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Lipman, Familiar Stranger

MA WANFU (1853-1934)

AND THE RISE OF THE CHINESE IKHWAN

Oh God! Help our government and nation, defeat 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! True God, answer our prayer! Amen.<sup>83</sup>

*The Early Life of Ma Wanfu, Hajjī*

We have seen Islamic currents from West and Central Asia arrive in Sino-Muslim communities in successive, intermittent waves. The first, the early transmission of Islam, based in sojourning merchant enclaves, lasted from the seventh century to the fourteenth, with a tremendous boost from the transregional, unifying force of the Mongol conquest. The Ming period, one of relative isolation from West Asia, saw the growth of an indigenous Islamic tradition in Chinese, including *jingtang jiaoyu* and the early *Han kitab*. The second wave, that of Sufism and the *tariqa*, lasted from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth and culminated in the formation of the *menhuan* in the northwest. Non-Sufi (Gedimu) communities continued to exist, of course, and constituted the mainstream of Sino-Muslim life outside the northwest and parts of Yunnan.

This influx of Sufi ideas and institutions had a complex and subtle relationship to the violent changes going on in Qing China, changes that brought some Sino-Muslims to oppose the ruling dynasty (Ma Mingxin, Ma Hualong, Du Wenxiu), others to defend it (Ma Guobao, Wang Dagui, Ma Anliang). With their non-Muslim neighbors, all of them felt to varying degrees the effects of dynastic decline and the encroachments of Euro-American political and economic expansion. Precisely during a period of intense foreign pressure on the Qing, the 1890s, a third wave of Islamic influence, scripturalist fundamentalism, lapped up onto China's inland frontier. Calling itself names familiar to historians of the Muslim heartlands, this new movement became powerful through allies as unlikely as Muslim militarism and Chinese national-

83. See Ye Zhenggang, "Ningxia Yiheiwani," 319, for a reproduction of the prayer in its poster form.

ism. In the late twentieth century it continues to wield power in many Sino-Muslim communities and constitutes one of China's largest religious associations.

Sufism had come to China through two types of leaders. Some, such as Hidāyat Allāh (Khoja Āfāq) of the Naqshabandiya, were West and Central Asian Muslims who traveled to China as missionaries. Others, such as Ma Laichi and Ma Mingxin, were Chinese Muslims who went west on the *hajj*, to seek texts, inspiration, and teaching in Muslim centers. A major intellectual and religious movement of the Muslim world, scripturalist fundamentalism, arrived late in the nineteenth century by both of these means, with Sino-Muslim pilgrims playing the greater role in its transmission. Chinese Muslim narratives concentrate on one man, Hajjī Guoyuan (1853?-1934), whose Chinese name was Ma Wanfu and whose Muslim name was Nuhai, as the primary carrier of these new ideas.<sup>84</sup>

Ma Wanfu was called Guoyuan after his native town, in the eastern subprefecture (Dongxiang) of Hezhou. Like many Muslims of that region, Ma Wanfu spoke a Mongolic language as his native tongue. People of the Dongxiang also had a reputation as a tightly knit, impenetrable, and intransigent ethnic community. Local non-Muslims feared them, as they did the Salars, as violent and unpredictable, saying that they stuck together and enjoyed a good feud. Ma Wanfu's father and grandfather belonged to the same Beizhuang *menhuan* as Ma Qixi, founder of the Xidaotang. Ma Tong, who conducted field research there during the 1950s, records that Beizhuang adherents claim religious descent from an Afghan Sufi living in Yarkand during the eighteenth century. Several heads of the *menhuan* had gone to Xinjiang to seek inspiration, and the leader during Ma Wanfu's early years had made the pilgrimage to Mecca.<sup>85</sup>

Ma Wanfu's father and grandfather were local religious professionals, so he began his study of Arabic and Persian at an early age and performed brilliantly. At only twenty-two he was initiated into the order ("donned his cloak") and ordained as a religious teacher.<sup>86</sup> During almost two decades of teaching in Gansu, Ma Wanfu became less

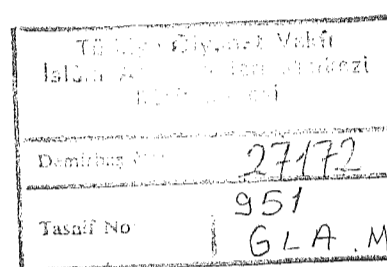
84. Chronological accounts of Ma Wanfu's life may be found in Ma Kexun, "Zhongguo Yisilanjiao Yiheiwani"; Ma Tong, *Zhongguo Yisilan . . . shilue*, 127-54; and Bai Shouyi, "Ma Wanfu."

85. Ma Tong, *Zhongguo Yisilan . . . shilue*, 277-93, 487.

86. The use of the term "donned his cloak" (Ch. *chuanyi*) for initiation into a Sufi order is general throughout the Muslim world.

MUSLIM CHINESE  
*Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic*

Dru C. Gladney



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who made the Hajj, or pilgrimage, to Mecca.<sup>154</sup> In 1937, according to one observer, over 170 Hui pilgrims boarded a steamer in Shanghai bound for Mecca.<sup>155</sup> By 1939, at least 33 Hui Muslims had studied at Cairo's prestigious Al-Azhar University. While these numbers are not significant when compared with pilgrims on the Hajj from other Southeast Asian Muslim areas, the influence and prestige attached to these returning Hui *hajji* was profound, particularly in isolated communities. "In this respect," Fletcher observed, "the more secluded and remote a Muslim community was from the main centers of Islamic cultural life in the Middle East, the more susceptible it was to those centers' most recent trends."<sup>156</sup>

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

The Muslim periodical press flourished as never before. Although Löwenthal reported that circulation was low, there were over 100 known Muslim periodicals produced before the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937.<sup>157</sup> Thirty journals were published between 1911 and 1937 in Beijing alone, prompting one author to suggest that, while Chinese Islam's traditional religious center was still Linxia (Hezhou), its cultural center had shifted to Beijing.<sup>158</sup> This took place when many Hui intellectuals traveled to Japan, the Middle East, and the West. Caught up in the nationalist fervor of the first half of this century, they published magazines and founded organizations, questioning their identity as never before in a process that one Hui historian, Ma Shouqian, has recently termed "The New Awakening of the Hui at the end of 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries."<sup>159</sup> As many of these Hui *hajji* returned from their pilgrimages to the Middle East, they initiated sev-

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

*Wahhabi Muslim Brotherhood.* Influenced by fundamentalist Wahhabi ideals in the Arabian Peninsula, returning Hui reformers introduced the Ikhwan Muslim Brotherhood to China—a religious movement in tune, in some cases, with China's nationalist concerns and, in others, with warlord politics.<sup>160</sup> While the Muslim Brotherhood elsewhere in the Islamic world has been depicted as anti-modernist and fundamentalist, this is not true of the movement in China. "There a fundamentalist, revivalist impulse among returned pilgrims influenced by Wahhabi notions," Lipman suggests, "was transformed into a nationalist, modernist, anti-Sufi solidarity group which advocated not only Muslim unity but Chinese national strength and consciousness."<sup>161</sup>

The beginnings of the Ikhwan movement in China can be traced to Ma Wanfu (1849–1934), who returned from the Hajj in 1892 to teach in the Linxia, Dongxiang area. Eventually known as the Yihewani (Chinese for the Ikhwan al-Muslimin), the initial reformers were primarily concerned with religious scripturalist orthodoxy—so much so that they are still known as the "venerate-the-scriptures faction" (*zunjing pai*).<sup>162</sup> Seeking perhaps to replace "Islamic theater" with scripture,<sup>163</sup> they proscribed the veneration of saints, their tombs and shrines, and sought to stem the growing influence of well-known individual among and Sufi *menhuan* leaders. Advocating a purified, "non-Chinese" Islam, they criticized such cultural accretions as the wearing of white mourning dress (*dai xiao*) and the decoration of mosques with Chinese or Arabic texts. At one point, Ma Wanfu even proposed the exclusive use of Arabic and Persian instead of Chinese in all education.<sup>164</sup> Following strict Wahhabi practice, Yihewani mosques are distinguished by their almost complete lack of adornment on the inside, with white walls and no inscriptions, as well as a preference for Arabian-style mosque architecture. This contrasts sharply with other more Chinese-style mosques in China, typical of the "old" Gedimu, whose architecture resembles Confucian temples with sweeping roofs and symmetrical courtyards (the Xi'an Huaqie Great Mosque being the best example).<sup>165</sup> The Yihewani also proscribed the adornment of their mosques with Arabic, especially Chinese,