictions – that occupied the minds of those prominent modern intellectuals, whose frequently contradictory intellectual orientations, were reduced to easily graspable, oversimplified concepts in the teleological narrative of history. Above all, this study

\(^4\) Duara 1996, p. 158
is based on an unproven hypothesis that, by extending our understanding of the ways historical figures, as sensitive souls, responded to their time, we may enrich our understanding of our own.
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